

CARMEL CLARION

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2008 VOLUME XXIV NO. 1



*The
Spirituality
of
St. Thérèse*

CARMEL CLARION

JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2008 VOLUME XXIV NO. 1

Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.

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Editorial

As we begin a new year in which we will be exploring the life and teachings of St. Thérèse, we have received some very wonderful news from Rome. On January 8, 2008



the Vatican announced that Thérèse's parents, Louis and Cecia Martin,, (cf. *Clarion*, May/June, 2005, Vol. XX,3), will be beatified sometime this year. This announcement implies that the miracle needed to proclaim them Blessed has been approved by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints and will be made known at the Congregation's next meeting. This is wonderful news for both the Church and the Order. For the Church at large, it is an affirmation of sanctity in marriage and family life for the faithful who have been called to the married life. For the Order, it rewards the two most influential people in the life of one of its illustrious Saints. It recognizes their unselfish love and sacrifice in carrying out their vocation to the married and family life.

As I said above, the theme for this year's *Clarion* is St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. As we have done for the past two years with St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, we will focus on her times, life and teaching. While we are particularly interested in her teaching, we will also be interested in little known things which we hope will fill in the gaps in her writings. This will include the various people mentioned in her writings, France during her life time, and her sisters in the Lisieux Carmel.

The article by Fr. Conrad de Meester, O.C.D., a noted Theresian scholar, entitled "The Discovery of the 'Little Way'" points out that love is the essential element of Thérèse's "Little Way." Everything in her life in Carmel was shaped by her determination to love. The austerities of the life, the relationships with members of her community, the detachment from her natural sisters, her very weaknesses shaped and deepened her love and understanding of her vocation in Carmel and the Church. For Father Conrad her conclusion is very clear: the "little way, is a way that is very straight, very short," and it leads to the summit of love and sanctity. The "elevator" she was searching for "is Your arms, O Jesus!"

The second article by Sr. Geneviève is a brief history of the Lisieux Carmel. It gives us an understanding of how the Carmel was founded and how it grew physically before Thérèse's entrance in 1888. The pictures depict Lisieux Carmel during her life.

We have also included short biographical sketches of Mother Geneviève of St. Teresa and Mother Marie de Gonzague, who were very influential in Thérèse's religious life. We will continue these sketches throughout the year. The more we know about the people Thérèse lived with, and dealt with on a daily basis, the better we will understand how difficult it was for a young woman of 15 to integrate herself into the Lisieux community.

We want to thank those of you who have taken the time to tell us how much the *Clarion* means to you and your communities. We appreciate your comments and support and are pleased that our efforts are bearing fruit in your Formation Programs.

This month's *Reminders* section, Formation Programs, is intended to help all of us have the same focus during 2008.

We pray that each of you has a very blessed and prosperous New Year.

Fr. Regis, O.C.D.

The Discovery of the “Little Way”

Conrad De Meester, OCD



Entering the Carmelite life was a new and often difficult experience for Thérèse, but she desired it with all her heart. She knew that Jesus called her to this “desert” and she was ready to follow wherever he led her. No name resounded as deeply in her as Jesus.

Just as it would be a serious mistake to think that Thérèse was born a saint, so it would be wrong to imagine that the young Carmelite only had to follow automatically a path that was clearly marked out. In Carmel, she had to find her own way, “a little way, totally new” (C 3v; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 208), of which she would be the vanguard. Bounding ahead at full speed, Thérèse had to devote more than seven years to the religious life before understanding that to love as deeply as she had imagined, her own efforts were not enough. Jesus alone must give her Jesus.

In Carmel, Thérèse had to live a unique spiritual adventure. It was only through a lot of reflection and questioning, wrestling with her conscience, making decisions, and prayerfully listening to her Lord, that she found her own way to realize her Christian and contemplative vocation in the church. Thérèse knew spiritual darkness and anguish. Her way often passed through the night. She suffered exteriorly, but even more so interiorly. And she felt the weight of her “poor nature,” which is our “means of earning our bread” (LI 89). “With a nature such as my own...I would have become very bad and perhaps even been lost,” she wrote (A 8v; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 24). As much for the individual Christian as for the entire church, and no less even in this age, Thérèse’s walk in the desert, in search of a hidden source and guided by confidence in God, remains prophetic.

In a Jansenistic time—which viewed God as just judge and laid stress both on one’s personal effort to assure oneself of salvation by good works and also on fearing sin that lies in wait everywhere—Thérèse developed a liberating view of God’s merciful love. But the Christian must continually discover and love this God of love. Have we ever stopped “believing in love” (I Jn 4:16) and surrendering ourselves to it, like Thérèse?

Therein lies the invitation of the Saint of Lisieux! Cardinal Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, said: “It is the same Gospel, the heart of the Gospel that Thérèse had rediscovered, but with how much charm and freshness.” And John Paul II, while visiting Lisieux, said: “Of Thérèse one can say with conviction that the Spir-

it of God enabled her heart to reveal directly to the people of our times the fundamental mystery, the reality of the Gospel: the grace of having truly received ‘a spirit of adoption which makes us cry Abba, Father!’” (Rom 8:15).

To Love, the Only Ideal and the Only Way

When Thérèse passed over the threshold of Carmel, she carried very few things with her. Her great wealth was within; it was the flame in her heart. The day before her entry she affirmed: “I want to give myself totally to Him, I want to live no longer but for Him” (LT 43 B). At last she would be able to love Jesus according to her unlimited dreams. This is why the “desert” of Carmel ravished her! It returned to the Essential. It hid a Presence. Her emptiness was her hope. And for Thérèse, the generous one, each sacrifice became a word of love, a smile, a flower to give. A very short time beforehand, while still living in the world, she had made up her mind to give to Jesus “a thousand proofs of my love” (A 47v; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 102).

We know that “suffering opened wide its arms to her” (cf. A 69v; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 149). To Sister Thérèse of St. Augustine she confessed: “I assure you that I have had many struggles and that I haven’t been one single day without suffering, not a single day”. All the better, thought the young novice Thérèse: suffering “is a gold mine to be exploited. Are we going to miss the chance?” (LT 82).

Thérèse approached her Carmelite life with the firm resolution to realize her ideal of sanctity, come what may. “I want to be a saint... I am not perfect, but I want to become perfect” (LT 45). “To become a great saint” was her theme song (LT 52, 80). Her Lord “does not want to set any limit to [her] sanctity” (LT 83). The price would never be too high: “Jesus is asking ALL, ALL, ALL. As much as He can ask from the greatest saints”—and she underlined this word “ALL” respectively two, three, and five times (LT 57).

Thérèse wanted to break the world record for loving God! “I would so much like to love Him! ...Love Him more than He has ever been loved!” (LT 74). She would love him “to folly” (LT 93, 96), “with a passion” (LT 94), “to infinity” (LT 127). She was really describing herself when she wrote to Céline: “Jesus’ love for Céline can be understood only by Jesus!... Jesus has done foolish things for Céline.... Let Celine do foolish things for Jesus” (LT 85). Thérèse would go about it “with all her power to love” (LT 104). The day of her profession, she asked for “love, infinite love without limits other than Yourself; love which is no longer me but You, my Jesus” (SOS, 275).

How would it be possible to realize this ideal of perfect love? For Thérèse, in these first years of Carmel, there was no doubt: By love, by my very, very generous love, in response to the follies of Jesus’ love! Because “love is repaid by love alone,” she said, citing her great spiritual master, Saint John of the Cross (LT 85).

Thérèse was sure to accomplish this one day. “Love can do all things, and the most difficult things don’t appear difficult to it” (LT 65). She didn’t know any oth-

“I assure you that I have had many struggles and that I haven’t been one single day without suffering, not a single day”

er way: "As for myself, I know of no other means of reaching perfection but Love, how well our heart is made for that!... Sometimes, I seek another word to express love, but on this earth of exile words are powerless to express all the soul's vibrations, so we have to keep to this one word: Love!" (LT 109). Her practical conclusion is this: "Let us profit, let us profit from the shortest moments; let us act like misers, and let us be jealous of the littlest things for the Beloved!" (LT 101).


Suffering Crowned

It is certain that in these years of her life, suffering brought many course corrections. And suffering was there in abundance, continually, in numerous and varied arenas.

We are not speaking of the external austerity that the monastic life brought the young Martin girl, born of a family living in easy circumstances and surrounded by the comforts of their time. This austerity is what she had wanted, what she had embraced with an immense generosity and eagerness: all these deprivations in food, rest, space, health, accommodations, and the temperature of this unheated building. This was the arena in which she would realize her dream of sanctity, of love without end and without limit.

Most difficult of all was the emotional solitude. Pauline and Marie, who preceded her to Carmel, didn't want to re-create the familial climate of Les Buissonnets that she had left deliberately. Besides this, there was the prioress, Mother Marie de Gonzague, in whom Thérèse discovered very quickly a suspicious and touchy side, which tempered the radiance and warmth of her maternal heart in a sudden and unforeseen way. And Thérèse soon discovered the trying aspects of community life that she later described: "These sad sentiments of nature" (C 19r; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 233), these "struggles" and "faults" and "weaknesses" (C 23v; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 239) which she discovered in herself as in others; "these moral infirmities [that] are chronic"; the "lack of judgment, good manners, touchiness in certain characters; all these things which don't make life very agreeable" (C 28r; SOS, 3rd ed. p. 246).

More purifying still were the aridity, weariness, and distractions in the two hours of prayer each day and in the annual retreats. She often admits this. Alluding to the nameless suffering caused by the humiliating sickness of her father (of



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whom we will soon speak), Thérèse wrote: “My soul soon shared in the sufferings of my heart. Spiritual aridity was my daily bread and, deprived of all consolation, I was still the happiest of creatures, since all my desires had been satisfied” (A 73r–v; *SOS*, 3rd ed., p. 156).

Thérèse wrote this years after she had experienced it. Surely at the actual time the suffering was often pure, painful, and confusing. And she often reacted to it poorly, humbly, “weakly,” “without joy, without courage, without strength,” recognizing herself as “weak and very weak, and everyday she had a new experience of this weakness” (*LI* 109).

Thérèse’s generosity gave unceasingly and didn’t break. She was like a reed—the laundry mark used to identify her clothing—which bends but does not break (*LI* 55). In the second place, her suffering only stirred up generosity. Thérèse wanted to transform all weaknesses and all trials into love of Jesus: into loving him exclusively, more humbly, more purely, more frequently, lifting herself after each fall in order to begin again without ceasing. Using comparisons that were dear to her at the time, she gave herself to Jesus at his convenience as “a little ball” in his hand, humble and small like “a grain of sand,” “unknown,” and “forgotten” (*LI* 103), “ignored” and “under the feet of all,” but “seen by Jesus” (*LI* 95).

All suffering to her was good. It was the money with which one pays for sanctity! Suffering was borne, in that period of her life, as a halo. Thérèse repeated with conviction the words of Fr. Pichon: “Sanctity! We must conquer it at the point of the sword; we must suffer..., we must agonize!” (*LI* 89).

Christ, Mirror of the Father

Thérèse was a realist. She didn’t get carried away in an imagined suffering, but accepted what was present—and how much it was present! Thérèse was affected by her father’s illness more than by all her other trials. During the first months that Thérèse was at Carmel, her father’s illness went from being preoccupying and distressing to being heartrending and crushing for her.

On February 12, 1889, Thérèse’s most tenderly cherished Papa was admitted into a psychiatric hospital under the most dramatic circumstances, suffering from an arteriosclerosis of the brain; Thérèse felt truly trampled underfoot. Years later, she wrote:

I recall that in the month of June, 1888 [her father had run away to Le Havre for three days at that time], at the moment of our first trials, I said: ‘I am suffering very much, but I feel I can still bear greater trials.’ I was not thinking then of the ones reserved for me.... I didn’t know that on February 12, a month after my reception of the Habit, our dear Father would drink the most bitter and most humiliating of all chalices. Ah! on that day I did-



Image dear to Thérèse and used in her artwork.

n't say I was able to suffer more. (A 73r; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 156)

Monsieur Martin stayed at the Bon Sauveur of Caen for more than three years. Closed in her Carmel, as her father was kept in what was readily called a "lunatic asylum," Thérèse's heart bled abundantly, for a long time. She offered all her blood to Jesus.

During her father's illness, Thérèse's faith went through an intense purification. Let's keep in mind that Thérèse was only sixteen years old. Her Papa, who was so good, wise, and pious, had naturally been until then a mirror of the Heavenly Father to young Thérèse. Then, all of a sudden, he was doing impatient, incoherent, dangerous things. The mirror broke into a thousand pieces.

Thérèse held on tenaciously in the face of suffering. She wanted to give all, absolutely all! But between the lines, we seem to have a presentiment of how she had silently come face-to-face with the mystery of God. Hadn't she prayed so much for this not to happen? And here was the apparent failure of her prayer. Necessarily these questions made their way into the mind of a little thinker like Thérèse, even if she didn't let them come entirely to the surface, even if she immediately rejected them—even if she responded to them and affirmed her will to suffer, following Jesus, for him and for souls.

ANNUAL SUMMER SEMINAR ON CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

Theme for Year 2008

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June 22-28, 2008

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Why did God permit such trials to come to someone who had always served him so well? Indeed, they say (and Thérèse repeated it) that suffering is a privilege reserved for the friends of God, and in heaven all will be rewarded. But is there really a heaven? Thérèse, who silently passed over many things on purpose in her autobiography, made this admission in passing: "At the time, I was having great interior trials of all kinds, even to the point of asking myself whether heaven really existed" (A 80v; *SOS*, 3rd ed., p. 173). It was the question of the hereafter that came back to her at the end of her life with such cruelty, and to which Thérèse gave, in Jesus, the response of faith and of magnificent love.

During this period, and in part under this pressure, the very young religious of sixteen to seventeen years would approach Christ in a new way. She discovered the "Holy Face" of the agonizing Jesus, his bruised face, humiliated and covered with wounds and tears. Thérèse pondered how much the Resurrected One had first to suffer. As with his beloved Son, God doesn't prevent suffering and death. Then, for Thérèse, the incomprehensible mystery of suffering was no longer entirely absurd nor in contradiction with the Father's goodness. And she saw how Jesus accepted his own death with a love that gave, forgave, and abandoned itself to God in redemptive confidence.

From a rather traditional faith, Thérèse crossed over to a personal faith, a fully accepted and responsible faith. Her faith became fundamentally "Christian." Jesus became her great argument and her certitude; she didn't want to know anyone better than she knew him. In her Offering to Merciful Love, she invoked with happiness the "Face" of Jesus just as she invoked the "crucible of suffering through which she had passed" (*SOS*, p. 277).

The Beauty of Jesus

And her Christ shines in the night. During her years between sixteen and twenty, Thérèse discovered more and more the depths of the Gospel and the ineffable beauty of Jesus, value beyond all value. "There is only Jesus who is; all the rest is not.... Let us love Him, then, unto folly" (*LT* 96). "He alone is ravishing in the full strength of the term.... beauty itself!" (*LT* 76). He is "the beautiful Lily of our souls" (*LT* 105).

Who else would speak of "the hidden beauties of Jesus" (*LT* 108)? Faith could hardly veil them: "Yes, the Face of Jesus is luminous, but if in the midst of wounds and tears it is already so beautiful, what will it be, then, when we shall see it in heaven? Oh, heaven... heaven. Yes, to see one day the Face of Jesus, to contemplate eternally the marvelous beauty of Jesus, the poor grain of sand desires to be despised on earth!" (*LT* 95). Even in darkness, she saw "a half-veiled light, the light that was diffused by the lowered eyes of my Fiance's Face" (*LT* 110).

The beauty of Jesus, the Word Eternal, was also the beauty of his love for humans. He loves us indescribably: "Jesus is on fire with love for us...look at his



adorable Face!... Look at His eyes lifeless and lowered! Look at His wounds.... Look at Jesus in His Face.... There you will see how He loves us" (*LT* 87). Thérèse would pray: "Your Face is my only Homeland. It's my Kingdom of love" (PN 20).

Abandonment to God's Work in Her

After "three years of martyrdom" (A 73r; *SOS*, 3rd ed., p 157), on May 10, 1892, Monsieur Martin returned home to his family, henceforth paralyzed in his limbs and very gentle and harmless. For Thérèse, "the very sad trial of Caen" (*LT* 137) had passed. What's more, on February 20, 1893, Sister Agnes, her "second mother" of Les Buissonnets, became prioress. Psychologically, it was a new stage in Thérèse's life. The "five years" of suffering (A 70r) had ended; now "with love, not only did I advance, I actually flew" (A 80v; *SOS*, 3rd ed. p. 174).

Spiritually also, she entered into a new stage. Already in October, 1892, during her annual retreat, she understood that "the exterior" had been reduced to nothing by means of the trials of Caen, and now Jesus invited her to work more intensely at "interior" detachment: she must totally "humble" that which could still be exalted in her own eyes (*LT* 137).

In a letter of July 6, 1893 (*LT* 142), for the first time in her writings she used the noun "abandonment" (abandon), summarizing her new attitude. Suffering and one's own effort lost their prime importance, giving way to loving adherence not only to the will of God, but above all to his divine action in Thérèse.

Our Carmelite asserted in this letter that "merit does not consist in giving much, but rather in receiving, in loving much." She no longer wanted "to amass spiritual riches" (*LT* 91), but now to abandon her spiritual "business" to the Lord. In this letter to Celine she wrote:

Your Thérèse is not in the heights at this moment, but Jesus is teaching her to learn 'to draw profit from everything, from the good and the bad she finds in herself' [St. John of the Cross]. He is teaching her to play at the bank of love, or rather He plays for her and does not tell her how He goes about it, for that is His affair and not Thérèse's. What she must do is abandon herself, surrender herself, without keeping anything, not even the joy of knowing how much the bank is returning to her.... Jesus teaches me not to count up my acts. He teaches me to do all through love.... But this is done in peace, in abandonment, it is Jesus who is doing all in me, and I am doing nothing. (*LT* 142)

Thérèse, the daughter of two shopkeepers, would naturally use economic and financial language to speak of her spiritual progress, just as warrior language was familiar to her. Combative and earnest, she loved to direct her own quest, to gather up spiritual riches, desirous of soon reaching "the summit of the mountain of Love" (*LT* 112). Progressively she came to understand that it would never be pos-

sible for her to love as her heart commanded her to love, unless the Lord himself came to love in her. She gradually learned to disarm and to no longer seize and count, but to open her hands in order to receive God from God.

Irreparable Weakness

Formerly, she wanted to return love for love equally, if possible; she wanted to reciprocate the infinite love of God by doing “foolish things for love” of Jesus who had done “foolish things for love” of us (*LT* 85) and by loving God “more than He has ever been loved” (*LT* 74). After six years of religious life, she confessed: “We shall never be able to carry out the follies He carried out for us, and our actions will never merit this name, for they are only very rational acts and much below what our love would like to accomplish” (*LT* 169).

She would remain unavoidably short of this dreamed love. Toward the end of her brief life, Thérèse spoke about the true dimensions of the two loves:

Your Love has gone before me, and it has grown with me, and now it is an abyss whose depths I cannot fathom. Love attracts love, and, my Jesus, my love leaps towards Yours; it would like to fill the abyss which attracts it, but alas! it is not even like a drop of dew lost in the ocean! For me to love You as You love me, I would have to borrow Your own Love, and only then would I be at rest. (C 35r; *SOS*, 3rd ed., p. 256)

Thérèse would always confess her “weaknesses,” her “faults” and “unfaithfulness,” very small and trifling though they be, and quite invisible to the eyes of others, but real and perceptible to her who had “the eyes and the heart” of an eagle (B 4v; *SOS*, 3rd ed., p. 198). These were irreparable weaknesses just the same, of which she later wrote without hesitation: “All our justice is stained” (Pri 6; *SS* 277), “no human life is exempt from faults” (*LT* 226), even “the most holy souls will be perfect only in Heaven” (C 28r; *SOS*, 3rd ed., p. 246). Likewise, in Carmel, Thérèse again experienced scruples and anguish concerning her faults and her state of grace, so sensitive was she to the perfect love that God deserves. It happened that she was “in such a night that I no longer knew whether God loved me” (A 78r; *SOS*, 3rd ed., p. 169). Her meeting with Fr. Prou, in October 1891, proved to be liberating for Thérèse on this point; Father Prou explained to her that there are “faults that don’t cause God any pain” (cf. A 80v; *SOS*, 3rd ed., p. 174). One year earlier, Thérèse had already had a presentiment of these “faults that don’t offend Him but serve only to humble and to make love stronger” (*LT* 114).

The Carmelite had carefully observed this slow clearing away of her misery in one of the most profound and most human passages she ever wrote:



The coat of arms designed by Thérèse at the end of her first manuscript in January 1896.



*Favorite picture from
childhood holy card.*

When I think of the time of my novitiate, I see how imperfect I was. I made so much fuss over such little things that it makes me laugh now. Ah! how good the Lord is in having matured my soul and in having given it wings.... Later on, no doubt the time in which I am now [three months before her death] will appear filled with imperfections, but now I am astonished at nothing. I am not disturbed at seeing myself weakness itself. On the contrary, it is in my weakness that I glory and I expect each day to discover new imperfections in myself. (C 15r; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 224)

Thérèse accepted her human weakness and the great necessity of God's grace, which is our only harbor of salvation. This is what she was soon going to explore: the wonderful mercy in God's love.

When the Way Is Not Yet Very Clear

Her own irreparable weakness and the greatness of God's love are what led Thérèse to adopt her attitude of abandonment. This attitude is characteristic of the period between 1893 and 1894, that is to say, after five or six years of religious life.

Is this already her famous "Little Way"? Thérèse no longer expected merits and progress from herself, but from God. She developed a profound awareness of her own incapacity. Henceforth, she sought less to transform her weakness in love by herself than to let the Lord act. She took account of the priority of God's love, which is not only the source of our acts of love, but also the source of our perfection. Isn't this already the "Way of Spiritual Childhood"?

Most certainly, this is already to live like a child of the Father. Nevertheless, it isn't yet the fullness of Thérèse's "little way." We must take the Saint seriously when she states that at a given moment—and this would be only during the course of the autumn of 1894—she made her discovery of a "little way, totally new."

Let's express it using the terminology of her letter of July 6, 1893. At that time, Thérèse wrote about a divine "game" in her journey toward sanctity, but she didn't yet understand "how Jesus would go about" increasing her love. At the time of her discovery of the "little way," the Lord revealed to her precisely how he goes about making her advance. Then, Thérèse was able to adapt herself perfectly to God's game. She saw a perfectly lighted path before her. Previously she had been walking in a good way, but in obscurity, like a blind person, with all the hesitations, delays, and mistakes. How much faster and more confidently she would now run on a clear path!

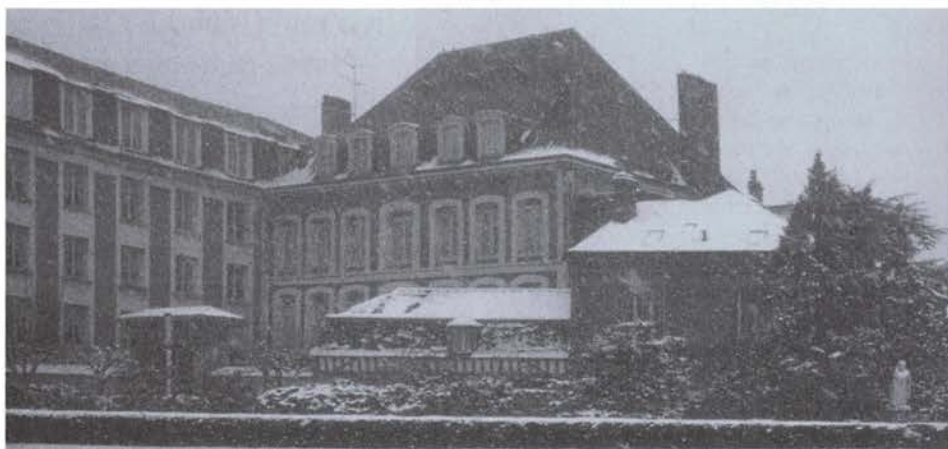
According to what Thérèse explains to us about her "little way, totally new," her great discovery was centered on God, on the divine mercy precisely as mercy. Of course, previous to this, Thérèse was also aware of divine goodness and how helpful it was. But now she learned to recognize that God's love is not only real, first, and faithful, but that it is a love that descends toward the little, that seeks the little

(continued on page 15)

(continued from page 10)

ones because they are little, and how great God is for the little. Littleness, instead of being principally humility, would from then on become principally confidence.

Wanting to be little and to become more and more little, Thérèse earnestly desired, above all, a completely childlike confidence. What “pleases God in my little soul,” she later wrote, “is that He sees me loving my littleness and my poverty, the blind hope that I have in His Mercy.... It is confidence and nothing but confidence that must lead us to Love” (LT 197). In a dear and deliberate way, she entrusted herself to the grace working in her, cooperating with it and surrendering to it.

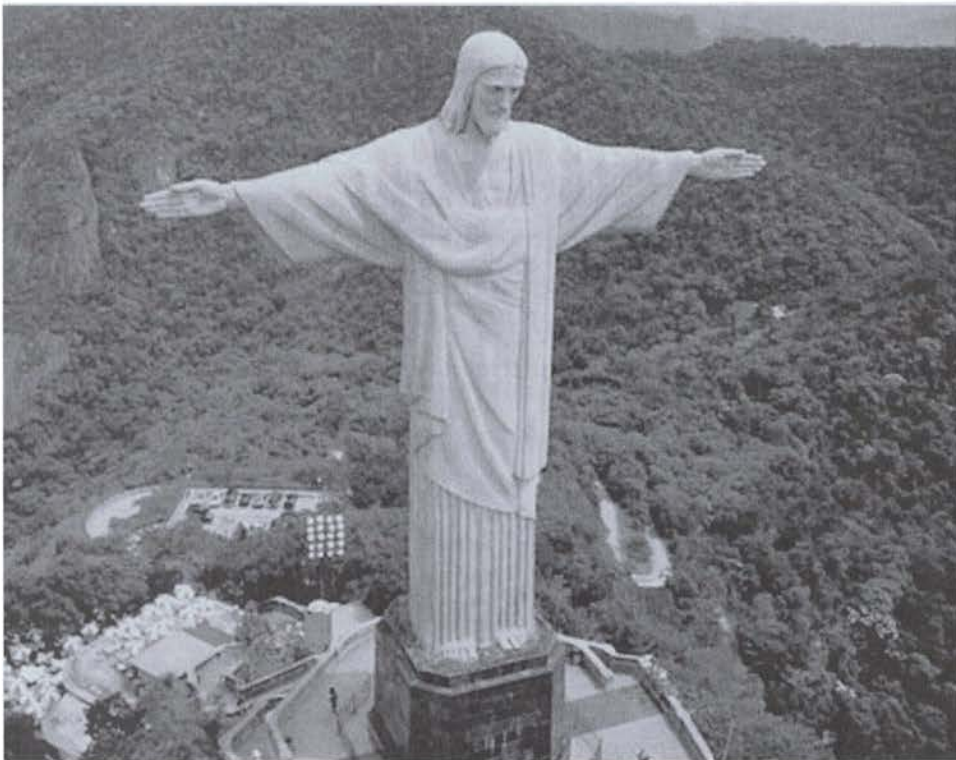


The Discovery of the “Little Way”

It is only in *Manuscript C* of her autobiography, written three months before her death, that Thérèse told of her discovery of her “little way, a way that is very straight, very short, and totally new” (C 2v; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 207). She had noticed in comparing herself to the saints that on the one hand she was like a grain of sand at the foot of a mountain, and on the other hand that “it is impossible for me to grow up” (that is to say, to grow up all by herself, but that didn’t mean that God couldn’t make her grow!). Thérèse began “searching the Scriptures” for a solution, for an “elevator” that would lift her to the summit of the mountain of sanctity.

Here we need to know that on September 14, 1894, one and a half months after Monsieur Martin’s death, Celine herself was also consecrated to the Lord at the Carmel in Lisieux. Upon her entry, she carried with her a little notebook in which she had copied the most beautiful passages of the Old Testament. At that time, young Carmelites were not allowed to read the Old Testament in its entirety. Eager to grasp the Word of God, Thérèse plunged herself into Celine’s little notebook. It was there that she experienced her important “eureka” one day in the autumn of 1894.

She was at first struck by these initial words: “Whoever is a little one, let him come to Me.” (Pry 9:4). Here she felt that she was being addressed personally: Littleness was precisely her difficulty on the way to becoming a great saint. And there she was being invited to approach God as a “little one,” even as a “very little” one.



Guided by the Spirit, she pursued her search in a very personal and penetrating interpretation. Something stirred her in reading the promise of God: “As one whom a mother caresses, so will I comfort you; you shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you” (Is 66:12-13).

Let us pause for a moment. Thérèse cited this passage twice, and twice she revealed the emotion that it evoked in her. Here is what she said about it: “Ah! Never did words more tender and more melodious come to give joy to

my soul” (C 3r; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 208). And again: “After having listened to words such as these... there is nothing to do but to be silent and to weep with gratitude and love” (B I r-v; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 187-9).

Why such a deep emotion? Because, for the very first time, Thérèse read in the Bible that God is like a mother to her child! And Thérèse was ultra sensitive to the love of a mother! Hadn't she lost her “matchless mother” (A 4v; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 17) to cancer when she was only four years and eight months old? This brutal loss, at the age when a child has such need for maternal affection to mold her personality, caused in Thérèse a deep trauma from which she only recovered at fourteen with “the grace of Christmas.” Then, after her mother's death, Thérèse became strongly attached to her sister Pauline, her “second mother,” who soon left for Carmel. It was a new tear at her heart when her other sister, Marie, her third “mother” so to speak, also left for the monastery.

And there Thérèse, the orphan, read that God is like a mother for her very little child! Thus, she concluded: “I had to remain little and become this more and more”—until she became a “very little one” to be filled with God's motherly love.

Her conclusion is clear: this “little way, a way that is very straight, very short,” which leads to the summit of love and sanctity, this “elevator” she was searching for “is Your arms, O Jesus!”

Note

Because Thérèse herself did not divide her work into chapters and numbered paragraphs, scholars have had to develop a standard method for identifying the

original site of particular quotations. Increasingly, they use a system devised for the facsimile edition: Within the three manuscripts (A, B, and C) each leaf is numbered consecutively, followed by an indication of the “recto” (front) or “verso” (back) side of the page, and the line on which the text appears. Thus the words “my vocation is Love” (see p. 194 below) appear in the manuscript at Ms B, 3v^o, 25 (that is, on line 25 of the verso side of the third leaf in Manuscript B).

For the third ICS Publications edition the pagination has been retained so that those who have previous editions will still be able to locate texts identified by page number.

Question of the Month

Question: Why is it so important to send in the various forms to the Main Office of the Secular Order?

There are many reasons.

First, it enables us to keep the OCDS database up to date.

Second, more importantly, it establishes a central place for verification of a person’s status within the Order, i.e., whether he/she has made Temporary and Definitive Promise or Vows, and the date on which each event occurred.

We often get inquiries concerning member status, particularly when a person transfers or a Community is applying for Canonical Establishment. Often we cannot verify the status because forms have not been sent to us. We all need to work together to insure consistency and accuracy of this vital OCDS information.



Flower of Carmel Community

A Community of Secular Discalced Carmelites,
of the Washington DC Province, located in Asheville, NC

ANNOUNCES:

The General Subject Index to the *CARMEL CLARION*
Is NOW online @:

www.flowerofcarmel.org

Check it out! We hope that it serves you
in personal study, preparing talks, formation, etc.

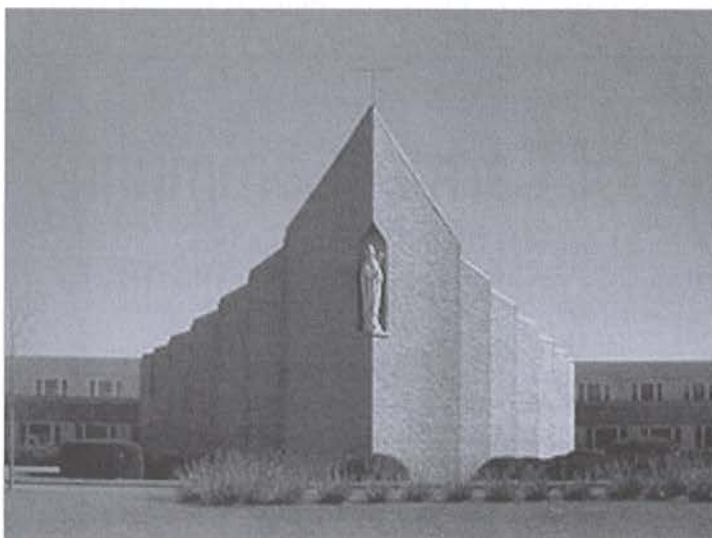
News from the Northeast Region

The six Northeast Districts are planning the following regional programs for 2008. OCDS members from outside the Northeast can register later if there is room on these dates:



July 25-27 2008 District I: “Foundations for Spiritual Life” by Fr. Paul Fohlin, OCD weekend retreat at the San Alfonso Retreat House in Long Branch, NJ. COST: \$190. Please make checks payable to: OCDS District I. Mail to: Martha Stefanchick, OCDS (Treasurer) 151 Hamilton Avenue, Princeton, NJ 08540. For questions and registration, please call: (Home) 609-924-8231 (Cell) 609-558-5104 or E-mail at toglorify@aol.com

September 26-28 2008 District 6: “Foundations for Spiritual Life” by Fr. Paul Fohlin, OCD at weekend retreat at the Franciscan Guest House, St. Anthony’s Monastery, in Kennebunk, ME. \$50 (non-refundable) due by



April 1, 2008. For map & views of retreat house only:

<http://www.franciscanguesthouse.com>.

Contact: Corinne Roberts, 6 Orchard Ln, Topsfield MA 01983-1311. For questions and registration, please call: 978-887-3020 or E-mail at corrinemry@aol.com.

The Lisieux Carmel

Genèveve Devergnies, OCD

The inauguration of the Lisieux Carmel could find a place in Saint Teresa of Avila's *Book of Foundations*; so dramatic were its beginnings. Two young ladies from Pont-Audemer, Athalie and Desiree Gosselin, aspiring to Carmelite religious life, decided to dedicate their rather modest fortune to the building of a Carmel. Mgr. Dancel, bishop of Bayeux, directed them toward Lisieux, giving them as future superior a Sulpician priest from Lisieux, Pierre Sauvage, curate of the church of Saint-Jacques.

Thus on March 16, 1838, the coach deposited at the little town's inn four novices from Normandy and two professed Carmelite nuns from Poitiers: Sister Elizabeth of Saint Louis, who would assume the office of prioress, and Sister Genevieve of Saint Teresa, named sub prioress and mistress of novices. Mother Elizabeth died four years later. Sister Genevieve then became prioress in 1842. She would hold this office, except during the periods provided for in the Constitutions, until 1886. She was considered the true foundress of the Lisieux Carmel.

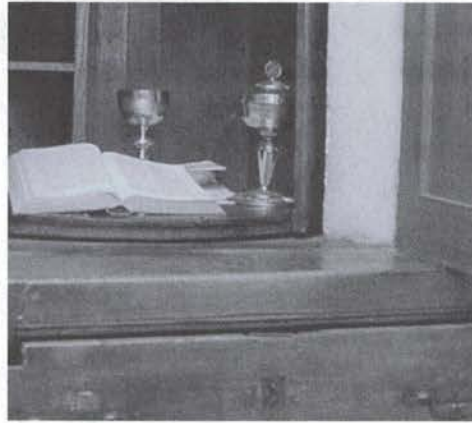
The Carmel was under construction. There was no question of conveniently settling there within a few weeks. In a driving rain, a canvas-covered cart took the travelers to Chaussee Beuvillers, the home of Madame Le Boucher, a hospitable and generous widow who offered to lodge them in her cottage.

On August 24, 1838, the new bishop of Bayeux, Mgr. Robin, blessed the oratory under the title of "Mary conceived without sin." Later it would receive the additional titles of "the Sacred Heart of Jesus" and "Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus"

On September 5th, the embryonic community moved to a slightly larger dilapidated



*Lisieux Carmel, above
Threshold of Cloister, left*



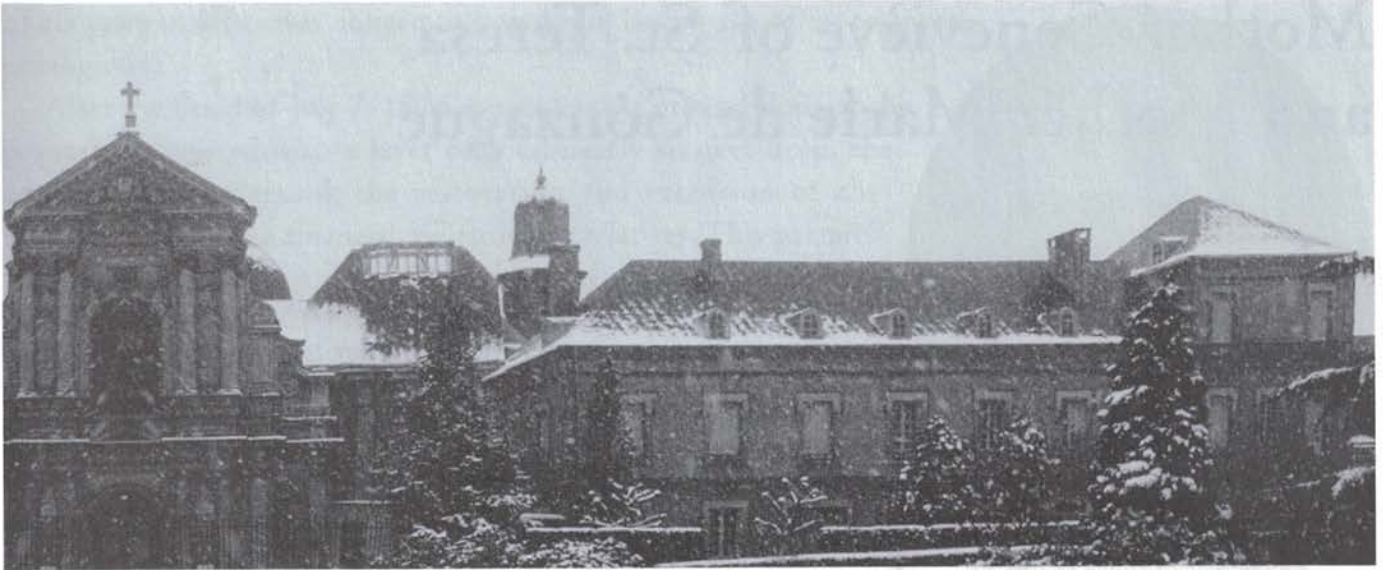
Sacristy where Thérèse worked

house on rue de Livarot, which would give way to the present Carmel. On September 16th, the two Gosselin sisters and Caroline Gueret made their profession. On March 19, 1839, the feast of Saint Joseph, the first postulant presented herself.

The community lived in real poverty, bordering on destitution. Trials came but the monastery quickly took on a beautiful spiritual vigor, so much that by 1861 Sister Philomene of the Immaculate Conception was able to leave Lisieux accompanied by three other Sisters of her community to go to Saigon and found the first Carmel in the missions of the Far East. Ties would always remain strong between these two monasteries.

Father Sauvage himself gathered throughout France the necessary donations for the construction of Carmel's chapel. On September 6, 1852, Mgr. Robin blessed the new sanctuary. Father Sauvage died a few months later in April 1853. The Carmelite nuns buried him near the choir grille, in their little chapel built by his efforts. A few months later, while still pastor of Saint-Jacques, Canon Delatroette would claim the title of superior of the Carmel, from 1867 to 1895.

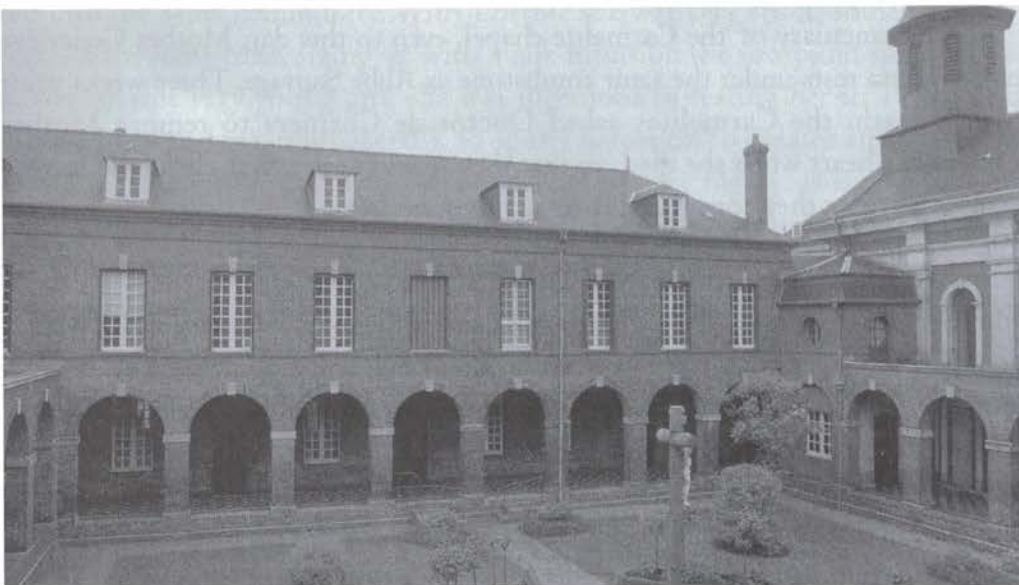
It was only in 1858 that Mother Aimée of Jesus, who replaced Mother Genèvieve for three years as head of the Lisieux Carmel, was able to build the first big monastery wing. Mother Marie de Gonzague, who succeeded Mother Genèvieve of St. Teresa, set herself from 1876 to giving the monastery its definitive shape. When Thérèse entered the Carmel in 1888, the monastery had only



been finished for eleven years. Some forty years were necessary for its completion. Situated at the bottom of a basin near the Orbiquet, the monastery, rising above the rue de Livarot in the center of old Lisieux, presents a unity of geometric construction in dark red brick.

The cloister square is constituted along one side by the length of the chapel and the nuns' choir; from one side to the other two wings of the building take shape; and the fourth side puts the finishing touches on the whole, with the harmoniously proportioned cylindrical vaulted arcades of a cloister in the most austere style.

A large granite crucifix, built in 1877, dominates the inner courtyard. The garden is narrow, squeezed between the course of the Orbiquet with its muddy waters and the neighboring properties. A lovely little alley of chestnut trees borders a small piece of hayfield, "the meadow" planted with some pear trees. The young Discalced Carmelite nun will love this familiar little landscape.



Mother Geneviève of St. Teresa and Mother Marie de Gonzague

When Thérèse entered the Lisieux Carmel in 1888 there were twenty-six nuns in the community. In the coming issues of the Clarion we will put a face to several of the nuns Thérèse mentions in her writings.

Mother Geneviève of St. Teresa (1805-1891)



Claire-Marie-Radegonde Bertrand, born in Poitiers on July 19, 1805, entered the Carmel of that city on March 26, 1830. She became novice mistress in 1837, and was sent as foundress to Lisieux on March 16, 1838 where she became the subprioress and was then elected prioress for five terms. She was venerated by her Sisters, who were edified by her activity, which was totally permeated with prayer.

Thérèse only knew her as an invalid and would pay tribute to her unflinching abandonment: "On more than one occasion I received great consolations from her.... Jesus was living in her and making her act and speak" (A 78r: SOS, 3rd ed., p. 169). There was a real spiritual rapport between these two Sisters. In the course of an extremely rigorous winter, Mother Geneviève died on December 5, 1891, in her eighty-seventh year. It was the first time Thérèse had assisted at a death, and to her it was a "ravishing" sight. She gathered up the last tear of the saintly Mother, and shortly thereafter heard Mother Geneviève say to her in a dream: "To you I leave my heart" (A 79r; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 171).

In the sanctuary of the Carmelite chapel, even to this day, Mother Geneviève of St. Teresa rests under the same tombstone as Abbe Sauvage. Three weeks prior to her death, the Carmelites asked Doctor de Corniere to remove Mother Geneviève's heart when she died, so that they would have a first-class relic to venerate of the one they considered their saintly foundress.

Mother Marie de Gonzague (1834-1904)

Marie-Adele-Rosalie Davy de Virville was born in Caen on February 2, 1834, of a family of seven children. Her father was a magistrate. She was educated at the Visitation of Caen, where she acquired solid principles of morality. Welcomed to the Lisieux Carmel on September 29, 1860, by Mother Geneviève of St. Teresa, she made her profession in 1862. Elected prioress in 1874, Mother Marie de Gonzague remained in that position for twenty-seven years, apart from the intervals prescribed by the Rule (a prioress was elected each time for a three-year term and at the end

of six years in office was obliged to step down, leaving the office to another religious).

After the flood of July 7, 1876, which left the ground floor of the monastery covered with a layer of mud nearly six feet deep, she courageously undertook the restoration and extension of the monastery, soliciting financial aid from her relatives. This permitted her to complete, in eighteen months, the construction of the two wings of the cloister: the one that comprises the infirmary and the other that opens to the garden.

When Thérèse Martin entered in 1888, Mother Marie de Gonzague was fifty-four years old. She had lost nothing of her tall stature, her distinguished bearing, and her natural charm, despite the domineering expression on her face. Her sound judgment was deeply appreciated by the clergy of Lisieux. Very approachable, her numerous qualities of intelligence, heart, and good manners attracted the sympathies of outsiders. On the other hand, being rather touchy by nature and jealous of her authority, it was very painful for her to see the leadership of the monastery pass, one day, into the hands of another. An energetic woman of good judgment, efficient and alert, she most often treated community matters according to the mood of the moment and as her fancy dictated. Mother Marie de Gonzague held an extremely important position in Carmel and she marked the community with her forceful personality. She died on December 17, 1904, in a terribly pathetic state, of cancer of the tongue, humbly confessing her faults, lovingly surrounded by the three Martin sisters, and putting all her trust in the intercession of "her" little Thérèse, who had died seven years before her.

Without the benevolent authority of Mother Marie de Gonzague, the four Martin sisters (and their cousin Marie Guérin) would never have been admitted into the same community. With Thérèse she was very strict, sometimes unjust. At the same time, sizing up with a rare intuition the profound spiritual capacity of this very young girl, she was ingenious in testing her in a thousand ways. This was done, undoubtedly, to spur Thérèse on to greater virtue. Mother Marie de Gonzague actually esteemed Thérèse very highly, as is seen in a letter written to Madame Guérin on May 17, 1888: "I would never have believed such an advanced judgment in a fifteen-year-old; I don't have to say a word to her, she is perfect."

As for Thérèse, she will remark tersely: "Our Mother Prioress, frequently ill, had little time to spend with me. I know that she loved me very much and said everything good about me that was possible, nevertheless, God permitted that she was VERY SEVERE without her even being aware of it.... What would have become of me if I had been the 'pet' of the community?" (A 70v; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 150).



Recent Releases from ICS Publications

The Collected Letters of St. Teresa of Avila – Volume Two

Translated by
Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D.

This second and final volume of St. Teresa's correspondence begins with the year 1578, a most troubling time for Teresa. A keen observer of the reality around her as well as within, Teresa in these letters focuses on many of the struggles in both the Carmelite order and the church of the sixteenth-century Spain. She introduces us to major personalities who have left their mark on history. Through her letters historians gain a better knowledge of the chronology of events in Teresa's life and how she related to the diverse people she had dealings with. A number of everyday particulars that compilers and editors considered unimportant are today prized. Because of the limited means of travel and communication in the sixteenth century, the organization of a reform like hers, with its unavoidable business matters, had to be dealt with chiefly through correspondence, a chafing duty that became one of Teresa's greatest trials. She often repeated that letter-writing was her biggest burden, a task that cost her more than all the miserable roads and bad weather experienced on her journeys through Spain.

Biographical Sketches
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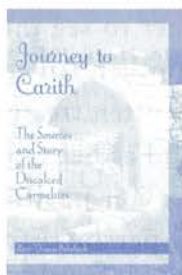
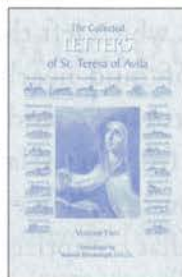
A Better Wine: Carmelite Studies 10

Edited by
Kevin Culligan, O.C.D.

The members of the Institute of Carmelite Studies contribute to this volume honoring their Carmelite brother and colleague, Father Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. on his fifty years as a Catholic priest. Through his translations of the works of Saints Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross and his other writings and

ministries, Kieran Kavanaugh has been a major proponent of the Carmelite heritage in the English-speaking world. Themes of these essays are: the Christology of Teresa of Avila; Book One of The Dark Night, an interpretation; Jerome Gracian's Teresian humor; the Holy Spirit, Mary and Thérèse; blind hope in divine mercy; reflections on the doctorate of Thérèse; two concentration camp Carmelites; learning how to meditate; the contemporary influence of the Carmelite mystical school; John of the Cross and interreligious dialogue in Asia.

Introduction
Bibliography
paper \$13.95 C10



Journey to Carith

by Peter-Thomas Rohrbach

When this book was first published by Doubleday & Co. in 1966, it was praised for its broad scope and felicitous style. In an engaging narrative of less than 400 pages, the author had somehow managed to survey a full eight centuries of the Carmelite tradition. Decades have passed since the appearance of this work and important new discoveries in the study of Carmelite history have come to the fore. Unfortunately, such scholarly research is not yet readily accessible to the general public. In the meantime, despite its limitations, *Journey to Carith* remains unsurpassed as a concise and readable overview of the people and events associated with the "discalced" branch of the Carmelite family as well as the first four centuries of the Carmelite Order out of which St. Teresa's reform grew. *Journey to Carith* remains a fascinating story of one of the oldest religious families in the Christian West.

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In Remembrance

Maria Trang Dai N. Cao, OCDS, began eternal life on June 25, 2007. She was a member of the St. Joseph's Community in Washington, DC.

Monica Geiger, OCDS, began eternal life in February, 2007. She was a long time President of the Carmelite Community in Manitowoc, WI. After her death, **Margaret Brandl, OCDS**, assumed the responsibilities of President. She followed her own sister Monica Geiger into eternal life in November 2007.

The Community of Our Lady of Mercy of Rotterdam, NY recently lost two members. **Dr. Frederick Isabella, OCDS**, Joseph Frederick of the Incarnation, began eternal life on November 28, 2007. **Helen Konopka, OCDS**, Maria Assunta of St. Michael, began eternal life on December 17, 2007.

Nicholas Petruzzelli, OCDS, Andrew Corsini of St. Joseph, began eternal life on December 15, 2007 at the age of 95. He was a Carmelite for 61 years. He made his Definitive Promise on July 7, 1946 and was a member of the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Community in Washington, DC.

The Holy Spirit Community in Louisville, KY also lost two members this year. **Dorothy Filburn, OCDS**, age 92, began eternal life on December 18, 2007. She made her Vows on May 19, 1974. **Gladys Pluckebaum, OCDS**, age 88, began eternal life on December 23, 2007. Gladys made her Vows on October 23, 1993.

Rev. Donald Mantica, OCDS, John of Divine Mercy and the Holy Face, began eternal life on December 21, 2007. He was the Spiritual Assistant for and a founding member of the Community of Divine Mercy and St. Therese of the Holy Face, in Steubenville, OH. He was a Diocesan priest and made his Definitive Promise as a Secular Carmelite on December 15, 2002. His parish said their Pastor was best known for his humility.

Reminders

Formation Programs

The National Statutes, Sec. IV 2-3, found in *Carmel Clarion*, Oct-Dec 2003, outline the timeframes for each step of spiritual growth in Carmel. These are intended to provide time for education, discernment and integration into the candidate's life style.

The approved OCDS Formation outline for the Washington Province was published in *Carmel Clarion*, Sept-Oct 2005, and may be found at our web-site:

<http://www.ocdswashprov.org/Formation/index.htm>.

Minimum of twelve months for Aspirants.

Two years (24 months) preparation for Temporary Promise, with possible extension for up to one year (12 months).

Three years (36 months) preparation for Definitive Promise, with possible extension up to two years (24 months).

At the conclusion of these timeframes, it is the Council's responsibility to discern whether or not the Candidate has a vocation to proceed to the next step of spiritual development in Carmel.

OCDS NEWSLETTER

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