

HONORING



Fr. Kieran of the Cross, O.C.D.

Thomas Morgan Kavanaugh

1928–2019

Carmel Clarion

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Carmel Clarion

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|---|--|----|---|
| 2 | Memories of Fr. Kieran of the Cross, O.C.D.
Jude Peters, O.C.D. | 12 | Getting to Know You... Fr. Kieran
Br. John-Mary Winter, O.C.D. |
| 3 | From the Provincial Delegate
Fr. Salvatore Sciorba, O.C.D. | 18 | Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D.
Sr. Constance FitzGerald, O.C.D. |
| 4 | Honoring Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D.
Mary E. Rodriguez-Harrington, O.C.D.S. | 21 | Excerpt
Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D.† |
| 6 | Homily Delivered at Fr. Kieran's Funeral
Fr. Marc Foley, O.C.D. | 25 | St. Teresa of Avila: A Joyful Saint
Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D.† |
| 8 | Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh of the Cross. O.C.D.,
My Brother in Carmel: A Eulogy
Fr. Kevin Culligan, O.C.D. | | |

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Memories of Fr. Kieran of the Cross, O.C.D.

Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh was born in 1928. He was ordained to the priesthood two years before I was born. I don't remember meeting him until I was sent on a summer assignment to our monastery in Brookline, MA in 1985. I probably met him when I was a novice at Holy Hill but my first memory of him goes back to that summer. My memories at that time are brief. I recall that he was very quiet, rather unassuming and that he had a melodious singing voice. I never lived in the same community with Fr. Kieran but our paths crossed many times. He was a regular presenter at our summer student seminars and taught generations of friars in his 90 years. One summer Father gave classes on St. John of the Cross at our "Summer Camp" in Deep Creek Lake, MD. It was a cold dreary day in the mountains and we lighted a fire in the refectory fireplace as there was no central heat. I was preparing the evening meal in the kitchen while Fr. Kieran was reading the latest issue of the National Geographic next to the fire. All of a sudden, I heard this blood curdling scream from the refectory. I ran into the refectory to find Father on the floor screaming "snake, snake!" There was no snake to be found then I realized the magazine had a huge spread on snakes and he was terrified of them! I had no idea he was so terrified of snakes! I also remember attending a lecture he gave to the OCDS on "St. Teresa and the Spanish Inquisition." I found it fascinating. You almost felt as if you were present when St. Teresa confronted her Inquisitors and was ultimately exonerated.

Fr. Kieran was 76 years old when he traveled to Nairobi, Kenya and presented classes to our young Kenyan friars. My novitiate classmate, Fr. Dennis Geng, O.C.D., recalled: *"Fr. Kieran came here in*

2004 and gave both the summer seminar input and the community's annual retreat. The theme for the seminar was the Interior Castle of St. Teresa.

One afternoon we took Kieran to visit the largest slum in Africa called Kibera. With over a million people living in abysmal poverty Fr. Kieran was struck by the dire conditions of the people living there. Upon leaving Kibera he said, 'I'll never complain again.' I don't remember ever hearing Father complain after that experience.

My last memory of Fr. Kieran was driving him to a conference given by our Fr. Michael-Joseph Paris on Blessed Marie Eugene on the occasion of his recent beatification. It was held at the St. John Paul II Shrine in Washington, D.C. Fr. Kieran was very frail at this point and I believe he was in a wheel chair. He was very pleased to attend and really enjoyed the evening. I was surprised with the huge number of people who came to greet Father and shake his hand or get his blessing. I felt like I was with a real celebrity. I think he even gave out a few autographs that night!

Father Kieran of the Cross died on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord on February 2, 2019. We may echo the words of the Gospel Canticle "Lord, now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled: my own eyes have seen the salvation which you in the sight of every people: a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel." (Luke 2: 29-32)

Fr. Jude Peters, O.C.D.
Provincial

From the Provincial Delegate

When I was a young friar in first vows, Fr. Kieran was the prior of the community. His was a quiet yet strong presence. When I was elected prior of the Washington community several years ago, I became his prior. The first triennium was relatively uneventful. Father Kieran worked diligently on his translations and writings. He was the Spiritual Assistant for four Secular Carmelite communities. He was often called to the phone and the parlor where he gave spiritual direction to many. He was the Confessor for the Little Sisters of the Poor.

The situation changed during the second triennium as his health began to fail. He was still very faithful to our community life. One afternoon, though, when he didn't come to Evening Prayer, I went to his cell and found him in distress. I called 911 and stayed with him in the Emergency Room until he was admitted to the hospital. I remember that I tried to get him to turn off the television and rest, but he was insistent on watching a program about Our Lady. There were other hospitalizations after that and a period of rehabilitation.

Once back in the monastery it became evident that he needed nursing care. After consultation with health care professionals, I made arrangements for him to go to Sacred Heart Home in Hyattsville, Maryland, where Fr. Francis Miller, was already a resident. He was well cared for there and was content. He continued his piano lessons from a friend, a Secular Carmelite. Anyone who visited him would immediately notice that he continued to spend a great deal of time on the phone. He was

still working on a book. Whenever I visited he would say: "My prior is here, I have to hang up"!

While he was still able, friends and friars would take him to various events. He continued to be present to the Emmitsburg OCDS community as long as he could. He had many visitors. There were still many tiring doctor's appointments. He was always patient and in good spirits.

Father Kieran began to fail at the end of last year. We could see that his time with us was limited. I anointed him with the holy oils. Sadly, I contacted the funeral director and brought him the Carmelite Habit our brother Kieran would be buried in. Father Marc Foley and our students Br. Pier Giorgio and Br. John-Mary kept vigil and were with him throughout the night.

I had made a commitment to give a Day of Recollection. I was reluctant to leave him but it was too late to cancel. It was the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. I received the phone call telling me of his death minutes before I was to give the first conference. It was to be on "Experiencing God." I knew that Kieran was doing just that.

Fr. Salvatore Scieurba, O.C.D.



Honoring Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D.

The written and spoken sentiments about Fr. Kieran, upon learning that his day to be received into God's loving arms had arrived (February 2, 2019), were truly beautiful. The emails and notes I read and the voice messages I listened to, touched me deeply. Each one was so different and yet, so revealing of how Fr. Kieran had reached so many souls. I could not imagine how I could ever weave these lovely words into an article. I imagined a spiritual bouquet where they were all gathered, beautifully arranged, and fastened with a sash of more of these words so that they all were represented as they honored Fr. Kieran.

His legacy is truly extraordinary. We are blessed for all his dedication and consistent work to bring the translations of St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross, Study Guides, introductions to books, conferences, homilies, retreats, his own books on our saints and spirituality, and his research and writings that would secure the canonization of our remarkable St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross—Edith Stein. His accomplishments are so numerous and varied and speak of a friar with a very specific mission during a time when we most needed the advances in Carmelite Studies—a man *in season*.

It is greatly because of his work and efforts, that our Secular formation program has evolved into a more serious and complete study of our spiritual tradition. We have available tremendous resources, and the responsibility to study them—with God's help and our willingness to apply them as closely as possible to our own vocations in the Secular Order.

It is somewhat daunting and at the same time exciting to be a part of this Order as it is gaining so much more recognition because of the value of its contemplative prayer practice—sought by many looking for meaning in their lives.

We will always remember his lectures that were filled with his dry sense of humor. I often wondered how much of it was said to make sure we were really following him. He is one of the most disciplined individuals I have ever met, and with that also came a bit of stubbornness when something needed to be a certain way. Fr. Kieran, as I observed him for many years, was extremely astute and would not let anyone flatter or challenge him without his response requiring some thinking about one's true intentions. He knew who he was talking to, and could only hope the person would understand what his answer really meant—particularly when the person thought he was giving them a compliment. His way of helping with formation, I often thought to myself.

It was always fascinating to hear him answer questions in our lecture sessions. He would bring the historical setting, the spiritual elements, and the deep meaning of the text for us with an ease and precision that would truly elevate a simple question to a full and profound anecdote. Our sessions were absolutely rich!

With the passing of the years, he became more at ease and laid back. His seriousness had relaxed and he was more able to go with the flow and laugh

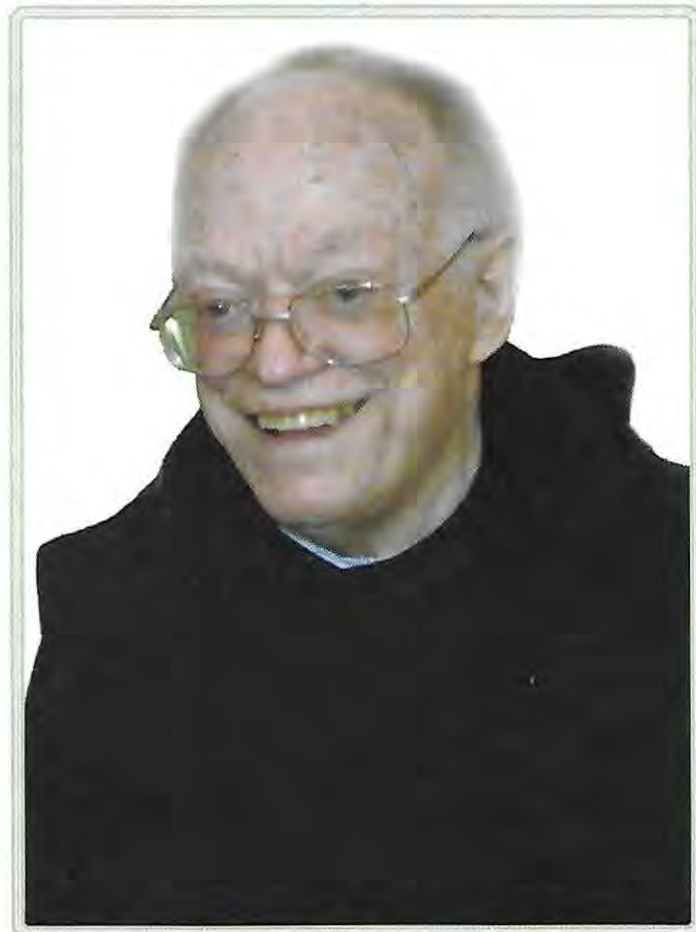
at the simplicity of matters. In many ways, he also allowed himself to be more *lightly* pampered by his devoted OCDS without thinking about *detachment* concerns or issues. This allowed us to see his fuller spirit and a lovely man who was always there for us, the Seculars.

All of these things about Fr. Kieran have been really important for us to observe and know because we have our challenges in our own formation in Carmel. His ways and example began to make more sense as to why the spirit and purpose of Carmel in this world needs to be followed in a specific way—as our documents teach us; our Rule, our Constitutions, and Statues—as well as many other letters from the Superior General, the General Delegate, the Provincial, Provincial Delegate, and like Fr. Aloysius Deeney's book, *Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites*. So many helping guide our communities!

We learned from his example and hopefully we will always continue to do so, as we remember him, so that we will be better ready to serve our Order and the Church.

The memories will be carried for many decades and we will always turn to the printed pages that he so carefully prepared for ICS and other publishing houses. As we read them, we will also listen to his voice and spirit. We are blessed to have been Fr. Kieran's students.

I was able to say good-bye to Fr. Kieran as he was beginning the agony of dying. The most important thing I could say to him, which I know he heard was, that, on behalf of all the OCDS, I thanked him for all he did for us. *He knew this*. Everyone loved him so much, always showed their gratitude, and were there to be of service as he needed it. But speaking



Fr. Kieran.[†] Photograph from September, 2014.

those words not only helped me give closure and accept more easily that it was a final moment with him, as I would not see him again, but gave me the privilege to take a small, loving message from all of you who cared deeply about him. From all of you who wrote or left voice messages—as you learned that he was no longer with us—to all of the Seculars in the United States and abroad.

So, dear friends, Fr. Kieran would want us to persevere in our prayer life and have that determination that he always demonstrated. He is a son of St. Teresa of Jesus and son of St. John of the Cross, and a brother to all of our saints.

In Carmel,
Mary Edith Rodriguez-Harrington, O.C.D.S.



Homily Delivered at Fr. Kieran's Funeral

There is a short story by Margaret Atwood entitled "Happy Endings" that consists of a series of scenarios on how to have a Happy Life.

In the first scenario, John and Mary fall in love. They get married, enjoy their jobs, buy a nice home, and start a family. All in all, they live comfortable fulfilling lives. Eventually they retire. Then, *John and Mary die.*

In the second scenario, John and Mary have no interpersonal problems. However, their house is swept away by a tidal wave. But they emerge grateful that they are alive. They live comfortable fulfilling lives. Eventually they retire. Then "*John and Mary die.*"

If these scenarios are too bourgeois, then let us make John a revolutionary and Mary a counterespionage agent. They both live exciting lives. Eventually they retire and settle down. Then, "*John and Mary die.*"

It has been said that Atwood's story is a comment on an incident that Ernest Hemingway relates in his memoirs of living in Paris, entitled *A Movable Feast*, in which Hemingway is talking to a woman who says that she likes stories with happy endings. Hemingway replies to her, "But Madame, all stories, if continued far enough, end in death." No matter what scenario you choose for Happiness, at the end,

John and Mary die, for all stories, if continued far enough, end in death. Everything ends at the grave.

The worldview that underlies both Atwood's story and Hemingway's comment is captured in Philip Roth's novel "Everyman," which is a commentary on the aging process. In this novel, we enter into the depressing world of the nameless atheistic protagonist, who believes that everything ends

at death. Roth's novel answers the question that is posed to us in the Exultet at the Easter Vigil. "What good would life have been to us, had Christ not come as our Redeemer?" The answer is *Nothing.*



Ironically, I found Roth's novel to be "spiritual reading" in the sense that it allowed me to mentally step into a Godless Universe, which filled me with gratitude for the gift of faith in the Resurrection and Eternal Life.

In the same vein, perhaps one of the greatest graces that was given to St. Thérèse was her doubts of faith, when in the last 18 months of her life, she questioned the existence of Eternal Life. Sometimes we can only appreciate the great gift of faith that has been given to us when it is temporarily darkened or called into question.

Paradoxically, when we question the reality of eternal life, we are provided with opportunities

where God's grace can help us to deepen our appreciation of our faith and invite us to ponder it anew. Have you ever wondered why in the Psalms that we pray in the Divine Office, we sometimes say things that we do not believe? For example, in Psalm 48 we pray. "Wise men and fools must both perish. Their graves are their homes forever" So, how can we pray these passages?

St. Athanasius gives us a clue in his *Letter to Marcellinus*, on the Interpretation of the Psalms.

He writes, "The Psalms are like a mirror in which we perceive the emotions of our souls and the thoughts of our minds." The troublesome passages in the Psalms are *not* expressions of our belief but rather acknowledgements of the dark musings and obdurate questionings that haunt our solitudes, when our thoughts confront us with the mystery of death. But these passages are also invitations to bring our somber thoughts to God in prayer.

Now, that I have sufficiently depressed all of you, fear not, *I will not abandon your souls to the netherworld*. It is essential to realize that the way out of the netherworld of a dead-end universe is the realization that faith in the Resurrection and Eternal life is not a private affair. It's a communal reality; it's the faith of the Church over the centuries.

And our faith is most deeply expressed in the lives of the saints, who being in union with God, have experienced in *this life*, something of the life of the world to come. This is why it is so important to read the writings of the saints. In this regard, I would like to read a passage from *The Spiritual Canticle* of St. John of the Cross, translated by Fr. Kieran.

"It is no wonder that God is strange to humans who have not seen him, since he is also strange to the

holy angels and to the blessed. For the angels and the blessed are incapable of seeing him fully, nor will they ever be capable of doing so...*They will forever be receiving new surprises and marveling the more*" (Stanzas 14-15, 8; italics added).

These words of St. John of the Cross provide us with an antidote to the constrictive suffocating experience of being trapped in a dead-end universe. They proclaim that Eternal Life is an ever-expanding reality in which we will plummet the Mystery of God for all eternity and "*will forever be receiving new surprises and marveling the more.*" This is the reality to which we commend our brother, Fr. Kieran today.

Fr. Marc Foley, O.C.D.

February 9, 2019

Carmelite Monastery of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
Washington, D.C.





Fr. Kieran of the Cross Kavanaugh, O.C.D., My Brother in Carmel: A Eulogy

I knew Fr. Kieran for over sixty years, as brothers in Carmel. I first met him in 1958 when I was twenty-two years old and a seminarian in philosophy at Holy Hill. Kieran had just returned home to the United States after his years preparing for priestly ordination as a theology student in Rome and one year at our Carmelite desert hermitage in Roquebrune in southern France. He looked so lean, silent, and ascetic in his brown habit and sandals that he frightened me. Already regarded by the other friars as the ideal Carmelite, I knew from our first meeting that I would never be able to imitate him.

Two years later I came to our Washington Monastery as a student in theology. For the next four years, Kieran became, successively, my student master, teacher, confessor, and spiritual director. From his place in heaven now I know he fully agrees when I say he was the most boring teacher I ever had in all my years of education. I learned many important lessons from his classes, but he was still boring. Every class he read to us with his head focused down in the textbook on the desk in front of him. Only later did I understand the reason for this. In those years between 1959 and 1963, Kieran spent every free moment of his day with Fr. Otilio Rodriguez translating the writings of St. John of the Cross from Spanish into English. He simply did not have time to prepare for us scintillating lectures on fundamental theology and Carmelite Spirituality.

Following my ordination to the priesthood and entry into graduate studies in psychology in 1963, I had the great honor of knowing Kieran as colleague for the next 45 years. We were both charter members of the Institute of Carmelite Studies which began in 1966 under the prophetic initiative of Frs. Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., and Fr. Peter Thomas Rohrbach, O.C.D., to promote scholarship and publications among the American Discalced Carmelites Friars. Later in 1982, Sr. Constance FitzGerald, O.C.D., of the Baltimore Carmel, fully supported by Fr. John Malley, O.Carm., Provincial of the Chicago Province of the Carmelite Friars of the Ancient Observance, invited both Kieran and me to join them in initiating the Carmelite Forum.

Envisioned as a collaborative effort among the entire Carmelite family, friars and nuns, Ancient and Teresian observances, religious and laity, the Forum's goal was to explore, foster, and disseminate Carmelite history and spirituality for American Catholics with the hope of promoting a more contemplative church in the United States. The Forum eventually sponsored annual seminars through the Center for Spirituality at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, that produced books and tapes on Carmelite topics. In countless meetings and planning sessions over forty years in both the ICS and the Forum, Kieran and I often struggled with each other in our mutual desire to discover the most effective ways of presenting our

cherished Carmelite tradition to an ever-challenging contemporary American culture. Eventually we both felt that God generously rewarded our effort as year after year we saw a steady stream of Carmelite literature, lecturers, seminars, and audio-recordings flow into the English-speaking world.

But what I cherish most when I recall these years with my brother Kieran was our growing friendship. We were mutually linked from the beginning as two Irish-Americans from the midwest, he a Kavanaugh born in Milwaukee, I a Culligan born in Chicago. That bond seemed providentially confirmed by our names in religious life, Kieran and Kevin. Surprisingly, in sixth-century Celtic monasticism Saints Kieran and Kevin were both contemporaries and colleagues. St. Kieran was abbot of Clonmacnois, the monastic city on the River Shannon, and St. Kevin was abbot of the monastery at Glendalough in the Wicklow hills south of Dublin. From time to time, the friends Kieran and Kevin met to discuss local church affairs and the growth of holiness and learning in their monasteries.

A story is told to this day in Ireland about Kieran during his final days on earth. Kevin came from Glendalough for a last visit with his friend. Unfortunately, Kieran died before Kevin arrived at Clonmacnois. Seeing Kieran laid out in death when he arrived at the monastery chapel, Kevin asked everyone to leave so that he could be alone with his deceased friend. After the monks departed, they gathered outside near the windows to see and hear what transpired inside. After a while, the monks later reported, they saw Kieran sit up in his casket. For an extended time, the two talked about their friendship and their monasteries. The conversation ended with Kieran placing his burial garment over Kevin's shoulders, and Kevin, in turn, putting his outer tunic upon Kieran's. This exchange between

the two abbots guaranteed that the monks of Glendalough and Clonmacnois would forever be united in prayer and brotherhood.

Kieran and I became more keenly aware of our mutual roots in historic Celtic monasticism in 1982. We were both in Ireland. I was on a year's sabbatical preparing a book on spiritual guidance; he was lecturing to the Carmelite Nuns in Ireland during the fourth centenary of St. Teresa of Avila's death. We were able to spend two weeks together traveling about Ireland and visiting both Clonmacnois and Glendalough to see the impressive remains of the monasteries of our respective namesakes—stone chapels, round towers, burial stones, and Celtic crosses. A highlight of this trip for both of us was our visit to Skellig Michael, a small, rugged Island rising abruptly out of the Atlantic Ocean off the west coast of County Kerry, which was a center of Celtic eremitical life from the sixth to the twelfth centuries. My favorite photograph from this visit shows Kieran seated beside an ancient stone beehive hermitage in deep contemplative prayer as if he were absorbing the spirit of Celtic monasticism to bring home to the USA. In fact, like Saints Kieran and Kevin centuries ago talking together about their contribution to the church in their time, we sometimes discussed together how we might make Carmelite spirituality more relevant to modern Americans.

Traveling through Ireland for 2 weeks in a little black car on the "wrong side" of the road is enough to try any human relationship, but this trip also provided us with alternating periods of long contemplative silence and animated conversations about all we were experiencing together, deepening our friendship as perhaps no other experience could. We became so close that people often saw us as one, at times confusing us, calling him Kevin, and me Kieran, or sending mail to his address marked

for Kevin Kavanaugh, and to me addressed to Kieran Culligan. Just the other day a lady called our Holy Hill monastery and offered the community her condolences on Fr. Kevin's passing.

From this close range, I gradually discovered the secret of Kieran's amazing life. I recall often longing for a deeper, more intimate friendship with him, but soon realized that he had set definite boundaries for us. I recognized how wholeheartedly he had embraced the Carmelite admonition to live for God alone—"Solo Dios," as both his mentors; Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross would say. In the center of his soul there was room for God alone; all other relationships in his life were arranged around his focus on God alive in the depth of his being. Without consciously intending it, our years thus developed in the ancient Celtic tradition of the Anam Cara—soul friend—a friendship rooted primarily in God with its greatest fruit being to help each other grow closer, not to one another, but to God.

Today we are privileged to be here at the Basilica of Mary, Help of Christians, to offer the burial Mass for Fr. Kieran's mortal remains. We see the circle of his life on earth now completed. He visited Holy Hill as a young student at Messmer High School in Milwaukee and felt God calling him to the Carmelite way of life. After entering the order in 1946, he was stationed here for three years as a seminarian, but once he left for Rome in 1950 he was never again assigned to Holy Hill. He lived the rest of his life in Carmelite communities in Europe and in the eastern United States. He also traveled widely throughout the Americas, Asia, and Africa, leading retreats and lecturing in Carmelite themes. We bring his body home to his native Wisconsin today to rest under the spires of Holy Hill among his fellow Carmelite friars from Germany and North America.

As we received his body yesterday into our shrine Chapel of Mary from the Washington, DC, area where he died on February 2nd, I thought of St. Kevin's last visit centuries ago to his deceased friend St. Kieran. I didn't expect our Kieran to rise from his casket as did his patron saint, but I did wonder, if he could now speak to our community of friars gathered to meet and pray for him, what he might say to us? I imagine him telling us three things as a kind of last will and testament. First, he would likely say: love your cell, for there you will find God. There you will discover the truth proclaimed by the hermits of old: your cell will teach you everything. Secondly, he would probably say: love your life together in community, at prayer, at table, in meetings, at recreation, in the quiet of the hallways. Here you find all the support of your brethren you asked for the day you were clothed in the Carmelite habit. Finally, I think he'd say: love your Order, the entire Carmelite family rooted in the Rule of Albert, the Calced and the Discalced, the men and women, the friars, nuns and laity, with all its glorious history crowned by the writings of three doctors of the church—St. Teresa, St. John, St. Thérèse—and all its more embarrassing moments. Here you will feel the pride of being called by God to live in one of the most glorious traditions of holy Mother church. These loves—his love for God alone, his love for the cell, our life together, and the Carmelite family—explain Kieran's life, his evident personal holiness, his astounding productivity as a writer and translator, and his selfless spiritual and sacramental ministry to thousands of God's children, both here and abroad. These examples flowing from the loves deep in his soul are his gift to us, a legacy we should frequently call to our minds and hearts to inspire us to follow in his footsteps.

As I think of Kieran now before the throne of God in his moment of particular judgment, St. John of

the Cross' words come to my mind: "A la tarde te examinaran en el Amor," which Kieran translated in his 1991 revised edition as "When evening comes, you will be examined in love." I recall Kieran saying to me when explaining his corrections in the revised translation of this passage, "Pay close attention, Kevin, to John's words here. He only says, 'a la tarde'—'when evening comes'! He doesn't say 'each evening' or 'at the evening of life' as I translated in the first edition, 'At the evening of life you will be examined in love' (1964). He only says, 'a la tarde'—'when evening comes.' So, you are free to interpret these phrases any way you want. You will be examined in love 'in the evening of each day' or 'at the evening of your life,' or both.

In Kieran's case, I imagine he prepared himself for the examination in the evening of his life by reviewing at the end of each day how loving a person he had

been in the previous twenty-four hours. I suspect this was the way he daily prepared himself for now being finally examined in love by the God whom he loved on earth with all his heart, soul, and strength (Dt. 6.5; A III, 16,1), a final examination I feel certain he has passed with high honors.

And we can be certain this is how it will be for each of us. If we examine ourselves each evening before we go to bed on how loving to others we have been throughout the day, we prepare perfectly for our examination when we meet God in the evening of our lives.

Fr. Kevin Culligan, O.C.D.

February 14, 2019

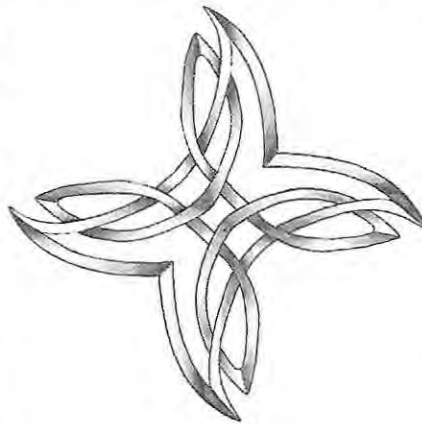
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Getting to Know You... Fr. Kieran

I first met Fr. Kieran at a province retreat in 2016 when I was a postulant. I had heard a lot about this friar who had devoted his life to studying and translating the writings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. I expected a man with an imposing presence and a somber tone, but I was so pleased to be met with Fr. Kieran's humility and joy. It was a great gift, as I was just beginning my time in Carmel, to be able to sit and soak in the wisdom and experience of this incredible friar. From that first encounter, I began praying for Fr. Kieran's health, hoping that in a couple of years I would have the blessing to live with him and learn from him on a daily basis.

Unfortunately, Fr. Kieran's health declined, and shortly before I was to move to D.C. for studies, he had to move into an assisted living facility. Thankfully he would receive exceptional care there, and being just a short drive from the monastery, I would still have the opportunity to spend time with him each week. It began with short visits asking him questions about St. Teresa and St. John or listening to stories of Father's experiences in the order. Fairly quickly however, our relationship grew into something much more profound. Fr. Kieran became my mentor, confessor, and dear friend.



Unexpectedly, I became somewhat of Fr. Kieran's "unofficial secretary." I would help him to prepare and print his homilies for his visits to the secular order each month. I would help him to find and organize his manuscripts for the books he continued to work on up until the week before his passing. And most rewarding, I would help him to read and respond to his email, which continued to pour into his inbox despite that he had not answered any of them for a few years.

Each week Father would receive emails from old directees and friends who wanted to thank him for the impact he had made on their lives. It was such a blessing to get to "look in" on this intimate correspondence as people shared their love and gratitude with Fr. Kieran. Previously I had thought

of him as more of an academic and writer, but I came to see that more than anything else, he was a spiritual father. These people were not thanking him for his books, articles, and lectures, but for the time he spent with them in spiritual direction, for the challenging and encouraging words he shared with them in the confessional, and for the priestly ministry through which he poured out his life in service of the Church in allegiance to Jesus Christ. This was the great legacy of Fr. Kieran, a legacy which remained very much hidden.

Fr. Kieran's health deteriorated fairly quickly. One week he was working long hours on his book on the Infant of Prague, practicing Für Elise for his piano lessons, and visiting with his countless devotees, and the next week he lay dying in his bed. Those last few days he suffered heroically, keeping his eyes fixed firmly on an image of Our Lady on the wall at the foot of his bed. When the pain was particularly bad, we would pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet which was the only thing that seemed to bring him some comfort. Although he was no longer communicative, he continued to move the rosary beads through his fingers as we prayed. Those were difficult times, but I wouldn't trade them for anything in the world.

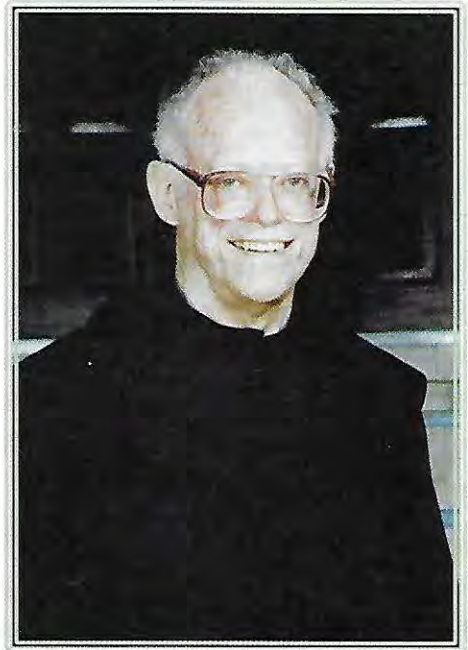
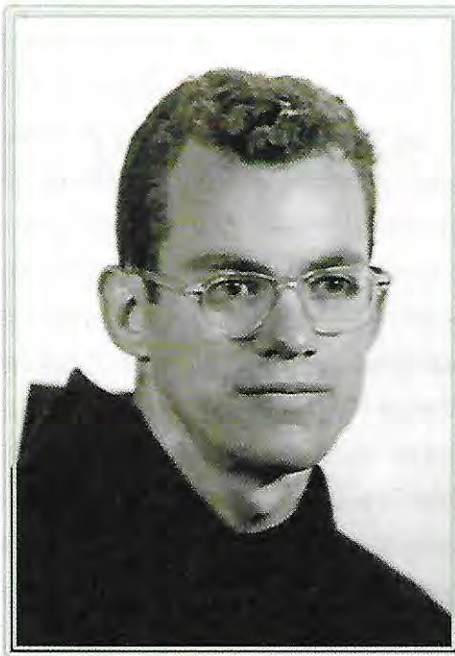
Finally, on February 2, a Saturday in which we remember Our Lady, and the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, Fr. Kieran's suffering came to an end. We gathered around his bed and sang the Salve Regina and Flos Carmeli, and within a few minutes, Fr. Kieran breathed his last. Our Lady had

come for him, to clothe him in her mantle and to present him to the Father in the Heavenly Temple. I'll always remember the joy Fr. Kieran had in the simple things in life; some good food or a beautiful song would put a childlike gleam in his eye and a grin on his face. I'll always remember Fr. Kieran's devotion and piety; besides his love for St. Teresa and St. John, he had a particular love for the Infant Jesus. I'll always remember Fr. Kieran's work ethic; he would spend several hours each day in the nursing home working to finish two more books. The last book he finished, a commentary on The Living Flame, he claimed to be the best book he has written. And most of all, I'll always remember Fr. Kieran's paternity and love for me and for all of those who came into his life.

I truly believe that Fr. Kieran, in his passing, has handed on his own mission in Carmel to those of us in formation now. Through his intercession, may we bring honor to Our Lady by living in allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Br. John-Mary Winter, O.C.D.





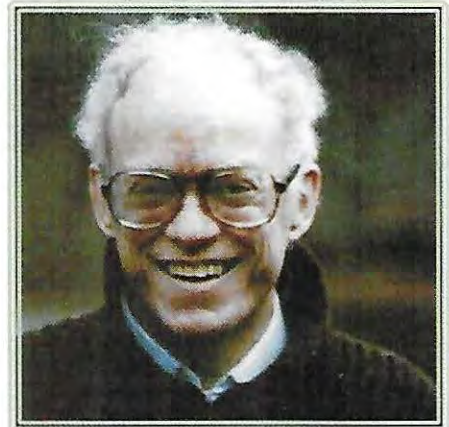
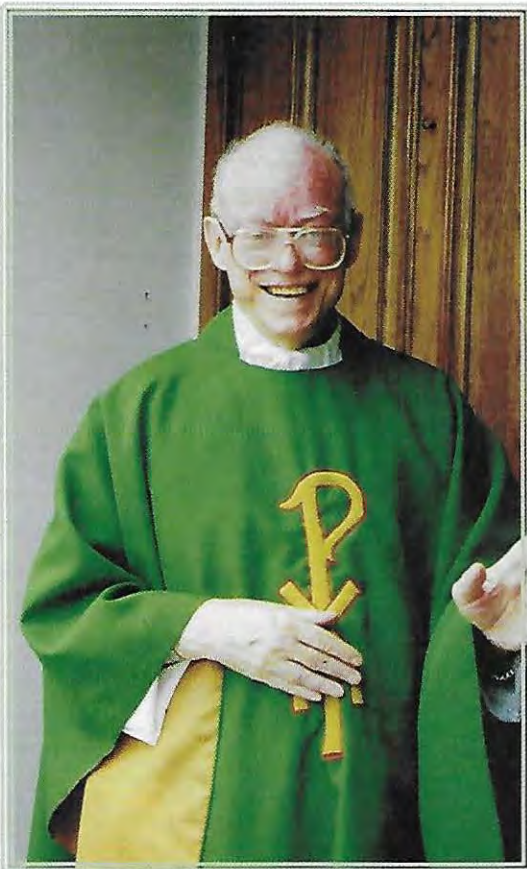
Carmelite Study Week and Community Retreat, Nairobi, Kenya 2001



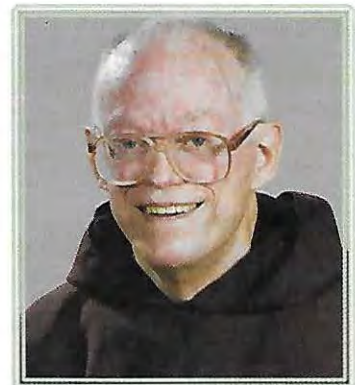
Fr. Bernard Ybernas, OCD, Fr. Kieran[†], and Sr. Pat Scanlon, OCD



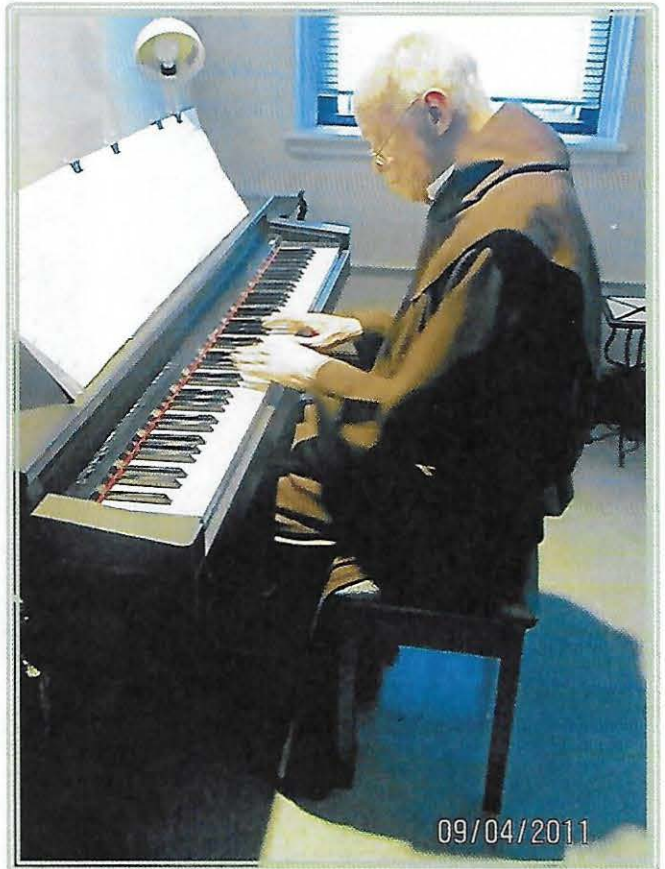
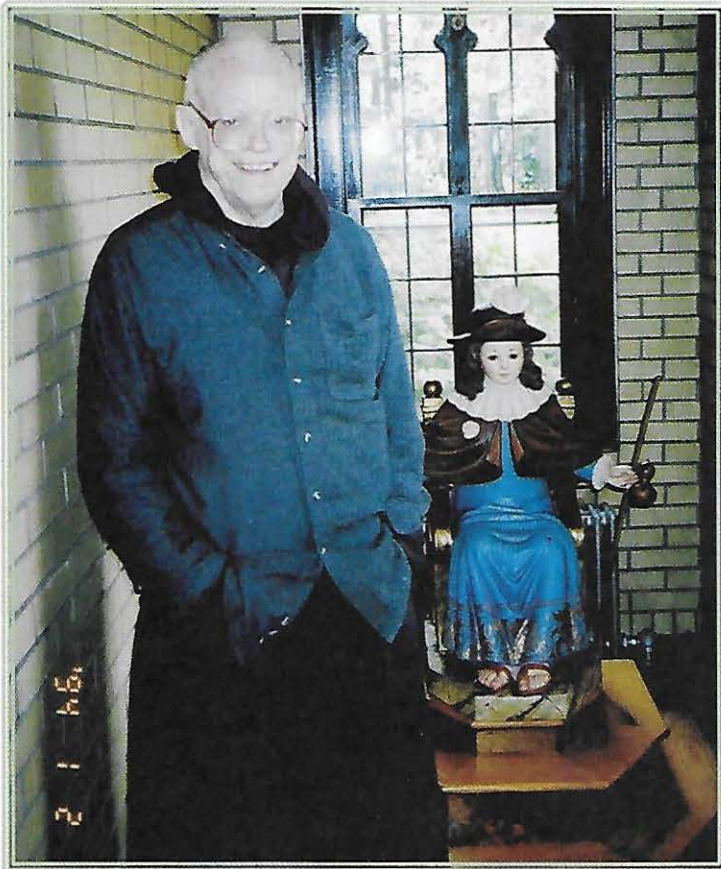
John Welch, O.Carm., Kevin Culligan, OCD, Sr. Constance FitzGerald, OCD, Sr. Margaret Dorgan, OCD, Sr. Vilma Seelaus, OCD[†], Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD[†], and Keith Egan, T.O.Carm.



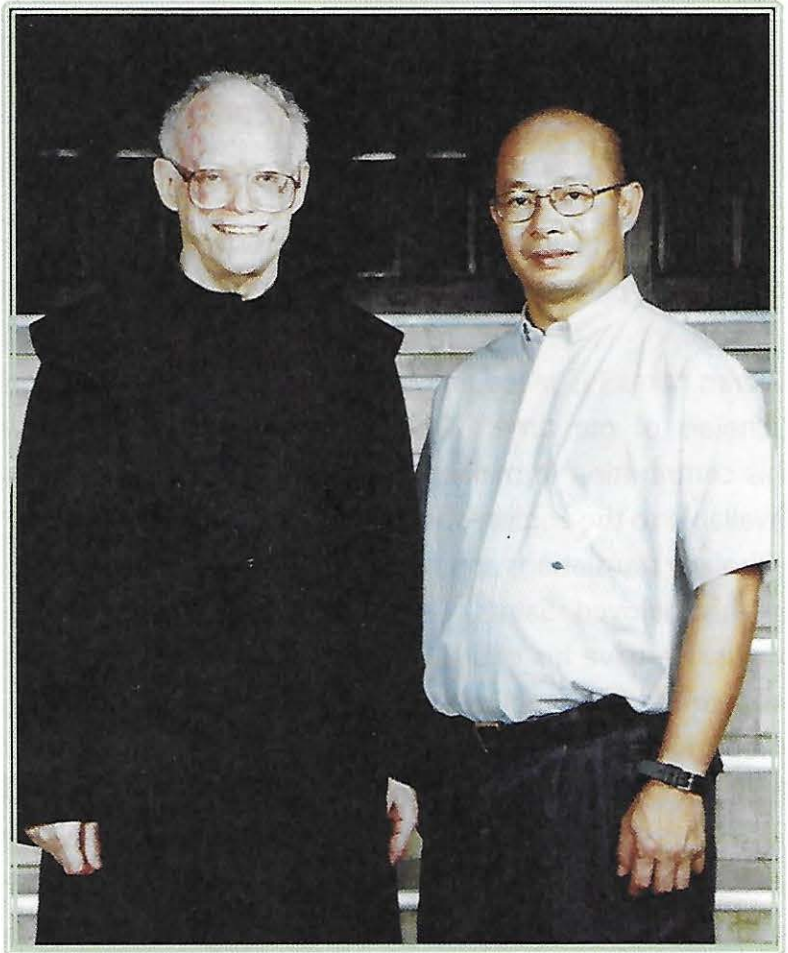
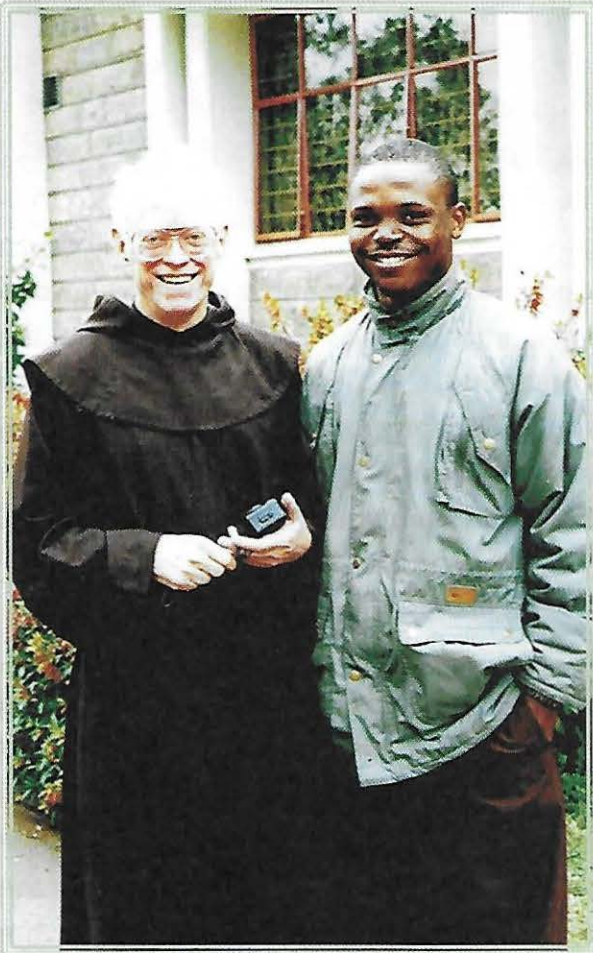
Fr. Kieran[†] receiving his lifetime award, June 2015, at the Carmelite Symposium in Mundeleine, IL.



Fr. Marc Foley, OCD, Fr. James Wu, OCD, Fr. Kieran, OCD[†], and Fr. John Sullivan, OCD. Hinton, West Virginia.



I-r: Fr. Kieran's friend. OCD Frs.: Emmanuel Sullivan[†], Regis Jordan, Kevin Culligan, Steven Payne, Kieran Kavanaugh[†], Salvatore Sciarba, George Mangiaracina, Daniel Chowning, John Sullivan, and Marc Foley.



Fr. Kieran† with students

Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D.

Our first community memory of Kieran: a very shy young friar just returned from studies in Rome, ordination, and a year in the Carmelite desert in France. He gave us a conference and never looked up once! Our last memory: Kieran in a wheel chair at Sacred Heart Home – frail, joyful, beaming and enthusiastic as he welcomed five of us from Baltimore Carmel shortly before his death. In between, a lifetime during which Kieran was a brother, a colleague, and finally a friend.

I loved the freedom in his laughter, the Irish sparkle in his shy sense of humor and the childlike awe with which he looked on life. He was always ready to share in our liturgies, our celebratory events, our annual picnic and our various Carmelite gatherings. He had an extensive ministry to both the Carmelite nuns and the Secular Order of Carmel. He cut across boundaries and was able to move comfortably in all the diverse parts of the Carmelite family.

Kieran takes his place among the great Carmelite scholars of our time. One cannot overestimate his contribution in making the Carmelite tradition available to the English-speaking world through his scholarly translations and numerous interpretations of his beloved Saints, Teresa and John of the Cross. He gave his entire life to this “work” in the silence of his Carmelite cell, “surrendering,” to our great mystical texts and being transformed by his profound participation in them. But his impact went far beyond his translations. So many people benefited from his lectures, workshops, articles and spiritual direction. For over thirty years he

participated in the work of the Carmelite Forum and the seminars it offered at St. Mary’s College in South Bend, Indiana. Initially reluctant to be pulled away from his translating, he grew to delight in the collaboration and companionship of his Carmelite colleagues from both branches of the Order, male and female.

It was a privilege to collaborate with Kieran as a member of the Forum. He brought so much knowledge of the history and meaning of the texts and the tradition to our discussions and to our efforts to offer meaningful contemporary interpretations of our Saints to those within and beyond the Order. Although he was adamant, even stubborn, in defending Teresa and John from anything he perceived as a diminishment of them, he always welcomed new insights into their writings with a positive, eager attitude, albeit an evaluating one. I still remember how a new world of hermeneutics opened before him when the Forum met with Hans-George Gadamer and with what attentive respect and awe he listened when I shared my work using the hermeneutical theory of Paul Ricoeur to interpret John of the Cross and Therese of Lisieux.

What a legacy of single-minded dedication, genuine goodness and love he has left us. Kieran was a holy man, a contemplative; he possessed what Carmelites call “purity of heart” and was undoubtedly given “even in this mortal life to taste somewhat in the heart and to experience in the mind the power of the divine presence and the



Members of the Carmelite Forum: Kevin Culligan, OCD, Steven Payne, OCD, Constance FitzGerald, OCD, Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD[†], Keith Egan, T.O.Carm., Ernest Larkin, O.Carm.[†], Vilma Seelaus, OCD[†], and John Welch, O.Carm.

sweetness of heavenly glory." (Institution of the First Monks) Now the "somewhat" is no more, the limitation is gone; fullness has come and we rejoice for you and with you, Kieran, our dear friend and brother.

Constance FitzGerald, O.C.D.
Baltimore Carmel

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Words fail me as I ponder what a blessing it was to have as a friend and colleague Father Kieran whose splendid scholarship and deep holiness will long be remembered and cherished. Kieran wore his achievements ever so lightly and shared his wisdom with unique generosity. He was a skilled translator of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross as well as an insightful interpreter of their wisdom. With joy in his heart, Kieran had to realize, approaching death, that he had lived a life of faithful "allegiance to Jesus Christ," the goal of every Carmelite.

— Keith J. Egan, T.O.Carm.



I consider myself greatly blessed to have lived in community with Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD, for much of my life in Carmel. Most of us knew him as a self-effacing, quiet, friendly, dedicated, genuinely holy and remarkably self-disciplined confrère. He was always present for times of prayer, and he approached his important study, writing, and translation work with a truly Teresian "determined determination." Less well-known in the tremendous scope of his apostolic service. Since returning to Washington, I have been tasked with going through the materials left in his office (mostly books, letters, and papers). I am amazed to see how much he accomplished, how many places he traveled, and how many lives he touched, within and outside the Carmelite family, through his talks and teaching, through his publications, through his sacramental ministry, through his advice. Thank you Kieran, for being a true brother and father to us all!

— Steven Payne, O.C.D.



In 1981, following the centenary celebration of St. Teresa's death, a group of Carmelites from both Orders met to share their interest in Carmelite studies. Along with Kieran, the group included Tom Kilduff, Vilma Seelaus, Connie FitzGerald, Ernie Larkin, Kevin Culligan, Keith Egan, and myself. There was some thought that it would be difficult to get Kieran to add another meeting to his life. He was dedicated to the solitary work of his writing, Kieran not only attended, but I remember it was he who said we should not just sit around talking about the tradition; we should do something together to make it better known.

Teresa of Avila, in the Interior Castle, lists a number of qualities which indicate an authentic spiritual life, among them humility and generosity. Kieran was a private and quiet person who would be the last to trumpet his work. He was soft spoken, had a ready smile, and a good sense of humor. It may be my imagination, but I always thought I could detect an Irish lilt to his voice when he was lecturing. His generous offering of himself and his gifts for translations, writings, meetings, conferences, retreats, and spiritual direction testified to his generous nature. To experience Kieran was to experience something of the tradition he studied, taught, and lived.

— John Welch, O.Carm.



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Excerpt

A MOVEMENT FROM THE CLOISTER TO THE WORLD

Where must one wait for God? This is another essential question raised and the answer given is: not before the altar but in the city, in the city with both the needy and the enemy. This answer represents a movement from the cloister to the world, from church (from place of protection and security) to the world of technology, power, money, sex, culture, the Jew, the Negro, beauty, ugliness, poverty, and indifference. It is the sense of the loss of God, then, that prompts the death of God Protestant to go to his neighbor, to the city, and to the world. And here he waits for God.

He feels certain that this phrase "waiting for God" preserves him from sheer atheism. Yet another aspect likewise saves him from this abyss; it is that his worldly work is Christian. His way to his neighbor is not only mapped out by the secular, social, psychological, and literary disciplines, it is mapped out by Jesus Christ and His way to His neighbor.

Jesus may be discovered in the world, in the neighbor, in this struggle for justice, in that struggle for beauty, clarity, order. Or, on the other hand, there may be no concern to unmask Jesus in the world, but to become Jesus in and to the world. In this way the Christian becomes the fool for Christ, the one who stands before power structures and laughs.

It would be naive and unrealistic for one to deny the possibility of a sense of the absence of God in today's world and thus what for many is designated as "the death of God." There are those, Bonhoeffer says, who can make it today without God and without despair and guilt. And their success is just as real as the fulfillment of those who live happily and have a

God. With this in mind the death of God theologians are in search of a language that does not depend on need or problem. If God is not needed, if it is to the world and not God that we turn with our needs and problems, then, perhaps, they reason, we may come to see that He is to be enjoyed and delighted in. Part of the meaning of waiting for God is found in an attempt to understand what delighting in Him might mean.

The death of God Protestant turns from the problems of faith to the reality of love. He somewhat inverts the usual relation between faith and love (again bringing to mind mysticism in which God is known through love), theology and ethics, God and neighbor. He does not proceed from God and faith to neighbor and love, loving in such and such a way because he is loved in such and such a way.

He moves to his neighbor, to the city, and to the world out of sense of the loss of God and there waits for Him.

THE ANSWER OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

Admittedly there is room for and in fact there are various interpretations and theories in the death of God theology, and many difficulties and problems arise. But prescinding from all the debatable and unacceptable points, it is interesting to compare, on account of the similarity of language and experience, the answers the death of God theology gives to the modern Christian, aware of God's absence, with the advice. John of the Cross gives to the contemplative who is suffering the purgation of God's absence.

The first line of the *Spiritual Canticle* bursts forth with a lament over the absence of God: "Where have you hidden, Beloved?" It is in response to

this cry of impatient love that John of the Cross gives doctrine for all, whether they suffer the contemplative experience of the loss of God or not. Anyone familiar with the *Spiritual Cantic* will probably by now have concluded to himself, that the mystical doctor's answer is in exact opposition to the modern death of God answer, that God is not to be found in the world but in the cloister, that is, by withdrawing from the world (as from an obstacle) and remaining indifferent to it and non-involved. He may repeat to himself the Saint's very words: "Do not go in pursuit of Him outside yourself. You will only become distracted and wearied thereby, and you shall not find him, nor enjoy Him more securely, nor sooner, nor more intimately than by seeking Him within you."¹

A more careful reading, of the *Spiritual Cantic*, however, reveals that seeking God within oneself rather than outside oneself will not necessarily result in finding Him. God is like a treasure hidden in a field, St. John points out; if a man is to find Him he must enter the hidden place. This he does by leaving all things "through affection and will," or by detachment, and following along the way of faith and love. "Faith and love . . . will lead you along a path unknown to you, to the place where God is hidden . . . the soul will merit through love the discovery of the content of faith, that is, the Bridegroom Whom she desires to possess."² What is more, a soul reaches Christ, the hiding place of the Father, by becoming like Him: ". . . like Moses she hides herself in the cleft of the rock (in real imitation of the perfect life of the Son of God, her

Bridegroom) . . ."³ And thus "remaining hidden with Him you will delight with Him in hiding . . . in a way transcending all language and knowledge."⁴

In St. John of the Cross' reply to the soul suffering the loss of God, it is not necessarily in the world nor necessarily in the cloister that one finds Him; one reaches Him by becoming Christ through a life of faith and love, whether in the world or in the cloister, according to the gift that is given to each: ". . . devout souls run along . . . from place to place and in many ways . . . Each runs along, according to the way and kind of spirit and state God gives, with many differences of spiritual practices and works. They run along the way of . . . evangelical perfection, by which they encounter the Beloved, after their spirit has been stripped of all things."⁵

WORLDLY OCCUPATION AND THE WAY OF FAITH AND LOVE

It is nevertheless true and it would be foolish to ignore that John of the Cross lived and wrote within the context of a monastic spirituality and in an age which had not yet witnessed the remarkable advancements in technology and science characteristic of our times. The impression a person often receives on first reading his works is that only by withdrawal from the world and its interests will one reach the perfect union with God. Yet a more careful study of the principles he establishes concerning the way to divine union shows that this way is not confined to any particular spirituality or age. The way of faith and love is an authentic way for all spiritualities and ages.

1 St. John of the Cross, *Spiritual Cantic*, 2, 8. p. 419. [All references to John of the Cross in this article are taken from *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D. New York 1964]

2 *Spiritual Cantic*, 1, 11. p. 420.

3 *Spiritual Cantic*, 1, 10. p. 420.

4 *Spiritual Cantic*, 1, 9. p. 319.

5 *Spiritual Cantic*, 24, 4. p. 507.

Today there is the growing fear that insistence upon the poverty of spirit, or detachment, produced through a life of faith and love, and without which there is no genuine delight in the presence of God, is opposed to human values and could lead to an indifference toward or even contempt for the development of man and the building up of the world. The death of God theology turns its gaze to the advancement of the city of man and the solving of its problems. It owes some of its inspiration to Bonhoeffer who from his prison cell in Nazi Germany wrote: ". . . God cannot be used as a stopgap. We must not wait until we are at the end of our tether: he must be found at the center of life; in life, and not only in death; in health and vigour, and not only in suffering; in activity, and not only in sin . . . Christ is the center of life and in no sense did he come to answer our unsolved problems . . . The Christian unlike the devotees of the salvation myths does not need a last refuge in the eternal from earthly tasks and difficulties. But like Christ Himself ("My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?") he must drink the earthly cup to the lees, and only in his doing that is the crucified and risen Lord with him, and he crucified and risen with Christ."

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin wrestled with this same kind of problem. He noted that the Christian who feels himself secure in a certain avenue of escape to the next world, frequently sees no ultimate value to the progress that man makes in the present one. The unbeliever is quick to sense this ambivalence. In Teilhard's eyes the planning and shaping of the modern world are of supreme importance, and he reproaches the Christian, sometimes bitterly, for his apparent lack of interest in grappling with the machinery of society and in identifying himself with the city of man. Teilhard's great question then was: How can the man who believes in heaven and the

Cross continue to believe seriously in the value of worldly occupation and carry out his duty as man to the fullest extent and as whole-heartedly and freely as if he were on the direct road to God?

The Second Vatican Council, too, gives attention to these perplexities particularly in its major and lengthy *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. In this constitution the Church puts herself at the service of the family of man, seeking to cooperate in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our time and pointing out the meaning of human endeavor and the validity of its goals. The emphasis is on service to the modern world and mankind.

In the mind of John of the Cross, God may be found in the world as well as in the cloister, as long as He is sought in faith and love. What must be determined is how faith and love may lead one to God in the secular city, through worldly endeavors. Faith and love are powers that accompany the gift of grace and enable a man to live and move and have his being in a reality that is supernatural and spiritual. Faith places before man the profound reality of revelation, by giving him knowledge of God and of how one ought to act in order to live in union with Him. In its purity, faith frees man from the limits of an anthropomorphic or cosmic notion of God. Pure faith does not picture the Trinity as "the God out-there," or the fulfiller of needs" and "solver of problems."

The man who walks in the darkness of faith must "accept it for his guide and light, and rest on nothing of what he understands, tastes, feels, or imagines . . . Faith lies beyond all this understanding, taste, feeling, and imagining . . . God's being cannot be grasped by the intellect, appetite, imagination, or

any other sense, nor can it be known in this life. The most that can be felt and tasted of God in this life is infinitely distant from God and the pure possession of Him."⁶ "Never stop with loving and delighting in your understanding and experience of God, but love and delight in what is neither understandable nor perceptible of Him. Such is the way. . . of seeking Him in faith."⁷

Furthermore, the man of faith, aware that God in His divine transcendental causality works into the course of nature in the most discreet way, using secondary causes whenever possible, does not expect to exceed the limits of this economy by receiving knowledge or help for the solution of his problems through extraordinary means, such as, for example, a vision or a revelation. He has the means necessary in order to know how to adjust to external reality as well as to integrate his functioning harmoniously with spiritual realities and values. These means are his reason, consultation with other men, the teaching of the Gospel, and the guidance of the Church and her ministers.⁸

In offering man the values of a higher order, the supernatural order, faith presents to the Christian a new norm of joy. While it is true that the good works he performs through his worldly duties and in his struggles to build up the city of man merit rejoicing, he ought to rejoice in these works chiefly because of the service and glory that can be rendered to God through them, that is: they are a further external manifestation of God's grandeur and power in his creatures.⁹ This norm for joy is at the same time and radically the norm of Christian love. To love God with

all one's strength means precisely that all a person's energies must be directed to His service and glory. Commenting on the highest commandment of love, St. John of the Cross explained: "The strength of the soul comprises the faculties, passions, and appetites. All this strength is ruled by the will. When the will directs these faculties, passions, and appetites toward God, turning them away from all that is not God, the soul preserves its strength for God, and comes to love Him with all its might."¹⁰

Excerpt is taken from the article,
Death of God and John of the Cross
by Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D.†

Spiritual Life Magazine
Winter, 1966.

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6 *Ascent II*, 4. pp. 112–115.

7 *Spiritual Canticle*, 1, 12. p. 420.

8 *Ascent II*, 21–22. pp. 172–187.

9 *Ascent III*, 27. pp. 260–262.

10 *Ascent III*, 16, 2. p. 237.

St. Teresa of Avila: A Joyful Saint

We will speak of the human joy that Teresa experienced—The joy in her community life, and finally of the joy she had in her spiritual life. Joy is one of Teresa's outstanding psychological characteristics. Her joy was a capacity for enjoyment, and for spreading it in her surroundings. She recalls its presence in her childhood and adolescence. "The Lord gave me the grace to be pleasing wherever I went, and I was so much loved." In full youth, there came upon her a spontaneous, joyful style.

At the age of 23, she was struck down by an illness that lasted three years. She speaks in her *Life* in this way: "I (did not) find rest, either by day or by night." This was a depression that she suffered along with her illness, which the illness caused. But soon, she regained her habitual joy and regained her physical health. Regarding her physical paralysis she writes: "I suffered all those years in great gladness. I spoke of God in such a way that I was edifying to everyone." It seemed it would have been impossible to suffer so much with so great contentment.

Teresa's Joy in Her Religious Community Life

"It sometimes happened to me, (and even now, but not so much) that I had very bitter trials of soul together with severe bodily torments and pains and sicknesses that I wasn't able to help myself. At other times, I had more serious bodily illnesses, yet, since I didn't have the sufferings of soul, I suffered there with great gladness." She lived her religious life with great joy. "He gave me

such great happiness at being in the religious state of life that it never left me up to this day—and God changed the dryness my soul experienced into the greatest tenderness." "All the things of religious life delighted me!"

When she was founding St. Joseph's, and they were talking about it and planning it, she thought, "How would I be able to endure so much penance, and leave a monastery that was large and pleasant, and where I had always been very happy. How could I leave so many friends?" So, she didn't leave the Incarnation because she was discontented there. She was always joyful.

In her new Carmels, she decided to introduce a new spirit into the Order. And so, she introduced recreation—one of the innovations she introduced—a style of community life she established. This is a proof that this human aspect formed an important part of her ideal for Carmel and is evident in her decision to inculcate in St. John of the Cross the idea of recreation that she established among the sisters—and taught him to inaugurate it among the friars. She codified it especially in her constitutions: "When they are through with the noon meal, the mother prioress may dispense from the silence and they may all converse together whatever topic pleases them most, as long as it is not one which is inappropriate for a religious. And, they shall all have their distaffs with them there. Games should in no way be permitted, for the Lord will give to one the grace to entertain the others."



(Fr. Kieran looked up, paused. Audience laughed, Fr. Kieran laughed). "In this way, the time will be well spent. They should strive not to be offensive, one to another, in that their words and jests must be discreet. When this hour of being together is over, they may, in summer, sleep for an hour. If some do not wish to sleep, they must observe silence." That's from her Constitutions.

Thus, the day of the Carmelite Community will be marked off by times of community joy and conversation and communication. One period at noon and then she introduced another one, after Compline! (in the evening, the same as times assigned for mental prayer). So, an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. So, she introduced (recreation) for an hour at noon and an hour in the evening. Recreation in the evening, following evening prayer was up until then a stricter silence. But, this shows she wasn't really reforming the Carmel or reforming the Rule, she was introducing her own style of living the Carmelite Way.

The newness and boldness of this initiative by Teresa is that to introduce it into Carmel, she had to go against a proscription of the Carmelite Rule that not only prescribed silence throughout the whole day, but a greater silence after Compline until Prime of the following day. For the community recreation, she and the nuns composed poems, carols, and songs. She enjoyed the Feasts and wrote poems to celebrate them.

Her manner of travel, as a founder, was typical. Despite the incredible troubles with the wagons on their travels, the cold, the heat, the snow (Once

it didn't stop snowing the whole day!), sometimes getting lost, other times getting sick and having a fever, "For Glory to God, I usually have poor health!" she says. Teresa has on her face and in her eyes, a contagious smile that she conserved fresh into her last years. Rivera, her Jesuit first biographer, says that, "Her eyes were smiling and ready to laugh, especially at herself and her miseries." "I'm really laughing at myself" she writes, "over these comparisons, for they do not satisfy me. But, I do not know any others. You may think what you want, I have said what is true." "I was laughing at myself and feeling pity at the sight of what poor people esteem."

In her letters she is constant in the numerous situations of social life which stir up joy in her and make her laugh. She writes to her brother, Lorenzo: "I am laughing to myself to think how you send sweet presents and money. And I send you hair shirts!" Or to Mother Maria de San Jose, she writes: "I'm laughing to myself how burdened I am with correspondence, yet spend time writing about trivia!"

Teresa's capable of laughing as well at the devil, when she lost her fear of him: "I was left truly exhausted from such a conflict and I laughed to myself at the devil for I saw clearly it was he! I saw beside me black, abominable little creature, snarling like one in despair that where he had tried to gain he had lost. When I saw him, I laughed to myself and was not afraid." In reading the little flowers of saints, about popular legends, she appears often to enjoy the laughing side of persons, reacting to them with a certain irony, not with sarcasm.

We are not dealing with an idyllic passage and in so much less than with a superficial facet of Teresa who in her youth suffered a physical blow of profound sadness in Becedas and at the infirmary

at the Incarnation. Later she experienced the same pain on a spiritual plain before her powerlessness in the apprenticeship of prayer which filled her with sadness in the deepest layers of her psyche: "And, so unbearable the sadness I felt on entering the Oratory that I had to muster up all my courage to go to pray."

One of the symptoms of change in the community life in the transition from the middle ages to the modern times is the ingredient of a healthy joy with which Teresa organized the religious life. "As the style of both our life together as sisters and the recreations we have together." And which she proposes directly to John of the Cross when he was on his way to Duruelo. The healthy joy that Teresa introduced into the structures of community, in the life-schedule.

And it was itself, in the daily community life, she infringes in a certain way on the prescriptions of the Rule. For, she breaks the Rule, in certain parts. She doesn't live according to the Rule. In a certain way, in a pedagogical tone, she inculcates in her readers of *The Way of Perfection*: "Strive to take time for recreation with the sisters, and, when there is need, and where there is time set aside by custom, even though this may not be to your pleasure, everything done with a pure intention is perfect love." So, even if you don't feel like going, go! That's what she says. Anyway "Sometimes it is a particular joy for me to see these sisters gather together and feeling such great joy at being in the monastery." At times, during recreation, she improvises in a festive manner the joy of the group, as when she received coconuts from America, the New World.

The fact itself of being a nun is a fount of joy (for Teresa). "As soon as I took the habit, within an hour, He gave me such great happiness at being

a religious, in the religious state, that it never left me up to this day!" And she writes, after she had been in religious life for thirty years: "Oh sisters, understand for the love of God, the great favor He has granted those He has brought here!"

She's convinced that religious life, without joy, is a contradiction. (Fr. pauses, looks up to audience and said with a smile on his face, "Remember that!" Pause. Laughter from the audience). He repeats: "Religious life, without joy, is a contradiction."

She expresses this graphically in a passage from the *The Way of Perfection*: "The discontented nun is like someone who feels great loathing for food however good the food may be. It 'nauseates her. And the food that healthy people find great pleasure in eating is repugnant to such persons." In the same passage, she diagnoses what the true joy of religious life consists in: "This house is a heaven if one can be had on this earth."

Here, in her first Carmel, "We have a happy life if one is pleased only with pleasing God and pays no attention to her own satisfaction. If a nun desires something in addition to pleasing God, all will be lost." She writes: "I fear an unhappy nun more than many devils!"

Among the sources of monastic joy, Teresa separates out, in a special way, Evangelical Poverty. In Chapter two of *The Way of Perfection* she treats how one should not worry about bodily needs, and the blessing there is in poverty. She underlines that in the experiences of extreme poverty, when making new foundation,

The experience was very good for us. The interior consolations and happiness we felt were so great that I often think about what the Lord had stored up, within the virtues. Truly I have seen that there

is more spirituality and even inner happiness when suitable accommodations for the body are seemingly lacking, than afterwards, when the house is large and the accommodations good.

Another cause of Joy is that each time that she accepts in one of her houses a poor young woman, without a dowry:

Believe me, mi Padre, it is a pleasure whenever someone who brings in nothing and is received for love of God alone. And, I can certify that when I received those who brought much wealth, I did not feel as great a joy as I did when I accepted only the one nun, only for the love of God, who was poor. On the contrary, I have fear about those with wealth. But, the poor, filled and enlarged my spirit with a happiness so great I wept for joy when they entered. This is the truth.

A good exponent of the joy Teresa fostered in the Religious life are her own poems, with the exception of those which were motivated by her mystical graces, all the rest of the poems radiate a festive aspect of the religious life. Community Joy, the Day of a Sister's Profession, The Explosive Joy on the Feast of Christmas, A humorous procession before the danger of fleas! (...in her coarse, wool habits. She wrote a poem and the fleas never returned!). They are poems composed with rhymes and meter from profane songs known by everyone, so as to facilitate singing by a group. For Christmas, Teresa promoted an exchange of Carols among communities of Andalusia and Castille.

The Joy Teresa had in the Spiritual Life

The First Counsel that Teresa writes down for the beginner is the two-fold slogan, Joy and Freedom. And, she concludes: "The formulation of this First Counsel, in this way, there are many reasons why it is permitted to take recreation, even so, as to be



able to return with greater strength to prayer."

Joy is an indispensable ingredient of Teresian ecumenism. Not merely as a tonic for community life, but as a factor for spirituality. It was what Teresa calls, *Interior Joy* which has its roots beyond psychological talent of the individual and beyond the joyful living together of the brothers and sisters in community and recreation.

By means of the biblical word, Teresa returns to the primordial spring of every blessedness, that is, the Trinitarian mystery. Perhaps the most biblical word that most consistently motivated her is that which assures us that "God finds His delight with the Children of this earth." "For the Lord takes delight in His people. He crowns the poor with salvation." (Psalm 149) He finds His delight—with us, in other words—with us! He's delighted with us, and looks and finds His delight there.

And that among the children of the earth, He rejoices—especially in Jesus! Something that makes her cry out with an authentic shout of joy: “Be joyful, my soul, for there is Someone who loves your God, as He deserves! Be joyful!” So, if you are feeling sad, think of the Joy Jesus finds in the Father and the Father finds in Jesus. Give thanks to Him. Hear the Carols of our Joys overflows definitively. Then, my soul, you will enter into your rest, when you become intimate with this Supreme Good. Understand what He understands, Loves what He loves, and rejoices in what gives Him joy.” That’s where we must find our joy in what gives Jesus joy. That’s where we must find our joy, where Jesus finds His joy!

Prayer must concur with the development of this joyful background of the Christian Life. Without prayer, we cannot find it. Teresa inculcates it in the praying novice. In the first book of her *Life* she counsels: “The soul can place itself in the presence of Christ and grow accustomed being inflamed with love for one, for His Sacred Humanity. It can keep Him ever present, and speak with Him, asking Him for its needs, and complaining of its labors, being glad with Him, in its enjoyment, and not forgetting Him, because of these enjoyments.”

She inculcates it again with insistence in a passage in *The Way of Perfection*: “If you are joyful, look at Him, as Risen. Just imagine how He rose from the tomb will bring you joy. “Just imagine that will bring you joy.” According to Teresa, prayer as it develops, flowers into a state of joy, designated by the term ‘consolation.’ Consolations that normally flow into the profound joy of contemplation, which she designates by the term, “spiritual delight.” For prayer, she is a partisan of an environment of solitude, but not of isolation, not of a somber absorption.

Many think that to pray you have to be absorbed in a somber way so no one ever distracts you. “When I see souls very earnest in trying to understand the prayer they have, and very sullen when they are in it, for it seems they don’t let their minds move or stir lest a bit of their spiritual delight and devotion be lost. It makes me realize how little they understand of the way by which union is attained. I think the whole matter lies in these things: “No sister. Absolutely not. Works are what the Lord wants. He desires that if you see a sister who is sick, to whom you can bring some relief, you have compassion on her and not worry about losing this devotion.”

An equal facet of joy is present in the idea that she has of sanctity. She enjoys the humor of a popular Saint of Avila, María Díaz. “I remember a saint I knew in Avila, for certainly it was clear she lived the life of a saint: She had given everything she had to God, but kept a mantle to wear. And after she gave that away, God gave her a great interior trial and dryness. After she had given everything away, all her wealth, she complained very much to the Lord. She said, ‘Is this the way you are Lord? After leaving me with nothing, You Yourself leave me?’ “

In sketching a likeness of the penitent Fra Pedro de Alcantara, she writes, “It seems he was made of nothing but tree roots.” She then adds another trait: “Yet, with all this sanctity, he was very affable. Although his words were few, unless he was questioned, he was very pleasant in his speech, because he had a bright mind.”

Her nurse, Blessed Anne of St. Bartholomew, recalled that: “Mother Teresa was no friend of people who were sad. Nor was she (sad) herself. Nor did she want people who were with her to be so. She used to say, ‘God deliver me from sad-faced

saints.” So, that’s a quote from Teresa, but the source is from Anne of St. Bartholomew.

Now, joy is a beatitude. The evangelical blessing that accompanies all trials is the blessing of the persecuted. A joy that is chemically pure, that flowers in a special freshness among contemplatives or in the Christian who is tried and mature. Among the characteristic traits of the terminal state of prayer, or simply of the Christian, Teresa notes, is in interior joy persecution. If you are persecuted, do you feel joy in that?

“These souls have interior joy, even if they are persecuted, with much more peace than that mentioned, and with any hostile feelings towards those who do or desire to do them evil.” This capacity for profound interior joy in the social content of calumnies and persecutions she had all but formulated in *The Way of Perfection* as the indispensable condition of the true contemplative, that is to say, the adult christian, in Christ.

Of herself, in this situation, she assures us: “These calumnies not only fail to make me sad, but gave me so great and accidental joy that I could not restrain myself. As a result, I’m not surprised that what David did before the Ark of the Lord. For, because of my joy, which I didn’t know how to conceal.” The same joy she shares with Maria de San José, (her friend who was the prioress in Seville, since they were both ‘calumniated’ by a kind of crazy nun that was in there. So she writes: “The love I had for you has doubled to the extreme. Even though it was great, and for you especially, since you suffered the most! But, be assured, when I learned that they had deprived you of your office, voice (explains: ‘Your say in the community’), and standing in the community (explains that Sr. Maria de San José was imprisoned), I felt a particular consolation. (aside to

audience: Has anyone written a letter to you like that? Followed with laughter).

Especially of the invulnerable Christian beatitude, “Blessed are you, when you are persecuted, and hated, and people say all kinds of terrible things about you—Rejoice and be glad! That’s the joy that she experienced. Yet none for these persons there has poured forth an inexhaustible fount of joy. I tell you, sisters, that the cross is not wanting, but it does not disquiet or make them lose peace. For the storms, like a wave, pass quickly and the fair weather returns because of the Presence of the Lord. The experience makes them soon forget everything. May He be blest and praised by all His creatures. Amen.”

Finally, we can say that Joy is a Fruit of the Holy Spirit, given to men and women as new creatures in Christ. As a counterpoint to the appetites of the flesh, the Teresian message is a patent reflection of the cry of St. Paul in Romans: “When we cry Abba, Father, it is the Spirit Himself, bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”



It is especially in her *Soliloquies* where St. Teresa reaches a tone most penetrating of her joyful delight in the Holy Spirit. We can call this joy “The Mystical Joy of Teresa.” From her profoundest depths, onto

it’s Christological–pneumatic manifestation, simple prophesy reserved to whomever is engulfed in these mysterious possessions, a foretaste already here below of the divine blessings and eternal life for which they hope.

By nature and destiny, through creation and divine adoption we are destined to be happy and enjoy the expansive fruition of the three divine persons, eternally happy! "Oh my soul! Consider the great delight and love the Father has in knowing His Son and in His Son, in knowing His Father. And, the enkindling love with which this Holy Spirit is joined with them. And, how not one of them is able to be separated from this Love and knowledge because they are One. These Sovereign Persons know each Other, Love each Other, and delight in Each Other. Oh My Hope, My Father, My Creator, My true Lord and Brother: I consider what you say, that your delights are with the children of the earth, my soul rejoices greatly!"

Now, Teresa had two daughters: They later entered into her Carmel. They were both canonized later in their life: One was St. Thérèse of Lisieux and the other was St. Edith Stein (St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross). They are more recent Carmelite saints, whom you all know well.

Many of us perhaps think of St. Thérèse, or the Little Flower, as someone who was very pious and very perfect. Now, they had in the community a Mother Superior who was a difficult person, a character: Mother Marie Gonzague. She had great qualities, but she was jealous of them and she could cause trouble. But, she always esteemed Thérèse very highly, much more than the other Martin sisters.

And, this is what she writes of her (a very different picture than when we read about her): "Tall and strong, with the air of a child. (She had) a tone of voice with an expression that hides in her the Wisdom and Perspicacity of a fifty year old. A little, untouchable saint whose head is full of mischief—to play on whomever she wants. A Comedienne! She is everything! She can make you weep with

devotion and just as easily faint with laughing." So, she understood Thérèse very well!

And, St. Edith Stein—Edith Stein, the Philosopher, whose picture, as a nun, makes us feel so forbidding that we all run from her! (laughter) We wonder if she ever cracked a smile. (more laughter) And when we read her, too, we feel the same (laughter). Anyway, the truth of the matter is that she was a very happy nun, and was always smiling, ready to help the other sisters.

Essentially, what Edith Stein, Philosopher and Educational Specialist had to learn at Carmel was how to become a pupil again. She had been a teacher all her life. Now her life was different. She found herself in a situation where people, twenty years her junior, carried out their duties more effectively than she. They were better at it. To the rest of the community she appeared not as a renounced Philosopher, but as a rather clumsy postulant. (laughter).

Nevertheless, Edith blossomed in a happy novitiate atmosphere. Her face lost the traces of her suffering, and acquired a cheerful, new serenity. She succeeded in adapting herself to her younger companions and patiently accepting her limitations. A novice who was with her in the novitiate wrote:

Everyone knows that more laughing and joking goes on in the novitiate—about nothing at all. (laughter). Edith joined wholeheartedly in the fun! Sometimes she laughed so hard, especially when the joke was on her, that the tears rolled down her cheeks. Yet, at a certain point in the novitiate, when I was feeling depressed, it was Edith who, as inconspicuously as possible, did everything she could to cheer me up.

Edith continuously radiated joy. Edith would tell the Prioress that she had never laughed so much as she did in Carmel. Hers was a spiritual joy, rising out of her union with God. And also the childlike, carefree joy of a nature freed from the extra burdens of its own making.

So, that's the end of my talk on Joy.

Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D.†
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of St. Teresa of Jesus

This is the transcript of Fr. Kieran's
last formal presentation



Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh's lifetime achievement award.
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