

CARMEL CLARION

NOVEMBER — DECEMBER 2008 VOLUME XXIV NO. 6



CARMEL CLARION

NOVEMBER — DECEMBER 2008 VOLUME XXIV NO. 6

Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.

I

Editorial

Fr. Regis, O.C.D.

2

Thérèse and Saint John
of the Cross

Federico Ruiz, OCD

6

Point d'Alençon

Bishop Guy Gaucher, O.C.D.

7

Thérèse's Sisters In Carmel

8

The Secret Life Of Therese:
To Be Hidden And Unknown

Benjamin Gibbs

I3

Thérèse Speaks:
To Sing the Mercies of
the Lord

I4

In Remembrance
Question of the Month

I5

OCDS 2009 Congress Update

I7

A Retreat for Caregivers
With Thérèse of Lisieux
Deborah Hanus, DMin

26

Reminders

CARMEL CLARION is a Catholic newsletter published bi-monthly by the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington Province, with Main Office in Washington, D.C.

Discalced Carmelite Friars

2131 Lincoln Road, NE, Washington, D.C. 20002-1101

Phone: 202-269-3792 Fax: 202-269-3792

NEW E-mail: ocdswash@live.com

Editor Staff

Fr. Regis Jordan OCD

Liane Melvin OCDS

Suzanne Treis OCDS

Provincial Delegates

Fr. Regis Jordan OCD

Fr. Paul Fohlin OCD

Fr. John Grennon OCD

Change of address:

Please notify us in advance.

E-mail: ocdsclarion@hotmail.com

Extra copies, if available: \$5.00 each

U.S. subscription: \$10.00 US per year.

Canadian subscription: \$20.00 US per year.

Foreign subscription: \$30.00 US per year.

Contents may be duplicated if not sold for profit.

Request subscription at: <http://www.carmelclarion.com>

Official Website: OCDS Washington Province

<http://www.ocdswashprov.org>

Editorial

It hardly seems possible that another year has passed. With this issue, we complete our study of St. Thérèse. I hope the material we have been presenting over the past year on St. Thérèse has been informative and spiritually rewarding for each of you. In her life and teachings we have seen the teachings of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross explained and lived in a unique way.

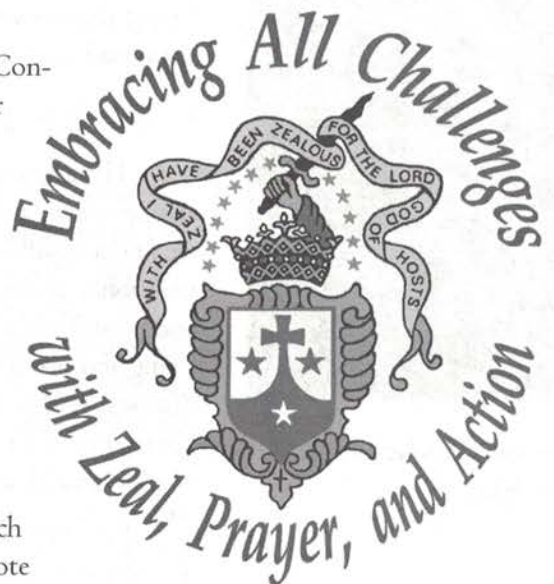
In the coming year we will be presenting the life and teachings of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity. Again we find a young gifted French woman called to Carmel to highlight an important aspect of Carmelite spirituality: the indwelling of the Trinity. She was a woman coming from a much different level of society than St. Thérèse, with another aspect of Carmelite Spirituality to share. As we journey together with her, let us pray for her Canonization.

You already know the theme of the 2009 OCDS Washington Province Congress. Who better exemplifies this theme than our holy spiritual founder and father Saint Elijah? You recall how he embraced the challenges of his time, meeting them with zeal, prayer and action. How he met the challenge of Jezebel and the priests of Baal with both zeal and action for the Lord God of Hosts. Then, how he traveled across the desert to the holy mountain to encounter Yahweh; not in the thunder and lightning, or the earthquake, but in the gentle breeze. He stands before all Carmelites, as a model of how we should meet all our challenges. It is from Elijah that we get our motto: *With zeal I have been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts.*

We are happy to announce the speakers for our upcoming Congress which begins on the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel next July. The Keynote speaker will be our new provincial: Fr. John Sullivan, OCD; Fr. Bonaventure Sauer, OCD, Provincial Delegate of the OCDS for the Oklahoma Province; Fr. Kevin Culligan, OCD, of our Brighton MA community; and Fr. Thomas Otanga, OCD, of our community in Nairobi, Kenya, currently in residence in Washington DC; will be delivering spiritual conferences. Each will be followed by workshops and panel discussions.

We regret the printing of this issue was delayed. We hope each of you had a very blessed and peaceful Christmas. In a world so full of darkness and violence, celebrating Jesus' birth reminds us that the light of the world has come and dispelled this darkness, and that His coming gives us the wherewith all to overcome the tendency to violence within ourselves and others. May the New Year bring much joy and peace.

Fr. Regis



Thérèse and Saint John of the Cross

Federico Ruiz, OCD

Thérèse's Affinity with John

After she entered Carmel Thérèse openly admitted her debt to John of the Cross: "Ah! how many lights have I not drawn from the works of our holy Father, St. John of the Cross! At the ages of seventeen and eighteen I had no other spiritual nourishment" (A 83r; SOS, 3rd ed., p. 179). But these lights began earlier and continued increasing until her death. When in a period of dryness she focused on the Gospels in her prayer, and left aside spiritual books, John of the Cross remained the exception, perhaps the only one. She continued reading and quoting from him with the same fondness as before. In the last months of her life, she frequently relived and repeated words from the *Living Flame of Love*. Explicit references to John of the Cross appear throughout her writings. Direct testimonies abound that she continually mentioned his life and doctrine in her conversations and oral teachings.



Fresco in chapel at Thérèse's birthplace, Alençon.

Contrasts in Life and Culture

The attraction is surprising. Given the differences in origin, family, epoch, life, temperament, and education, the harmony between the two is unexpected. In Thérèse we find a childhood surrounded by affection and bounty, a temperament sensitive and emotional; she was the center of attention for her whole family, isolated from the world and its suffering. In John of the Cross, on the other hand, we find a childhood of suffering and privation, hard and humble work, study, and care of those with contagious diseases. Within Carmel the life of the two manifests little in common. Thérèse writes at age twenty in a narrative, autobiographical, and anecdotal style. John at forty writes in a clean, essential, and symbolic language.

But beyond the differences, there prevails a kind of preestablished harmony. When Thérèse was twelve or thirteen years old her father hid the works of St. John of the Cross from her for fear that his rigorous teachings would warp her spiritual growth. Precisely from those years of growth an autograph has been conserved, in which she repeats in a handwriting exercise the strong motto of John of the Cross: "Lord, to suffer and be despised for you."

The Type of Relationship

Her interest in her Carmelite father and master was not a matter of simple devotion or of recalling luminous passages. What we find is a convergence in key points of their teaching. Thérèse experienced a profound and spontaneous communion with the very person of the saint, and not merely with his writings. He is "Our Holy Father," the spiritual father of the Teresian Carmelite family. Attitudes and sentiments of veneration, affection, and discipleship were mingled: he is the saint, the father, the master, a brother and friend. Her admiration was spontaneous for this mature man, this experienced and sure witness to God, who was also a theologian of keen insight. She feels she is his disciple, sister, reader, daughter. In him she finds a spiritual model who empowers,



The Pavilion, acquired by Louis Martin before his marriage.

strengthens, inspires, and offers her sometimes even the exact word for expressing her own experience.

Toward the Nucleus

An unerring instinct guides her directly to the nucleus of John of the Cross's experience: love, vocation in the church, dark and sure faith, the cross, hope, death and glory. She discovers the dynamics of the theological virtues in John's synthesis at a time when the theological-spiritual study of his doctrine had not yet come to a similar precision. All her quotations and all that strikes a chord in her are connected with the life of the theological virtues: union of love, intimate experience (in intensity and extension) of union with God in faith, love, and hope. This tri-dimensional relationship with God has from the beginning to the end the same axis for both saints: love, the life and death of love. We know that among the few books Thérèse kept in her room for personal use are the *Spiritual Canticle* and the *Living Flame of Love*, bound in one volume. Love is her center, but not her boundary. Impelled by an expanding love, Thérèse takes upon herself the demands and experience of the *todo-nada* (the "all-nothing") found in the *Ascent*, as well as the "night of faith" found in the *Dark Night*.

Love

By grace, vocation, and temperament, Thérèse from the beginning centers on love and takes the *Spiritual Canticle* as her preferred book. Here she sees portrayed John of the Cross himself, "the saint of love par excellence," and she finds herself portrayed as well in her most intimate aspirations. For her, stanzas 25-29 form the heart of the work: young souls in love with Christ, the inner wine cellar, the total gift through love, the contemplative vocation, service of the church. John here shows Thérèse how to love, the plenitude of Christian, ecclesial, and Carmelite life, and how to be contemplatives so as to love. Now she wants no other office, only to devote herself to love: to love and be loved.

She encounters the supreme value of the church and the meaning of her own vocation in one of John's classic phrases that fills her with enthusiasm: "A little of this pure love is more precious to God and the soul and more beneficial to the church, even though it seems one is doing nothing, than all these other works put together" (*Canticle*, 29, 2).

All and Nothing

Love, for Thérèse as for John of the Cross, is not an isolated feeling but the total gift of one's entire life, a renunciation of all that is not love of God. The experience of love uncovered for her the demands of an unconditional vocation. She entered, then, into the rhythm of the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*: "To love is to labor to divest and deprive oneself for God of all that is not God" (*Ascent*, 2, 5, 7).

From the time she was a child, she chose "all," not love by half measures. Her vocation of love asserted itself with markedly Sanjuanist colors. Marie of the Trinity tells us that she insisted that "her little way of humility and love was none other than that of St. John of the Cross: the nothing that we are, the all that God is." She does not reject the harshest expressions of her master: "it is necessary to suffer, to suffer much; I suffered before, but I didn't love suffering."



Night of Faith

Unexpectedly, a final discovery of faith, pure and dark, came over her. It was a painful experience that pressed upon and precipitated her into an abyss of darkness. She entered into the world of suffering for which she was not psychologically predisposed and converted it into a supreme form of union of love. It is the mark of her interior and exterior life during her last months. The fraternal word of her brother John was both spiritual company and a precious help. In her desolation, she and her sisters referred to the experience with terms taken from the “dark night of faith” of St. John of the Cross.

It was an all-encompassing problem regarding life and meaning. She spoke with the same words and examples of the master: temptations toward blasphemy, scruples, and even the sense that death would be a relief. And we find also the same positive elements: interpretation of the experience is the key of faith, trust in God who never abandons us, and solicitude about serving him, at least materially, with gestures that seemed to her of little value.

Hope and the Death of Love

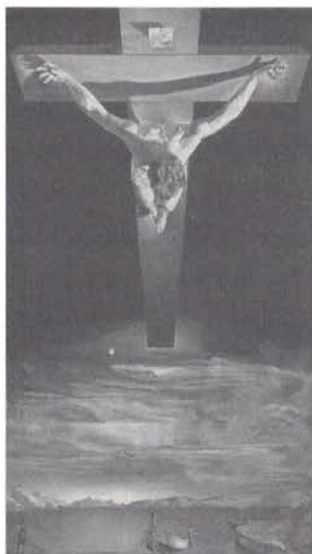
All her life and work resonated with the virtue of hope: great desires and certitude about their fulfillment. Two of John’s principles form the basis for this: “The more he wants to give, the more he makes us desire” (*Letter 15*); “for in relation to God, the more a soul hopes the more it attains” (*Ascent*, 3, 7, 2). God does not inspire us with unrealizable desires.

She identified with the *Living Flame of Love*, especially the verse of the first stanza, “tear through the veil of this sweet encounter:” to live by and die of love. “With what longing and what consolation I repeated from the beginning of my religious life these other words of St. John of the Cross: ‘It is of the highest importance that the soul practice love very much in order that, being consumed rapidly, she may be scarcely retained here on earth but promptly reach the vision of her God face to face’” (DE 26.7.5; HLC II3). During the last months of her life, Thérèse and her sisters seemed to be reliving this scene from the Flame.

Personal and Cultural Adaptation

The benefit Thérèse sought to derive from the Sanjuanist corpus was limited by her simplicity of thought and life. The selection was not guided by criteria such as gentleness or rigor, love or renunciation. She accepted without reserve the master’s most exalted expressions as well as his most austere.

One notes her silence in certain areas, or at least the absence of explicit references to them: the mystical life, its graces and phenomena; the prayer of loving attention; the purifying of all mediations through faith and love; the transcendence of God in the *Ascent*; and the trinitarian perspectives of the *Canticle* and *Flame*. Carried along by her own experience or under the influence of some other source, she modified many of the things taken from her father and master. Regarding love, she enlarged and went deeper into the meaning of the reference to the church in stanzas 27-29 of the *Canticle*. She developed her own ideas about abandonment and victimhood, words that John of the Cross never used. As for the image of night, she introduces into the living experience of the dark



night shades of atheism and materialism, unthinkable in John of the Cross's time and environment; she lives the dark night at the end, not as an earlier phase of the journey. One could add many other divergences.

Common Grace

We all benefit from this spiritual kinship and affinity. The reader of John of the Cross's works will encounter new stimuli and orientations in Thérèse's simple and profound rereading of John: 1) She confirmed what John foresaw, that these matters will be understood better through the affinity gained from mystical experience than through the study of scholastic theology. 2) She identified from the outset the essential nucleus of the Sanjuanist doctrine without getting lost in minutiae of style or contrasting viewpoints. 3) She engaged in an authentic reading, open to the reality of grace and her personal experience, a faithful, dynamic, and original reading.

In the final analysis Saint Thérèse did not take the word of Saint John of the Cross as a book or doctrine, norm or project. Hers was a personal story about the common life of grace: this is what John of the Cross lived, and this very same thing is what is now happening to me.

Abbreviations

A, B, C: Thérèse's autobiographical manuscripts, ordinarily with indication of page number and recto (front) or verso (back) side (C 3v, for example, refers to the verso side of the third page of manuscript C.) This referencing system is incorporated into the ICS Publications third edition of SOS.

LC: Last Conversations

LT: Letters

SOS: Story of a Soul



La Paquine, a river that borders the church of Ouilly-le-Vicompte, where Louis Martin used to fish while Thérèse gathered flowers in the meadow.

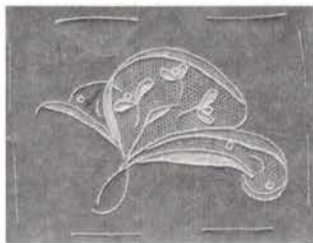
Point d'Alençon

Bishop Guy Gaucher, O.C.D

The production of the lacework known as "Point d'Alençon" began in Alençon around 1664, under the administration of Colbert. The minister brought some thirty cloth workers from Venice to launch the enterprise.

Point d'Alençon is made with extremely fine threads of flax, using barely perceptible needles matching the thread. It is made entirely by hand.

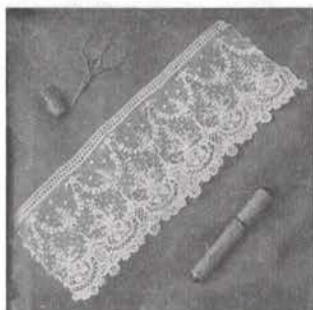
This lacework is made out of pieces roughly six by eight inches, on a green parchment perforated according to the design to be reproduced, and lined with linen. One begins by making the outline of the work on the parchment, using projecting threads. The various stitches ("points") of the design are then executed over the outline. There are nine different stitches; each piece including these stitches (not all designs have them) must pass successively through the hands of nine lace makers, each a specialist in one of the stitches. They all work at home, and one of them is the assembler, responsible for joining all the finished pieces together in a way that makes the connection invisible. This is the most difficult part. But before beginning the assembly, it is necessary to detach the piece, and once finished, to cut from the reverse side the numerous threads attaching it to the outline, then to lift the lacework carefully. With the same care, one must remove the unnecessary threads, and also pull away, with pincers, the ends of the threads still hooked to the parchment, in order to be able to reuse the same design.



In Alençon there were professional schools to teach the young women the different stitches. In the boarding schools and academies, courses were given for the same purpose, to develop this industry that made the city's reputation. Unfortunately, because the cost of the handwork required too high a sale price, this remarkable lacework had to be greatly simplified.

In running her business, Madame Martin hired the workers, distributed the work, and controlled it; she personally worked the netting, skillfully repairing the tears inevitably produced in the course of all the aforementioned handling, and taking on the role of assembler as needed.

Monsieur Martin was very artistic, and so his role was to choose the designs and arrange to have them done tastefully. This required frequent trips to Paris, where he also took care of supplies and orders placed by the shops. In addition, he reserved to himself the perforation of the designs into the parchment, very hard work, done over a cushion with a specially mounted needle.



Therese's Sisters in Carmel

Sister Marie Emmanuel (1828-1904)

Virginie-Bathilde Bertin, born in Sables d' Oloiv (Vendee) on September 10, 1828, wife of Auguss Bereze. A widow at thirty-five, after having lost three children in their infancy, she entered Carmel January 3, 1879. From the biographical sketches of the Sisters written by Sister Marie of the Angels, we learn Sister Marie Emmanuel made the stockings for the community. She possessed the ardor of the Vendeens and the heart of a fifteen-year-old. Considered the 'Life of the party' during recreations; knowing how to tell stories to perfection to amuse the Sisters, and always at everyone's beck and call, even for the smallest service. She died on June 21, 1904.



Sister Marie Emmanuel
(1828-1904)

Sister Marie of Jesus (1862-1938)

Eugenie-Henriette-Amelie Courceau, born in Rouen on September 13, 1862 and entered Carmel April 26, 1883. She was seamstress and part-time infirmarian, having for a continual refrain: "I can never do too much; I will never do enough." Thérèse's patience was tried all during prayer by the clicking sound she made on her teeth with her fingernail (C 30r-v; SOS, 249). She died November 25, 1938.



Sister Marie of Jesus
(1862-1938)

The Secret Life Of Therese: To Be Hidden And Unknown

Benjamin Gibbs

The Desire To Be Hidden

From the time she entered the Lisieux Carmel at the age of fifteen, Thérèse Martin wished to live 'unknown and counted as nothing', that 'my face be truly hidden, that no one on earth would know me' (SOS, p.152).¹ On the day of her profession, she carried next to her heart a note addressed to Jesus:

Never let me be a burden to the community, let nobody be occupied with me, let me be looked upon as one to be trampled underfoot, forgotten like Your little grain of sand, Jesus. (SOS, p.275)

Thérèse's humble desire to be unknown in her community was amply fulfilled during her lifetime. Few of the nuns who lived with her had any awareness of the depth and intensity of her interior life. A typical perception was that of Sr. Anne of the Sacred Heart, who had lived with Thérèse in the Lisieux Carmel for seven years before going to Saigon in 1895:

There was nothing to say about her. She was very kind and very retiring, there was nothing conspicuous about her. I would never have suspected her sanctity.²

Misunderstood

Some of the nuns seem to have positively disapproved of Thérèse, at least initially. Sr. St. John of the Cross had deplored Thérèse's early admission to the monastery: 'How imprudent it is to let a young girl like that enter Carmel! What does Sister Agnes think she's doing?' (OM, p.29).³ According to Sr. Teresa of St. Augustine, some of the nuns regarded Thérèse as 'cold and proud', possibly because she was so reserved and recollected (OM, p.197). Sr. Marie of the Trinity reported the 'jealousy felt by a considerable section of the community towards the four Martin sisters' (OM, p.253). Sr. Mary Magdalen of the Blessed Sacrament also mentioned the influence of 'party animosity' within the community in determining how some people regarded Thérèse. About half of the nuns used to say that Thérèse was 'a good little nun, a gentle person, but that she had never had to suffer and that her life had been rather insignificant'; while the other half said that Thérèse had been spoiled by her sisters (OM, p.264).

Thérèse's critics within the Lisieux community were not malicious malcontents but good pious Carmelites. Most of them were poorly educated women from humble origins, who had come to the religious life from small peasant farms or worked as domestic servants before entering Carmel. They naturally resented Thérèse's bourgeois manners and bearing, and her lack of aptitude for manual work. Sr. St. Vincent de Paul, a formidable little lay sister with a loud booming voice, used to call Thérèse 'the grand lady' and 'the big nanny-goat', rebuking her for her slowness in household tasks such as laundry. When Mother Geneviève of St. Teresa, the revered foundress of the Lisieux Carmel,



Celine (Sr. Genevieve) and Thérèse at the foot of the Cross after her profession, on the day of her reception of the veil (March 17th 1896)



The community gathered on the Feast of the Good Shepherd (April 28th 1895)

died in September 1891, Thérèse was given the task of arranging the bouquets sent by members of the local community, including from her own family. One of the nuns inspected the display and complained loudly: 'Ah! you're well able to put the wreaths sent in by your own relatives in a prominent place, aren't you! And you put those of the poorer families in the background.' Thérèse immediately apologized and arranged the flowers in a more democratic fashion (OM, p.51; cf. p.98).

Witness for the 'Devil's Advocate'

Another nun who resented the airs and graces of the 'Martin clan' was Sr. Aimée of Jesus. This gruff, hard-headed woman came from a peasant background, like Sr. St. Vincent de Paul, and was physically very strong. Sr. Aimée was the nun who for a long time opposed the acceptance of Thérèse's sister Celine into the community because, she said, what Carmel needed was not artists but good infirmarians and laundresses. Sr. Aimée did not have a high opinion of Thérèse either.

For years after Thérèse's death, Sr. Aimée of Jesus remained opposed to the idea that a Carmelite who had done nothing extraordinary in her short life might be canonized. She insisted that there had been nothing special about the deceased Thérèse, and that the legends about her sanctity had been fabricated by her scheming sisters. In 1911, Sr. Aimée testified before the Diocesan Tribunal as a witness for the Promoter of the Faith, the so-called 'Devil's Advocate'. She told the Tribunal that she respected Thérèse's holiness but had no 'enthusiasm or natural liking' for her, as a person (OM, p.279). Sr. Aimée lived long enough to see Thérèse's canonization in 1925, an event which she must have found hard to comprehend.

A Novice Teaching

When, in 1893, Thérèse was entrusted by Mother Agnes – her sister Pauline – with the delicate task of assisting in the spiritual formation of the novices, some senior members of the community criticized Thérèse for being insufficiently strict with her charges. Sr. St. John the Baptist could not understand why someone so young and inexperienced had been appointed to such an important position. Thérèse was only twenty years old and herself still officially a member of the novitiate (with the designation 'Senior Novice'), not a fully-fledged choir sister with a seat on the chapter. Sr. St. John the Baptist admonished Thérèse during recreation: '[you] would be better off directing [yourself] than directing others' (OM, p.249).

Thérèse's 'Little Way' of confidence and love would have been anathema to Sr. St. John the Baptist who, like many of the older nuns, held sternly Jansenist notions of personal holiness. This good sister would have been astonished to learn that a Pope would one day declare Thérèse to be a doctor of the church, principally for her inspired rediscovery of an ancient theological truth: that God is Love. And the corollary, antithetical to Jansenism, that God's gracious and merciful love is what will save us in the end – not our own good works, not even the best and noblest of them, nor fidelity to our human notions of rectitude, justice and merit. This is the fundamental doctrine underlying Thérèse's 'Little Way'.



April 30th 1896

Hidden Suffering

By April 1897, Thérèse was firmly in the grip of tuberculosis, too ill even to wash her own hands or make the sign of the cross or recite the Angelus. She was forced to spend most of her time alone in her sickroom, cut off from the rest of the nuns, cared for by her sisters Pauline and Celine when they were not attending to other duties. Probably none of those around her realized how ill she was. The nuns were not equipped to recognize the symptoms of her disease; and, in any case, Thérèse always received visitors with a smile and tried to appear as normal as possible. The heavy folds of the Carmelite habit hid her thinness; and her face remained full and healthy-looking, which was unusual for a tuberculosis patient. Dr. de Cornière visited Thérèse at regular intervals, but he did not usually examine her closely and apparently did not diagnose the nature of her disease until she was close to death. If he suspected it, he did not mention it: the fearful word 'tuberculosis' was taboo at the time.

Some of Thérèse's critics within the monastery may have suspected her of malingering. This would explain the strange, highly irregular behavior of Sr. St. John of the Cross, who used to enter the infirmary every evening during the silence after Compline, place herself at the foot of Thérèse's bed, and laugh at her for a long time (*LC*, p.167).⁴

A Saint? A Good Religious?

Other fault finders in the community dismissed the Martin sisters' reports of Thérèse's patience and fortitude under suffering. Sr. St. Vincent de Paul complained:

Why are they talking of Sister Thérèse as though she were a saint? She practiced virtue, true, but it wasn't a virtue acquired through humiliations and especially sufferings. (*LC*, pp.115-6)

When Thérèse was too sick to eat a bowl of soup brought to her by this sister, the latter was far from being edified. She came out of the room grumbling about Thérèse's ungracious behavior:

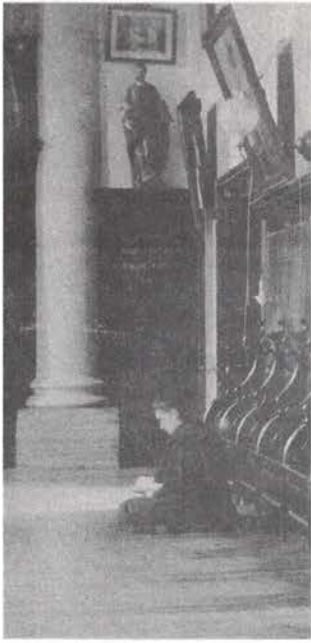
Sister Thérèse is no saint; she is not even a good religious. (*OM*, p.60; cf. p.197)

From her sickroom, Thérèse overheard Sr. St. Vincent de Paul saying to another nun:

I wonder what Mother Prioress will find to say about Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus. What can one say about a person who has always been pampered, and who has not had to acquire virtue at the cost of struggles and suffering like the rest of us? (*OM*, p.66, cf. p.163)

Thérèse's sisters Pauline and Celine – Mother Agnes and Sr Geneviève – who had known her all her life, and who spent long hours sitting with her and caring for her during her fatal illness, understood her better than anyone else. Yet even they failed to grasp the uniqueness of her character and her spiritual teaching. They believed she was a little saint and told her so. Thérèse replied:

No, I'm not a saint; I've never performed the actions of a saint. I'm a very little soul upon whom God has bestowed graces; that's what I am. What I say is the truth; you'll see this in heaven. (*LC*, p.143)



Carmelites often sit back on their heels when they pray in the choir of their chapel



Thérèse in the role of Joan of Arc, crowned in heaven

A 'Beautiful Death'

When it became clear that Thérèse was dying, her sisters hoped she would have a 'beautiful death', such as that described by John of the Cross in *The Living Flame of Love*, where he writes about the death of people who are consumed by Divine Love:

The death of such persons is very gentle and very sweet, sweeter and more gentle than was their whole spiritual life on earth. For they die with the most sublime impulses and delightful encounters of love... (LF I:30)

Pauline and Celine kept wondering whether their beloved little sister would die in this edifying fashion, whether she might die on a feast day such as the Transfiguration or the Assumption, whether some remarkable sign would take place during her death-agony, whether angels might appear, whether her body might remain incorrupt. Thérèse's unfailing common sense resisted all these supposedly tasteful suggestions. She warned her sisters repeatedly not to expect signs and wonders at her death; it would not be in conformity with the 'Little Way' she had chosen to follow:

Don't be astonished if I don't appear to you after my death, and if you see nothing extraordinary as a sign of my happiness. You will remember that it's 'my little way' not to desire to see anything... Don't be troubled, little sisters, if I suffer very much and if you see in me...no sign of happiness at the moment of my death. Our Lord really died as a Victim of Love, and you see what His agony was! (LC, pp.55-6)

This was her ultimate spiritual insight:

Our Lord died on the Cross in agony, and yet this is the most beautiful death of love. This is the only one that was seen; no one saw that of the Blessed Virgin. To die of love is not to die in [raptures]. (LC, p.73)

The Poverty Of Death

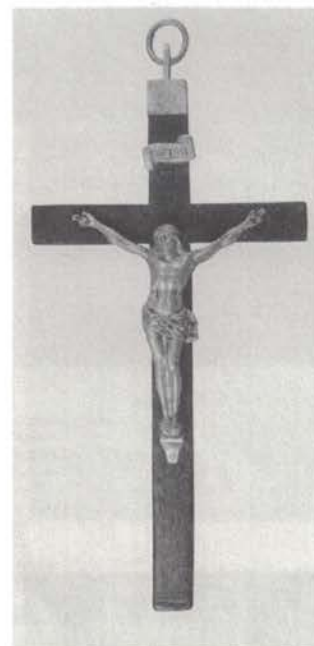
Thérèse's sisters did not grasp the point she was making. A few days later, one of them suggested again that she might receive the grace of a 'beautiful death' in the pious conventional sense. She might die on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel immediately after receiving holy communion. (It would read so well in the obituary notice circulated to other Carmels.) Thérèse rejected the idea:

Oh! that wouldn't resemble my little way! Would you want me to leave this little way, then, in order to die? Dying after receiving Holy Communion would be too beautiful for me; little souls couldn't imitate this. (LC, p.98)

Mother Agnes asked if she had an intuition of when she would die, but Thérèse replied:

Ah! Mother, intuitions! If you only knew the poverty I'm in! I know nothing except what you know; I understand nothing except through what I see and feel. (LC, p.199)

Thérèse lived her 'Little Way' to the very end. It had truly become a way of the cross. The tuberculosis continued its pitiless work, destroying her right lung, then attacking the left lung and the intestines, which became gangrenous. Thérèse died of suffocation, after an agony of two days, on Thursday, September 30th, 1897. Her final words – stammered, but distinctly audible – were: 'My God...I love you!' (LC p.206). No



"In Carmel," Thérèse wrote to Fr. Belliere, "we sometimes exchange religious articles, for this is a good way to prevent becoming attached to them."



A picture painted by Thérèse. The theme of surrender into the hands of Jesus: there we have nothing to fear.

angels appeared at her death, no miraculous visions, and the corpse began showing signs of decomposition so quickly that the coffin had to be closed before the funeral.

'The Greatest Saint Of Modern Times'

The following year, copies of Thérèse's autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, were circulated to other French Carmels. Most of them responded gratefully, acknowledging the exceptional virtue of Thérèse's life. Some, however, rebuked Lisieux for publishing the writings of such a young Carmelite: 'Age and experience would undoubtedly have modified her opinions on religious perfection.'

A young Scottish priest, Fr Thomas Taylor, was apparently the first person to suggest the possibility of introducing the cause for Thérèse's beatification. Mother Marie de Gonzague, who was prioress of Lisieux at the time – it was 1903 – did not welcome the idea. She expostulated: 'But, Father, in that case we should canonize a lot of our Carmelite nuns' (OM, p.74). Fr Taylor's proposal received a similar response from Blackrock Carmel in Dublin: 'When I spoke to the prioress of this convent about Sister Thérèse's life,' she said, 'she laughed heartily, and told me we might just as well canonize all the nuns in her convent' (OM, p.77).

Such eminently sensible judgments were soon to be overturned, however, by the unforeseen worldwide 'storm of glory' surrounding Thérèse. By 1907, ten years after her death, Pius X himself was describing her as 'the greatest saint of modern times'.



1. SOS = *Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996.

2. Guy Gaucher, *The Spiritual Journey of St Thérèse of Lisieux*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1987, p.207.

3. OM = Christopher O Mahony (ed.), *St Thérèse of Lisieux by those who knew her: Testimonies from the Process of Beatification*, Dublin: Veritas, 1975. This fascinating book contains personal testimonies from the proceedings of the Diocesan Tribunal of 1910-1911, the beatification process.

4. LC = *St. Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations*, Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1977.

Mount Carmel, Jan – March, 2007

Thérèse Speaks: To Sing the Mercies of the Lord

Ah! Brother, like me you can sing the mercies of the Lord, they sparkle in you in all their splendor ... You love Saint Augustine, Saint Magdalene, these souls to whom "many sins were forgiven because they loved much." I love them too, I love their repentance, and especially ... their loving audacity! When I see Magdalene walking up before the many guests, washing with her tears the feet of her adored Master, whom she is touching for the first time, I feel that her heart has understood the abysses of love and mercy of the Heart of Jesus, and, sinner though she is, this Heart of love was not only disposed to pardon her but to lavish on her the blessings of His divine intimacy, to lift her to the highest summits of contemplation.

Ah! dear little Brother, ever since I have been given the grace to understand also the love of the Heart of Jesus, I admit that it has expelled all fear from my heart. The remembrance of my faults humbles me, draws me never to depend on my strength which is only weakness, but this remembrance speaks to me of mercy and love even more.

When we cast our faults with entire filial confidence into the devouring fire of love, how would these not be consumed beyond return?

I know there are some saints who spent their life in the practice of astonishing mortifications to expiate their sins, but what of it: "There are many mansions in the house of my heavenly Father," Jesus has said, and it is because of this that I follow the way He is tracing out for me. I try to be no longer occupied with myself in anything, and I abandon myself to what Jesus sees fit to do in my soul, for I have not chosen an austere life to expiate my faults, but those of others. (LT 247 to P. Belliere, her missionary brother).



Thérèse corresponded with Maurice Belliere (1874–1907) while he was a novitiate of the Missionaries of Africa in Algiers.

In Remembrance

Irene Davis, OCDS, began eternal life on June 24, 2008. She was a member of Holy Spirit Community in Richmond, VA and made her Definitive Promise on December 16, 1995.

Mary Magdalene Head, OCDS, began eternal life on July 26, 2008. She was a member the Community of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament in Owensboro, KY and made her Definitive Promise on June 7, 2008.

Mary McKiernan, OCDS, Sister Joan of Arc, began eternal life on August 15, 2008 at the age of 83. She was a member of the St. Teresa of Jesus Fraternity in Philadelphia, PA and was professed on May 27, 1960.

Irmalee Traylor Adair, OCDS, began eternal life on September 19, 2008. She was a member of the Mary, Queen of Carmel Community in Lakeland, FL and made her Definitive Promise on January 11, 1998.

The St. Joseph Protector Community in Clemens, MI lost two members:

Mary Jeffers, OCDS, Therese of the Holy Eucharist, who made her vows on April 8, 1984, began eternal life on January 15, 2007. **Helen Kogut, OCDS**, a faithful Secular Discalced Carmelite for over fifty years, began eternal life on October 24, 2008 at the age of 88.

Question of the Month

Why does the OCDS Main Office insist on referring to our community by its location (city and state), instead of by its religious title?

The OCDS Constitutions (49e defines the place of community meeting as one of the necessary components for establishing a community. This is how the General Secretary of the Secular Order in Rome records canonical establishment. (Also why the city of your community meeting cannot be changed without approval of your Provincial Delegate and notification to the OCDS Main Office.)

Another reason why this is important is that there are many duplicate titles in our 149 OCDS Communities, i.e., "Our Lady of Mount Carmel". Therefore, we need you to identify your community by the location on your Roster when you call or email. Failure to do so hampers our ability to respond in a timely fashion.

OCDS 2009 Congress Update



Friars of our Province were involved in an archeological excavation of the site where the hermits first gathered on Mount Carmel. As part of this effort, the entrance to the oratory of the first community (pictured above) was rebuilt. Fr. Ted Centala, OCD helped to lay those stones, as he has helped to lay the foundations of our OCDS communities. We have witnessed Fr. Ted and other Friars of our Province work tirelessly to help form our OCDS communities over the years and we are very grateful for their labors.

All of us are called to be living stones aligned with the Lord as our living Cornerstone (I Peter 2:4-8). As Carmelites we accept this challenge. We are formed in the charism of the Teresian Carmel within our secular communities, and as brothers and sisters in our Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The 2009 OCDS Congress is different from other Congresses. Getting to know one another and learning from our shared challenges and experiences of success, is important for building a strong foundation in each of our Carmelite communities. We are planning a Congress format to help all OCDS members. Through spiritual conferences and networking between secular members at workshops and panel discussions during the Congress, and bringing shared information back to each member's community should help to establish ongoing communications after the Congress: our goal is to benefit all communities and members.

The 21st Century Carmelites Campaign is a forum whereby each community in the Washington Province is invited to contribute a picture of its members and a short paragraph sharing its history and/or apostolate. Please identify your group by the city and state of your meeting location. A community title may be included in the description; however, member names should not be listed. We look forward to seeing all of you in a '21st Century Carmelite Living Stones' photo album before the Congress next year!

2009 Congress attendees should arrive at the Westin/Sheraton Baltimore-Washington International (BWI) hotel complex during the afternoon of Thursday, July 16th, the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Join us for Evening Prayer at 6:30pm, followed by the Eucharist and a welcome reception. The Congress concludes at noon, after Mass on Sunday, July 19th. Congress Registration is \$325 (BEFORE FEBRUARY 28, 2009) and \$350 thereafter. All rooms (for singles, doubles, triples or quads) are \$139 per night, after OCDS rebate for those registered at the Westin. VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE DETAILS AND REGISTER NOW!

www.OCDS2009congress.org

2008 FORUM - ORDER FORM



CC Communications

2131 Lincoln Rd NE
 Washington, DC 20002-1101
 Phone (202) 640-2201 Fax(202) 269-3792
 TOLL FREE: (877) 845-4560

DATE: ____/____/____

E-mail: OCDSClarion@hotmail.com
 WEB: <http://www.CarmelClarion.com>

Bill To:

Ship To: IF DIFFERENT

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY STATE ZIP _____

PHONE _____

Carmel: A School for Desire

QTY	CD #	DESCRIPTION
	174	Carmel: Born in the Desire for Peace - Patrick McMahon, O.Carm. Rule of St. Albert is used to set historical perspective on formation of Carmel and provides understanding for challenges we face today.
	175	A Theology of Desire: Keith J. Egan, T. O.Carm. Biblical background of our Carmelite charism. Our Lord and Carmel teach us to desire God, Elijah called it zeal.
	176	The Mystical Life of Jesus in Teresa and John: Vilma Seelaus, OCD Full realization of our human potential is that we are all called to be mystics and discover the sacred within.
	177	The Education of Desire in the Letters of Madeline de Saint-Joseph: Mary Frohlich, RSCJ Inculturation - taking Carmel into France with echos of of Teresa and John; forshadow of Therese. Lessons on discerning vocations.
	178	Peacemaking and the Mortification of Desire: Kevin Culligan, OCD "Challenge of Peace" on 25th anniversary of US Bishops pastoral letter and discussion of the Nature of Peacemaking: God's Promise and our Response.
	179	The Desire for God the Discovery of the Little Way: Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD Understanding our desires helps us better relate to St. Therese's Little Way and finding peace.
2008 FORUM: ENTIRE SET OF 6 CDs		

EACH CD is \$8.95 (plus actual shipping costs)

10% discount for 4 or more INDIVIDUAL CDs

SET OF 6 CDs is \$44.95 (plus actual shipping costs)

INVOICE WILL BE SENT WITH ORDER FULFILLMENT

CALL: Toll Free: (877) 845-4560 or EMAIL: OCDSClarion@hotmail.com TO ORDER

A Retreat for Caregivers With Thérèse of Lisieux

Deborah Hannus, DMin

Awakening to Love

"To whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (Is 53:1).

Throughout our lives God gives us opportunities to grow in awareness of Love and to participate in his compassion for others. The people and events sent our way by the Divine Hand have the potential to draw us into greater intimacy with God, with ourselves, and with others. We know that these opportunities can be joyful or sorrowful, or sometimes both at the same time. Being a full-time caretaker to another is one such opportunity to mature in God's love, share in God's sorrow, and experience the joy God promises to all who show care and compassion to others.

God awakened me to this particular path of sharing more fully in a life lived in God's love through the unforeseen disability of my husband. His stroke and subsequent diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease introduced me to a life I knew existed, but in which I had never participated: the sorrows and the joys of caring for a loved family member in the home. Sociologists tell us that as medical science is able to lengthen our lives, we are also confronted with illnesses that in the past would have led to death. Increasingly we are becoming a nation of those who care for family members in home situations.

This is an awakening to a new kind of life for both my husband and for me. Sometimes we are able to share the journey through thoughts and feelings. Just as often, however, each of us takes an individual journey into an unknown land. My husband portrays his journey as "keeping a strong mind." He is patient, uncomplaining, and increasingly quiet. I have moved through all the stages of grief: denial, rage, coming to some level of acceptance, and occasional glimmers of new life. The key to my own journey has been prayer, seeking the companionship of the Christ, who knows what it means to suffer, and the example of the Carmelite tradition.

Meditating on Christ the Suffering Servant has taken on a new life for me as I begin to understand, not only with my head but with my whole being, what it means for Christ to share in our sufferings. Teresa of Jesus wrote of her own method of meditation as one in which she first became aware of the presence of Jesus, usually through some mystery of his life in which he suffered. In both Teresa and John, we see lives spent in ill health or, in the case of John, caring with great compassion for those who were ill. Teresa particularly exhorts her nuns to be aware of the needs of one another, writing, "All must be friends, all must be loved, all must be held dear, all must be helped."¹

It is, however, most especially in the life of Thérèse of Lisieux that we are able to trace a history and pattern of care that lead through sorrow to the joy of spiritual union and intimacy with God, self, and others. Her childhood illness, well documented and much commented on, demonstrates the loving care of a family dedicated to aiding her in a return to health. One must wonder if the "smile of the Virgin" was not a transfer of loving energy from her family to her melancholy spirit. Thérèse's experience of God's healing love does not end with her own recuperation. She herself lives a life of loving concern and care for others that can provide for us a disposition of heart in the care of others which then leads us into new adventures in faith. Lent 2006 gave me and a small group of other caregivers the opportunity to explore what meaning Thérèse's life and message might have for us as we too take a new path on this journey toward God.



Retreating with the Suffering Servant

"A man of sorrows and familiar with suffering." (Is 53:3)

We know through Christ that our God is not a God who stands apart from human suffering but rather immerses himself fully in all that is human. It is with this remembrance and with song that we began our retreat with Thérèse. It is fitting to begin with her image of Christ, for it is the experience of Christ that Thérèse espoused as Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. For Thérèse, the Holy Face accompanied her as she made the difficult journey into spiritual adulthood, through her father's illness and even to her own sickbed.

Meditation on and remembering the Holy Face is an effective and helpful image for caretakers to keep in their hearts and to return to often. The face of the suffering Christ looks at us with empathy, understanding, and acceptance of all that is human. Acceptance by God of our human frailty is an important point of meditation for caretakers, who often feel as though they have failed to be as kind or compassionate as they would like to be. In the face of the Suffering Servant, we find relief for our own emotional and psychological suffering, our fatigue, our fear, and our anxiety. When we meditate on the Suffering Servant and gaze in our prayer at the Holy Face, we see that Christ notices our suffering and provides us with the love we need in order to be faithful to our call.

As we become free to share our stories of caretaking with one another, we realize that we spend much of our lives either being cared for or caring for others. Some of us have learned to care for ourselves in the midst of caretaking and some of us are just beginning to learn to care for ourselves. We are, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot, learning to care and not to care. Like all healthy human and spiritual responses to our lives, we are meant to learn to put things into perspective: to give ourselves lovingly in the act of caring but also "not to care," to let go of the idea that we will be perfect caregivers. We hear common threads in the stories told: of the often unceasing demand on a caretaker's time and energy, sometimes for decades; of the need for human support, as well as some experience of God's loving presence in our lives. Letting go of the notion that we can be other than frail humans as we offer care to others begins with an honest and gentle reflection on what we experience emotionally and physically as we seek to attend to the needs of others.



Reflection

1. Remember a time when you were cared for by another. What was the experience like? What was helpful to you? How might this memory affect the care you are presently giving to another?
2. What are some of the physical, emotional, and spiritual demands you feel on a regular basis in your caretaking of another? Which are particularly difficult for you? Have you found ways to help yourself cope with these difficult demands?
3. In what ways are you aware of God's presence? Do you experience an absence of God? What expression of God's love do you need at this time?
4. Prayerfully read Isaiah 53:2–12

Growth through Compassion

"He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our infirmities." (Is. 53:4)

Thérèse did not marry and care for a husband or children, nor did she take care of her ailing parents or even for her own sisters, all who lived into their seventies and eighties. Yet, she can offer much to contemporary caretakers in the way of growing in love of God through service and attitude. Thérèse's story of heroic sanctity is a narrative of growing in the loving gift of self to

God and others. As she matured in her love of God, she chose to give everything, to hold back nothing. This did not come naturally, for she was not born as a heroic saint. Her love of God grew in relation to her capacity to care about others. As her mind and heart began to understand the complete gift of Christ to us, her actions of concern and love for others increased. Her autobiography is full of her accounts of her own willfulness and determination to have her own way. Having lived her early life as the coddled child of an adoring father and older sisters, she entered Carmel determined to become the generative adult Christ calls all of us to be. For Thérèse this meant to be intentionally caring toward others.

An early opportunity to find herself came during the influenza epidemic that scourged the Lisieux Carmel in 1891. At nineteen, Thérèse was one of the few sisters who contracted only a light case of the flu. Able to remain on her feet, she threw herself into the care of the community, giving daily care to the many who were down. She assisted with the bedside nursing, bathed her sisters, and, when several died, prepared their bodies for burial and arranged for the funerals. Writer Ida Gorres states, "It may be that in overstraining herself in caring for the other sisters, she contracted the disease which was later to prove fatal."² Thérèse saw clearly that it is in laying down our lives for others that we become like the God we adore. She embraced this spiritual method wholeheartedly. She chose to love freely and without reserve and, in doing so, was propelled more deeply along the path toward God.

As caretakers, we are too often presented with circumstances that we never would have chosen for ourselves. We too are invited to reach into those places of our hearts and souls, time and energies, which until now have remained unexplored. Caring for others presents us with new places of the spirit to cultivate. It is not always easy to do so. We lament our lot and we wish to run away, but if we allow him to do so, the Suffering Servant places us within his wounds and there teaches us the art of compassion. Just as Thérèse stepped into new territory and found a new Thérèse, so too do we, modern caretakers, discover ourselves in new practical and spiritual ways. We do not always like what we find. When we do not, we can only turn once again to the inner cave of love, the wounds of Christ.

Reflection

1. What new insights do you have about yourself as a result of caring for another? Have you discovered or cultivated any new gifts or talents?
2. How has caregiving caused you to turn toward God for help and consolation? Is it difficult for you to ask God for what you need and want in the midst of your caretaking?

Happiness that Surpasses the Joys of Earth

*"Rejoice in the Lord always: Again I say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near."
(Phil 4:4)*

All those who suffer look forward in hope to the promise of joy. All believers hope that their suffering will be transformed into joy. Responding to God's desire for us to experience joy in the midst of suffering is perhaps the key spiritual transformation for all believers. This profound transformation is accomplished in us by God as we are more and more able to receive God into all the experiences of our lives. It is God's loving us in the Suffering Christ that frees us to intentionally connect our lives with those who suffer and, in doing so, come to enjoy God on earth. Serving God in our neighbor becomes a blessed enjoyment of the nearness of Christ.

While Thérèse's care of her sisters during the influenza epidemic was thrust upon her by circumstances, this was not the case in her intentionally choosing to care for an elderly member of the community. The care of this sister resounded so profoundly in her soul that Thérèse

includes the event in her autobiography as a significant manifestation of growth in her spiritual awareness of God in her life. Sister St. Pierre was frail and known to be critical of her caretakers. She had worn out a few before Thérèse asked for permission to become the older sister's aide. Her duty was simply to walk Sr. St. Pierre from the chapel to the refectory each day and to seat her at the table for her meal.



The veteran sister complained that Thérèse walked too fast, did not have a good hold on her, and was too young to be of help. This incident is one with which most caretakers can resonate. It is in the daily helping tasks that we lose patience, feel unappreciated, and feel very distant from God. Thérèse not only persevered but took the time to cut up the sister's food and put her mug and bread within easy reach. Finally, before departing, she gave her fellow sister a warm and friendly smile. This ordinary act of care became for Thérèse a significant experience of spiritual growth. In her autobiography she writes:

"One winter night I was carrying out my duty as usual.... Then my glance fell upon the poor invalid whom I was supporting.... I cannot express in words what happened in my soul; what I know is that the Lord illumined it with rays of truth which so surpassed the dark brilliance of earthly feasts that I could not believe my happiness.... If already in suffering and combat one can enjoy a moment of happiness that surpasses all the joys of this earth, ...what will this happiness be in heaven when one shall see in the midst of eternal joy and everlasting repose the incomparable grace the Lord gave us when He chose us to dwell in His house, heaven's real portal?"³

How often we fear that the care of others will consume our lives, leaving us with only work and endless details with which we have to attend. Our fears and resentments are real issues and need helpful solutions so we do not feel trapped in our care of others. As balance is achieved, the act of caring for others can become for the caretaker the very means through which God is glimpsed and God's love experienced. The kingdom for which we long is here and now in the ways we are present and available to one another. It is right below the surface of these daily and mundane things that the kingdom lies. Caring for others, reorienting our lives, and renegotiating our life agendas provide us with the vehicle for entrance into a God-centered experience of daily reality. The very things we feared would annihilate us give us the opportunity for a reconstructed life. Our actions and attitudes as we care for others can become a sign and a sacrament of God's presence in the here and now.

Reflection

- I. Draw a picture of yourself in the role of caretaker. Pin it up in a quiet place. Gaze upon the drawing with nonjudgmental eyes. Ask God to reveal to you his loving presence in the scene. Sit in quiet enjoyment of God.



Words Cannot Express Our Anguish

"Although exteriorly we are fading away, interiorly we are being transformed day by day." (2 Cor 4:16)

Thérèse is the first to admit that she did not always find acts of charity easy to perform, nor was it without much interior cost that she traveled the road of caring for others. It was not always easy to be one with the Suffering Servant. Loving God and neighbor did not remove the pain and anguish she felt when those whom she loved suffered. To care for and about others was draining and exhausting. The emotional and spiritual care of her father as he entered his final illness was a case in point for Thérèse and can say much to us about our own inner emotional state as we care for others.

Louis Martin had suffered a series of strokes, beginning in 1887, and, by the time Thérèse and two of her sisters were in Carmel, his health had begun to take a serious turn for the worse.

The three Carmelite sisters were very distressed that they could not directly participate in his daily care. They did however serve as soul companions to Louis as he traveled his journey to Calvary. It was with a gaze of anguished love that Thérèse watched her beloved “King’s” decline. Louis and Thérèse shared a complex and intertwined spiritual consciousness. While not physically present to Louis, Thérèse felt herself drawn into deeper spiritual growth through the sufferings her father experienced. In her autobiography she describes this time as a martyrdom for her father, herself, and her sisters. She writes:

“Yes, Papa’s three years of martyrdom appear to me as the most lovable, the most fruitful of my life; I wouldn’t exchange them for all the ecstasies and revelations of the saints.”⁴

She suffers with her father, holding him in her spiritual care, suffering with him, and experiencing union with the Suffering Servant with ever greater intensity. While the physical struggles of caring for another may be difficult, it may be of even greater difficulty and suffering for the caretaker to watch both the fading of hope and the descent of depression and isolation onto the loved one. As silence descends upon the house, as anticipated plans for the future are laid aside, and as projects that once interested the patient are forgotten, the caretaker knows a dark night of the spirit. Illness and suffering slowly draw a veil over the face of life as it was known. For both caretaker and the one who is ill, it is a time of not only relinquishing bodily health but also of watching the inner sparks that kept hope and imagination and initiative alive begin to languish and die. It is a time of letting go of what we have believed were God’s ways. We undergo a deconstruction of what we have clung to as the sure way to God. It is probably only in retrospect that we know these as spiritually fruitful years and are able to trace our own growth in compassion and love.

Being with others in their suffering is the royal road to participating with God in the world. It is in and through our human frailty, in our bodies and in the fragility of our minds and feelings, that we are most near to Christ. Jesus embraces us at the core of our suffering: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. As we identify with the fully human Christ, we are moved from the isolation of suffering and into the interior transformation of recognizing ourselves as within the Mystical Body of Christ. We know ourselves as the Body of Christ. This ever-deepening awareness is an experience of Resurrection. Our hope in and our experience of the Resurrected Christ is commensurate with our embrace of our common suffering. It is only through his passion and death that Christ passes into new life. As caretakers, we come to know ourselves as one with and cared for by those who suffer and by Christ.

Reflection:

In 1895 Thérèse wrote a poem entitled “To the Sacred Heart of Jesus,” in which she celebrates not the symbolic nature of the heart but the reality of Jesus’ suffering heart as a place of comfort and solace for us. Read the verse below and allow it to turn your thoughts and prayers toward trust and confidence in the support we can find in the humanity of Christ:

“I need a heart burning with tenderness,
Who will be my support forever,
Who loves everything in me, even my weakness...
And who never leaves me day or night.
I could find no creature
Who could not love me and never die.
I must have a God who takes on my nature
And becomes my brother and is able to suffer!” (Verse 4)⁵



What a Grace to Have Faith

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46)

Thérèse opened her hands and her heart to those in her life in need of her physical and spiritual care. She exhibited this attitude of caring in every arena of her life as witnessed by the care she took of the novices entrusted to her, the faithfulness in her correspondence with the missionary priests to whom she was assigned, and in the creativity she brought as a community member through her poetry and plays. Her own final illness and death continue to give us an example of a life lived fully and, as such, a life that continues to give a message of faith, hope, and love for caregivers.

As she lay dying, a curious sister asked her, "How do you arrange your spiritual life now?" With characteristic simplicity and honesty, Thérèse replied, "My spiritual life as a patient? Why it is simple, I suffer, that is all."⁶ Throughout her last illness Thérèse lived as fully in the moment as her suffering permitted. She would not allow herself to be reduced to someone else's empty idea of a saint. Though usually patient and cheerful during the course of her illness, Thérèse would not allow herself to be manipulated into putting on a false front about her suffering. In one of her last conversations, she said she would like to be strong but asked her sisters not to expect a "beautiful death" from her.⁷ Thérèse in fact lived the last six months of her life in great physical pain, brought on by the ravages of tuberculosis as well as an ongoing crisis of faith, which she described as a dark wall stretching all the way to heaven. Throughout these months she had moments of cheerfulness, times of delirium, desire for human comforts, as well as times of profound conversations with her sisters.

She knew she needed others' care, and she cooperated in receiving their care. At the same time, she continued on her own human and spiritual journey toward God in her own way. She knew that this was a time of human and spiritual growth for herself and requested that others treat her with the dignity that this part of her journey required. Her faith continued to be tested and she continued to grow in self-knowledge. She made a revealing comment to her sister about dangerous medications being around seriously ill people:

"What a grace it is to have faith. If I had no faith, I would have inflicted death on myself without hesitation

The story of Thérèse as one receiving care reminds us that those for whom we care are complex, still growing in their own self-knowledge and still struggling with all the mysteries of life.

It is tempting for caretakers to consider those for whom they care as pale reflections of the persons they once were. Yet each person has the potential to be a new creation each day. Disability and illness demand a new relationship between the patient and God and between the patient and the caretaker. This relationship is built on transparency of thought and feeling, mutual trust, and the sharing of words of encouragement. It is a time of change and transformation for both receiver and giver of care. Spiritual and human growth do not stop during illness, disability, or approaching death but continue to unfold, sometimes with even greater intensity than in times of good health.

Thérèse in her last illness continued to open her petals to God. She wanted God to have every petal of the flower of her life: "In being unpetalled, I want to prove to you that I love you, O my Treasure."⁹ Caretakers best serve the ones for whom they care when they are able to provide an atmosphere that allows for the continued human-spiritual growth for him or for her and for themselves as well.



Reflection:

Given that different situations and physical conditions require differing approaches, are you able to provide the activities and atmosphere for ongoing growth to those for whom you care? What are the difficulties you encounter in doing this for the one for whom you care? For yourself?

The Little Way of Caring

It was through caring for others and by allowing herself to be cared for that Thérèse most fully lived out her famous “Little Way.” Caring for others is the embodiment of the idea of being totally dependent on and in need of God. Caretakers find out very quickly how much they are in need of God’s and others’ help. The little way of caring invites us to see ourselves as poor in spirit, poor in our capacity to love, poor in the practice of the virtues, and therefore in great need of being cared for by our compassionate God. In being little, we can abandon ourselves to the physical, emotional, and spiritual acts of caring as best we are able and then leave our faults, lack of competence, fatigue, and frequent breakdowns in the hands and heart of the merciful God. The little way of caring reminds us that we are human, not perfect, and will not care for others in a perfect way. Thérèse’s way invites us to surrender ourselves into the loving embrace of the God who loves us. She says in one of her last conversations how happy she is to see herself imperfect and in need of God’s mercy even at the moment of her death. As caretakers, our great relief and consolation is that we can rest in confidence under the care of the man of sorrows who understands our suffering.

A Closing Meditation

Spend a few moments becoming quiet in body and mind. Be attentive to your breathing and allow your breath to calm you. In the quiet of your heart ask God for what you want and need at this time in your life as a caretaker. In your mind’s eye see yourself as you are today. Hear a voice calling you by name. You recognize the voice as that of Christ, and you turn to see him beckoning to you. As you draw near to him, he takes you into a gentle embrace. Allow yourself to be still in his embrace. Perhaps Christ speaks to you, perhaps you remain in stillness with him. Stay there, loved by Christ, for as long as you wish. When you are ready, close the meditation with a slow praying of the Our Father.

Deborah Hanus, DMin, is director of the Center for Spiritual Growth and the Contemplative Life in San Antonio, TX, and is a member of the San Antonio. She and her husband are parents of two adult daughters.

This article originally appeared in *Spiritual Life*, Fall 2008

NOTES

1. *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD, and Otilio Rodriguez, OCD (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications), vol. II, p. 55.
2. Ida Gorres, *The Hidden Face: A Study of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*. (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1939), p. 164.
3. *The Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Thérèse of Lisieux*, trans. John Clarke, OCD (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 1972), p. 248.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
5. *The Poetry of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux*, trans. Donald Kinney, OCD (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1996), p. 119.
6. Guy Gaucher, *The Passion of Thérèse of Lisieux*, (New York: Crossroad, 1990).
7. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
8. *Story of a Soul*, p. 264.
9. *Poetry of Saint Thérèse*, p. 204.



Retreat News from the Northeast

May 23, 2009: District III - "St. Teresa & Prayer" a Day of Recollection by Fr. Mark-Joseph DeVelis, OCD, at the Good News Center in Utica, NY. 9 AM – 4 PM. Cost: \$40.00. Contact Person: Joyce Ponerella: cell phone 518-248-4291; email: SrMarySunshine@aol.com.

May 29-31, 2009: District V - a Weekend Retreat by Fr. Kevin Culligan, OCD at the Espousal Retreat Center, 554 Lexington Street, Waltham, MA. Deposit: \$ 170.00. Contact: Deb Silve at debsilve@gmail.com or telephone 617-365-3243.

July 24-26, 2009: District I - "Prayer" a Weekend Retreat given by Fr. Mark-Joseph DeVelis, OCD, at San Alfonso Retreat House in Long Beach, NJ. Cost: \$190.00. Please make checks payable to: *OCDS District I* and mail to: Martha Stefanchik, OCDS (Treasurer), 151 Hamilton Avenue, Princeton, NJ 08540. For questions, and registration, please call: (Home) 609-924-8231 (Cell) 609-558-5104 or email: toglorify@aol.com.

October 9-11, 2009: District III - "*Foundations for a Spiritual Life*" by Fr. Paul Fohlin, OCD, a weekend retreat at Christ the King Retreat House, in Syracuse, NY. Cost: \$170.00. Contact Joyce Ponerella: cell phone 518-248-4291; email: SrMarySunshine@aol.com.

October 17, 2009: District V - a Day of Recollection at Medway, MA Contact: Deb Silve at debsilve@gmail.com or Telephone 617-365-3243.

SUMMER SEMINAR
ON CARMELITE
SPIRITUALITY

For Life and Ministry

Carmel's Search for Wisdom:
Prayer and Contemplation

June 14-20, 2009



Presenters

Daniel Chowning, OCD
Kevin Culligan, OCD
Keith J. Egan, T. O. Carm.
Mary Frohlich, RSCJ
Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD
Patrick McMahon, O. Carm.
Vilma Seelaus, OCD
John Welch, O. Carm.

Center for Spirituality
Saint Mary's College
Notre Dame, IN 46556--5001
Phone: (574) 284-4636

E-Mail: Kathy Guthrie
kguthrie@saintmarys.edu

ANNUAL
CARMELITE SUMMER SEMINAR

The Center for Spirituality at Saint Mary's College invites you to participate in the 2009 Seminar on Carmelite Spirituality. This seminar was inaugurated in 1985.

Lectures, workshops, common prayer, and daily Eucharist are the rhythm of this one-week seminar during which prayer, study, and community offer opportunities to renew one's life, prayer, and commitments.

The Center for Spirituality welcomes to this seminar laity, religious, and clergy of all faiths). The seminar begins with the celebration of the Eucharist at 4:30 P.M. on Sunday, June 14, and concludes with lunch on Saturday, June 20, 2009.

Mark your calendar: June 15-19, 2010
for the 25th Anniversary Seminar.

COSTS

\$40.00	Non-refundable registration fee
\$200.00	Tuition
\$150.00	Single room in Regina Hall
\$150.00	Board: Includes Sunday dinner through Saturdays lunch
<hr/>	
\$540.00	Total

There will be a surcharge of \$30.00 for fees received after May 20, 2009. Overnight reservations for the day before and Saturday night afterwards cost \$40.00 per night. These reservations can be made through the Center for Spirituality at (574) 284-4636. To stay in an air conditioned apartment building on campus rather than the dormitory building add \$75.00 to the above housing costs. The total for **Apartment Housing** is \$225.00, while the total for **Dormitory Housing** is \$150.00. There are two hotels on campus. Reservations can be made directly for the hotels: **The Inn at St. Mary's** (574) 232-4000 and **Hilton Garden Inn** (574) 232-7700.

Reminders

Resources for OCDS Community Councils and all Secular Carmelites:

- The OCDS Constitutions, Rule of St. Albert and currently enforce National Statutes are available in the Carmel Clarion reprint of the October-December 2003 issue for a cost of \$3.00 each. Email the OCDS Main Office at ocdsclarion@hotmail.com; or call and leave a message at 1-877-845-4560 (toll free).
- Washington Province website www.ocdswashprov.org provides access to the following information:
 - Electronic version of the OCDS Constitutions, Rule of St. Albert and currently enforce National Statutes are found by following the LEGISLATION link.
 - Contact Information for Provincial Delegates (Fr. John Grennon, OCD: Mid-West and Florida Regions; Fr. Paul Fohlin, OCD: Northeast Region; Fr. Regis Jordan, OCD: Mid-Atlantic Region) and OCDS communities and Presidents listed by state.
 - Approved Washington Province Formation Outline, which is currently being implemented by all OCDS communities.
 - Washington Province OCDS FORMS, REMINDERS, and QUESTIONS
 - Link to OCDS 2009 Washington Province Congress
 - Other Provincial news and links to resources including books, spiritual publications and Carmel Clarion Subject Index.
 - News from Rome, including link to General Delegate's Blog (Fr. Deeney)
 - Carmel Clarion Communications website www.carmelclarion.com which provides itemized lists by topic and speaker of more than 75 Carmelite spiritual conferences on CD.