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## AND IN HER MORNING

Jessica Powers (1905-1988)

The Virgin Mary cannot enter into  
my soul for an indwelling. God alone  
has sealed this land as secretly His own;  
but being mother and implored, she comes  
to stand along my eastern sky and be  
a drift of sunrise over God and me.

God is a light and genitor of light.  
Yet for our weakness and our punishment  
He hides Himself in midnights that prevent  
all save the least awarenesses of Him.  
We strain with dimmed eyes inward and perceive  
no stir of what we clamored to believe.

Yet I say: God (if one may jest with God),  
Your hiding has not reckoned with Our Lady  
who holds my east horizon and whose glow  
lights up my inner landscape, high and low.

All my soul's acres shine and shine with her!  
You are discovered, God; awake, rise  
our of the dark of your Divine surprise!

Your own reflection has revealed Your place,  
for she is utter light by Your own grace.  
And in her light I find You hid within me,  
and in her morning I can see Your Face.

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ARMAS DE S.TERESA



## Cepeda and Stein, Two Sainly Teresas

Compliments of John Sullivan OCD. *This article first appeared in THE CARMELITE DIGEST in 1997. Information for subscriptions in our back issues.*

A happy choice put Teresa Cepeda of Jesus of Avila and Teresa Benedict, Edith Stein, close to each other on the Church's liturgical calendar. Stein assumed Teresa's name as a religious upon entering the Order Saint Teresa founded, just as she had chosen it previously at her baptism when she took the Christian name Teresa Hedwig.

But their close association does not depend on a name. At a deeper level, both were "able in adversity"; both show us how to hold up under life's difficulties. Several striking parallels exist in their lives that further illustrate closeness between them.

Teresa the foundress felt forced to leave the monastery she entered for a new monastic home to assure more faithful observation of the *Rule of Carmel* (the one she understood was given to hermits on Mount Carmel by the Patriarch of Jerusalem). Teresa Benedict was forced to leave her monastery in Cologne on the Rhine for a small village in Holland, after the ravages of the *Kristallnacht pogrom* endangered her and her beloved community in the Schnurgasse. Recently a copy of the petition document she signed to ask Vatican approval for her transfer was published in the *Catholic Historical Review* of the Catholic University of America: on it one can see her signature affixed to that tragic text.

Teresa the writer had to allow sympathetic theologians to edit out overly vivid expressions from her mystical treatises so she would thereby avoid problems with the Inquisition. Never in trouble with church censors, Teresa Benedicta failed to see her great synthesis *Finite and Eternal Being* reach print due to the discriminatory laws of the Nazis. And her beautiful commentary entitled *Science of the Cross*, on St. John of the Cross, was interrupted forever the day the Nazis arrested and deported her to die in Auschwitz.

Frequently Teresa of Jesus would put her nuns on their guard against attachment to their family honor, even calling it "black honor" because she wanted them not to mistreat either herself or some other members of the first generation of Discalced Carmelites who descended from Jewish "conversos" into their midst and avoid pride and prejudice: a pride that looks down on others who do not fit one's categories of ethnic worth and swiftly engenders prejudicial behavior against them.

Scholarly proof of the Jewish ancestry of Teresa of Avila appeared in the past decade in English in the first volume of *Carmelite Studies*. Her Jewish spiritual daughter, Teresa Benedicta, took pen in hand to ward off contemporary prejudicial attitudes against her people with her beautiful autobiography *Life in a Jewish Family*. The translation of that book received the Catholic Press Association's Spiritual Book of the Year Award in 1986. No wondering why Stein would cry out "This is the truth" the morning she finished reading St. Teresa's account of her own life. The autobiography captured the many ways God shone through

the difficulties and sufferings Teresa encountered, and so it nourished Stein who so hungered to see the presence of God in the things she experienced.

Edith made that momentous discovery of the truth in 1921 before she entered St. Teresa's Discalced Carmelite order, and thus before she got to know her better. Afterward she wrote the following words of praise to the person to whom she owed so much: "Actually, there are few saints so humanly near to us as Our Holy Mother...a woman with the daring and strength of a man, revealing natural intelligence and heavenly wisdom, a deep knowledge of human nature and a rich spirit's sense of humor, the infinite love of a heart tender as a bride's and kind as a mother's."

It would not be presumptuous, I think, to apply those words written about the "great Teresa" to Stein herself, "so humanly near to us...(with) natural intelligence and heavenly wisdom, deep knowledge of human nature, a heart tender as a bride's..." Both Teresa of Avila, Doctor of the Church, and Teresa Benedicta are teachers of great renown.

If the Vatican resumes the practice of declaring doctors of the Church, one would imagine how good the chances of the latter are of joining the others, after the Church declares her a saint. Both Teresas realized in their own lives the truth of the gospel reading for the feast of Teresa of Avila, "My teaching is not from myself: it comes from the One who sent me" (Jn 7:16). They served the One who sent them as they assured us God is close to all of life's difficulties -- they were very "able in adversity" because they trusted in "the Lord, a rampart, a shield" whose only purpose is to "give us favor and glory", as the Psalm for October 15 puts it.

May we, too, learn to read the signs of our times and know how to decipher our particular set of life's problems, so we can allow God's Spirit to well up in us and flow out into others' lives for their consolation, as the Gospel for St. Teresa's day shows Jesus promising living waters flowing out from those who believe in him.

The testimony of both Teresa of Avila and Teresa Benedicta Stein show us that the experience we gain from the things we suffer can affect others for the good and help them forward. By accepting the good example they give of such applied wisdom, we will feel capable of giving meaning and hope to each other. □



## ST. TERESA AND THE EUCHARIST

**A Workshop by Dr. Joyce Rogers, OCDS.**

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### **Introduction.**

This field of St. Teresa and the Eucharist extends over the whole panorama of history and theology, from Jerusalem to Spain, from the early Church to the Counter-Reformation. And then we see Teresa in the midst of all this, follow the line of her life from birth to death, to trace her encounters with the Eucharist.

From a collection of essays on The Eucharist and the Early Christians we find that, according to Ignatius of Antioch, the general meaning of the word "eucharistia" is "thanksgiving" while its more focused meaning is "eucharist," "the supreme act of thanksgiving and the principal rite celebrated by the Christian assemblies" (qtd. in Rordorf 51). This prayer of thanksgiving to the glory of God, also means "memorial and repetition of the Last Supper when Jesus gave thanks over the bread and the cup (Luke 22: 19-20)".

Mt. 26:17-29: Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to the disciples. "Take it and eat," he said, "this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying: "Drink from this all of you, for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

Mk. 14:12-25: During the meal he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. "Take this, he said, this is my body." He likewise took a cup, gave thanks and passes it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant, to be poured out in behalf of many."

Lk. 22:7-23: Then taking bread and giving thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying: "This is my body to be given up for you. Do this as a remembrance of me." He did the same with the cup after eating, saying as he did so: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you."

And in St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (I Cor. 11: 23-26) we find the earliest written account of the tradition of the institution in the New Testament, also discerning the imperative to unity. (St. Hippolytus in the year 215 wrote a Eucharistic Prayer which is still used today as Eucharistic Prayer II.)

For the first 12 centuries or so of Church history, one can find only traces of devotion such as Benediction and visits. Disputes over the - Blessed Sacrament, on the other hand, can be traced back to long before the 16th century of Teresa and John and the Reformation. "The Roman Catholic Church also instituted extensive reforms, leaving a uniform pattern, later known as the Tridentine Mass" (Heilwig, Enc. Rel. 185).

Let us look at Eucharistic devotion in Spain. The center of the Catholic cult was the Blessed Sacrament (el Santisimo Sacramento). But ideology of that time differed so much from now, that it is necessary to put it clearly in order to avoid inadequate comparisons.

From Isidore of Seville we learn that in the 7th century, the Sacrament was regarded thus: "These (bread and wine, of which he [Christ] suggested the symbolism) are visible things, but consecrated by the Holy Spirit they change into the Sacrament of the divine Body" (Etic. of Eucharist 102). Isidore further indi-

cates frequency of Holy Communion: "Some say that unless sin stand in the way the Eucharist should be received daily, for we ask that this Bread be given us daily, as the Lord commands, when we say 'Give us this day our daily bread' [a point echoed by Teresa in her commentary on this prayer in *The Way of Perfection*, which we will consider later in detail]. "They are right about this, if they receive with religion and devotion and humility, and do not do it relying on their own righteousness with the presumption of pride" (102).

Yet by St. Teresa's day the "communion" that was ordinarily administered in the Mass of the faithful was not the Blessed Sacrament: it was only a sacramental, called *pan bendito* (blessed bread) [my translation] (Efren & Steggink 1982, 98).

"The Communion of the faithful as Sacrament was a rare and solemn thing, all an event like a fiesta. They had to receive it from the hands of the respective prelate or with his license... We cannot, then, trace/talk about the question of frequent Communion in the sense of today. In that time it was a thing so exciting that they had in evidence so extraordinary Communion that all were content with the *pan bendito*, that was symbolic and announced of the true Sacrament" (Efren & Steggink 1982, 99).

Possibly related to the reforms of the 16th century, the Constitutions of the Discalced reflects the popular mentality, that in devotion matters it was customary to adopt as proper, and limit the Communion to Sundays, days of fiesta and some others. St. Teresa in her last years received Communion more frequently, and at times received daily; but always as an exception.

We do not know for sure when St. Teresa received the sacrament of Confirmation and first Communion, nor how many times the Eucharist was received in the year. She was Baptized in Avila on, it is generally agreed, April 4, 1515, at the Church of San Juan.

Confirmation was customarily received at seven years of age, and first Communion at the age of ten years, which in St. Teresa's case would place the first communion around the year 1525. In some dioceses it was administered under two species, although in Spain it was usually under the one species of bread. It was the custom, maintained throughout St. Teresa's whole life, to use absolutions (called *lauatorlos* [Efren &

Steggink, n. 42, 98] ) after receiving, in the same manner in which water was used for purifying the chalice at Mass.

However, uncertain as the historical details are, when we turn to St. Teresa's writings, we find many references to Communion, Blessed Sacrament, and/or the Eucharist (taking into consideration, that these are the translations for what in the original Spanish appear as *comulgar* --or Santisimo Sacramento. In collating these words from her works in the ICS English translation, I found some 93 such references.

When separated into clusters of similar subject matter, six major groupings could be identified: those pertaining to (1) Communion and Prayer (2) Communion and Understanding, usually related also to Confession; (3) Communion and Manifestation (rapture, or other affective experience; (4) Eucharist and Reformation, principally dealing with the Foundations and Constitutions; (5) Explicit Understanding of the Eucharist, and finally, to (6) the Presence and the Sacrament.



## 1. Communion and Prayer

After explaining in eight full sections of Chapter Four of the *Life* the difficulties she had in her prayer life for eighteen long years, Teresa in one sentence, and with one phrase within that one sentence, reveals the singular significance of Communion in her life: "In all those years, except for the time after Communion, I never dared to begin prayer without a book" (*Life* 4:9, 44). Note the parenthetical phrase set off by commas "except for the time after Communion."

Prayer even during those years when it was otherwise difficult for her to pray, was nonetheless a natural response to Communion, a fruit as it were of her reception. She states it as though it were to be expected. Indeed, in the passage following this one, she attributes her restoration to the right spiritual "road" to the direction of the Dominican Fr. Vicente Barron, who "woke me from this sleep" by counseling her to receive Communion (not *pan benedito*) every 15 days.

"I began to return to my senses, although I didn't cease offending the Lord. But since I hadn't lost the way, I advanced on it, even though very gradually, by failing and rising. And He who doesn't fail to walk and advance on it shall arrive even though he may be late. I don't think losing the way means anything else than giving up prayer. May God free us because of who He is!" (Life 19:12, 127).

This view of prayer as outpouring from Communion is further expressed by Teresa in two metaphors we find in Chapter 16 of the Life. Writing on the third degree of prayer, she likens it to the third water by which this garden is irrigated, "the water flowing from a river or spring." This prayer is the sleep of the faculties, the experience of which Teresa writes it "doesn't seem to me to be anything else than an almost complete death to all earthly things and an enjoyment of God."

Moreover, though she had experienced this form of prayer for five or six years, she hadn't understood it, she tells us, until the day she was writing this part of the Life: "The Lord today after Communion granted me this prayer; and interrupting my thanksgiving. He put before me these comparisons, taught me the manner of explaining it, and what the soul must do here" (16:2, 109).

In this example, the first grouping Communion and Prayer overlaps with the second one that we'll be coming to, that dealing with Communion and understanding or knowledge, showing the fruit bearing more fruit. The prayer aspect is clearly stated in her depiction of the experience as one in which the soul wants nothing other than to praise: "It would want to be all tongues so as to praise the Lord" (16:4, 110). It is caught up in "holy, heavenly madness coming from Your goodness and mercy" (110). Eventually in the same chapter, we find Teresa apologizing to the director for whom she is writing for "the excess" of her exuberance about this form of prayer.

And also she points to the two aspects of prayer and understanding as forthcoming from Communion: "There is no reason sufficient to prevent me from this excess when the Lord carries me out of myself -- nor since this morning when I received Communion do I think it is I who am speaking. It seems that what I see is a dream, and I would desire to see no other persons

than those who are sick with this sickness I now have" (Life 16:6, 111). Again, for Teresa it is from a conjunction with Communion that all this flowing of the Spirit emanates.

It is noteworthy that in all of the written instruction she gives about prayer, Teresa does not directly advise one to begin with Communion. Communion for her is the Beginning and End, so much so that it is present as a Given, like Being or Life itself. Yet even so, her perception of the Eucharist as the veritable and singular source of wisdom is as apparent in these implicit examples we've been considering as in the explicit expressions of the connection she makes in the references to be considered in our second grouping, as in these words of praise she gives her Jesuit confessor, Baltasar Alvarez: "God gave him understanding of the truth in all things --the very Sacrament itself enlightened him, I believe" (Life 28:16, 188).



## 2. Communion and Understanding

Other directions she received subsequent to reception of the Eucharist --usually introduced by the words "One day after Communion"-- include those (a) to open the new monastery and call it St. Joseph (Life 32:11, 217); (b) to have faith in His assurances "I've already told you to enter as best you can" (Life 33:12, 225), when she had been thinking the property too small but found in these words of the Lord that it was just fine; and (c) "to take courage and to continue on with what I had begun," as she was told by St. Clare who appeared to her (Life 33:13, 225).

Often, the understanding, or wisdom, came in the form of visions in conjunction with Communion:

"A rapture came upon me so great that it almost took me out of myself. I sat down; it still seems to me I couldn't see the elevation or hear Mass ... It seemed to me while in this state that I saw myself vested in a robe of shining brightness, but at first I didn't see who was clothing me in it. Afterward I saw our Lady at my right side and my father St. Joseph at the left, for they were putting that robe on me. I was given to understand that I was now cleansed of my sins.

"After being clothed and while experiencing the most marvelous delight and glory, it seemed to me then that our Lady took me by the hands. She told me I made her very happy in serving the glorious St. Joseph, that I should believe that what I was striving for in regard to the monastery would be accomplished, that the Lord and those two would be greatly served in it, that I shouldn't fear there would ever be any failure in this matter even though the obedience which was to be given was not to my liking, because they would watch over us, and that her Son had already promised us He would be with us.... (Life 33:14, 226).

It is small wonder then that Mother Teresa would, as she writes, "On occasion," experience "such ardent desires to receive Communion that I don't think they could be exaggerated" (Life 39:22, 275). One morning even though it was raining so hard it seemed impossible to leave the house, she tells us that "even should lances have been held to my heart I think I'd have gone into their midst; how much more into the midst of rain." And when she arrived at the Church, "a great rapture came upon" her and it seemed she "saw the



heavens open, not just an entrance as I have seen before," but rather further into it, where there was a throne. From this vision she "understood that everything desirable is brought together there, yet I didn't see anything. I was told, I don't know by whom, that what I could do there was understand that I couldn't understand anything and reflect upon how in comparison with that glory everything else was nothing at all."

And sure enough what she saw, that is understood, was that "all things seemed to me like an ant-hill" (Life 29:22, 175). She adds "I was present at Mass and received Communion, but I don't know how it was possible." She had been in that rapture for two hours, and describes the wisdom she came to thus in a comparison: "It seems this fire comes from above, from God's true love: for however much I may desire and seek and strive after it, I play no part in obtaining even a spark of it, save when His Majesty so desires, as I often said.

But perhaps one of the most extraordinary instances to demonstrate the powerful interconnectedness between Communion and understanding, imparting of wisdom, and/or vision is surely The Interior Castle. We are told by an eyewitness of the writing of this spiritual masterpiece: "she was in Toledo, and this witness saw that it was after Communion that she wrote this book, and when she wrote she did so very rapidly and with such great beauty in her countenance that this witness was in admiration, and she was so absorbed in what she was writing that even if some noise was made there, it did not hinder her. This witness understood that in all that which she wrote and during the time she was writing she was in prayer" (Int Castle: Intro, 267).

Yet for all the magnificence of these insights and visions of glory, there is still another connection of Communion and understanding that may be perhaps the greatest of all since It brings one to the graces of another Sacrament, that of Confession. In the Life St. Teresa tells us that after a brother-in-law had died suddenly without the chance to go to confession, she was led by the Lord to tell her sister to prepare herself for a similar event; later, after her sister died, the Lord reassured Teresa her exhortation had been heeded: "the Lord appeared to me after I received Communion and wanted me to see how He brought her to glory" (Life 34:19, 235).

And finally, we conclude this group with two profoundly intimate disclosures made earlier in the Life. In writing about the severe physical trials she suffered in the beginning years of religious life, Teresa tells us that upon her "return to consciousness" from what everyone had taken as her certain death (the grave in the convent was already opened awaiting arrival of her body!): "Immediately I desired to confess. I received Communion with many tears," not tears because of having offended God, "but for the mistake I made on account of those who told me certain things were not mortal sins, which I afterward clearly saw were" (Life 5:10, 50). This insight Teresa links to "favor His Majesty has given me since my first Communion, that I never fail to confess what I think is a sin even venial."



### 3. Communion and Manifestation

The references in the third grouping, are no less related to interconnection than those in the first two groupings; however, they indicate an outward manifestation of the interaction. The union is manifested, becomes incarnate, so to speak, in the body and outward life of St. Teresa. Not that she sought such manifestations: "So forceful in this enrapturing that very many times I wanted to resist and used all my energy, especially sometimes when it happened in public or other times when in secret and I was afraid of being deceived" (Life 20:5, 130).

She tells of one time when the nuns were "ready to go to receive Communion and while [she] was kneeling," that her body was raised from the ground." She explains the wisdom gained from this sort of manifestation: "there is a manifestation of the tremendous power of the Lord; of how we are incapable, when His Majesty desires, of holding back the body any more than the soul, nor are we its master" (Life 20:7, 130).

As to the frequency of these occasions, Teresa herself testifies: "Sometimes (almost ordinarily, at least, quite often) after receiving Communion I was at peace. And sometimes in approaching the Sacrament I felt at once so good in soul and body that I was surprised" (Life 30:14, 200). Often this experience was felt within her body: with word or a vision "or a little recollection that lasts for the space of a Hail Mary, or in approaching to receive Communion, my soul and body will become very quiet ... and I will feel all the fortitude and desires I usually have. I have experienced for more than a half year that at least when I am receiving Communion I noticeably and clearly feel bodily health" (Spiritual Testimonies 23, 316).

Even in the midst of a spell of dryness, the Eucharist brought manifest change: Again, in the Spiritual Testimonies, in the entry for April 15-16, 1571, she records: "All day yesterday I felt very lonely, for except when I received Communion I benefited little from the fact that it was Easter Sunday" (ST 12, 325).

Another experience involving the corporeal or affective aspect took place in Avila, on March 30, 1572, Palm Sunday, when "after Communion," her faculties were "In such deep suspension that [she] couldn't swallow the host; and with it still in her mouth she felt that her "entire mouth was filled with blood." She actually felt as if all of her were also covered with blood, as though the Lord had just then finished shedding it (here we see again, the body experience tied to that of the Sacred Humanity). The words spoken to her by the Lord would verify such a correlation:

"Daughter, I want my blood to be beneficial to you, and don't be afraid that my mercy will fail you. I shed it with many sufferings, and you enjoy it with the great delight you are aware of; I repay you well for the banquet you prepare me this day" (ST 22, 330-31). Teresa confides, "He said this because for more than 30 years I have received Communion on this day when possible and have striven to prepare my soul to give hospitality to the Lord...so the Communion was beneficial to me."

As to the external form of the actual host, St. Teresa was instructed regarding this as well. On November 18, 1572 (I think in Avila, at the Convent of the Incarnation). Teresa "was receiving Communion from Fr. John of the Cross who was giving me the Blessed



Sacrament broke the host to provide for another sister. I thought there was no lack of hosts but that he wanted to mortify me because I had told him it pleased me very much when the hosts were large (not that I didn't understand that the size made no difference with regard to the Lord's being wholly present, even when the particle is very small)." Not only did the Lord reassure her but "appeared to her in an imaginative vision..., very interiorly, and He gave me His right hand and said: 'Behold this nail; it is a sign you will be My bride from today on'" (ST 31, 336).

From this grouping of references pertaining to manifested interrelationship, we move to the fourth --and most abundantly represented in her work-- which also deals with exterior connection, though not just exterior but out the door, as it were, and into the streets and highways of Spain, centering as they do on the Eucharist and Reformation, mainly in terms of the Foundations and Constitutions of the Order.

#### 4. The Eucharist and Reformation

It was a few days following a discussion with friends and relatives, her circle of supporters, who recommended establishing a convent of discalced, or bare-foot, nuns, and "after receiving Communion" [emphasis added], that "Teresa heard the mandate of God" (Bilinkoff 123): "One day after Communion His Majesty earnestly commanded me to strive for this new monastery with all my powers" (Life 32:11).

"On August 24, 1562, Teresa de Ahumada and four other women officially entered the convent of San Jose as nuns of the primitive Carmelite rule. Gaspar Daza presided over the ceremony, reserving the Blessed Sacrament in the convent and bestowing upon the nuns their habits of coarse wool" (Bilinkoff 108 [see Life 36:1-6]).

Teresa "took many of her ideas concerning religious practice, practical administration, and prayer from the religious movements and institutions that emerged in Avila in the mid 16th century. They fostered an atmosphere in which her own ideas could develop" (Bilinkoff 79). Specifically, one of the most influential developers of the *devotio moderna* and the methods of Christian humanism in Spain was the Dutch thinker Erasmus of Rotterdam, and one of the best known of Erasmus' many followers was the famous preacher, writer, and clerical reformer Juan de Avila (1499?-1569), who corresponded with Teresa de Ahumada.

"His theology, predicated upon the need for charity, the typically Erasmian notion of the Mystical Body of Christ (with its corresponding devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, composed of all believers, and the exercise of interior, mental prayer, emphasized faith over liturgy, formation over heredity" (Bilinkoff 83).

Teresa in the Foundations (3:10) expresses her awareness of the Blessed Sacrament as central to the Counter-Reformation: "It is the greatest consolation to see one church more where the Blessed Sacrament is preserved,' especially 'at a time so dangerous, on account of those Lutherans. What one scholar refers to as 'a clear sense of mission' motivated the almost incredible activity of her last 20 years, during which she founded 17 religious houses" (Bilinkoff 135).

In the Foundations Teresa tells us of a "great recollection" which came upon her "when I had just received Communion" in Pastrana. She received an intellectual 'vision of a holy woman who had founded a monastery there, dying a few years later. The holy woman urges Teresa to "strive to go ahead with these foundations" (Found. 28:36, 263-4).

In the processions common at the time, the Blessed Sacrament was taken out of the Church and into the world outside. In 1580, when the nuns arrived in Villanueva de la Jara:

"We had heard from afar the peal of the church bells. Once we were inside the church, they began the *Te Deum*, one verse sung by the choir and the other played by the organ. When it was finished, they carried the Blessed Sacrament on one portable platform and a statue of our Lady on another, and crosses and banners. The procession proceeded with much pomp.

We were in the middle near the Blessed Sacrament with our white mantles and our veils covering our faces, and next to us were many of our Discalced Friars from their monastery, and Franciscans from the monastery of St. Francis that was located there, and one Dominican who happened to be present ... Since the distance was great, there were many altars set up along the way. From time to time the procession stopped and some verses were recited in honor of our order which moved us to great devotion. So did the sight of all of them praising the great God present in our midst and the fact that because of Him they paid so much honor to us seven poor, little discalced nuns who were there (Found. 28:37, 264-65).

One other thing needs to be pointed out here, before we consider how Teresa's Eucharistic devotion began its extension throughout Spain and eventually the world and the centuries, and it is a very important point. That is, the way in which she never separated the Communion from the Church and the Church from Scripture. Whatever good fruit might issue from Communion --whether it be prayer, understanding, manifested experience, or graces issuing into the community and the people, whatever good might be brought forth, still one had to know that here as in all other matters spiritual the devil seeks to deceive. If "a soul always strives to proceed in conformity with what the Church holds," and "if a locution bears the credentials of being from God, it is in conformity with Sacred Scripture," then the devil will not deceive.

So careful was Teresa in this regard, that even when her spiritual directors feared lest she be deceived and after agreeing that her experience was from the devil had decided, as she tells us, "that I shouldn't receive Communion so often," instead of going her own way, Teresa acted in obedience, giving up receiving Communion for many days. But the testing was for bringing forth the fruit of wisdom and knowledge that would later serve as sure guides in reforming the Order and preserving what in her mind was the integrity of both the Church and the Word, as the translator/editors of *The Way of Perfection* say: "In her mind, the faith was what the Church holds, the truths of Sacred Scripture" (Way, Intro. 21).

It is very interesting that St. Teresa should find her own suffering and persecution linked to that focussed

on the Eucharist, the most crucial point of attack being aimed at the Church at that time, certainly as the situation was perceived and given expression by Teresa in *The Way of Perfection*: "nowadays these heretics have so little regard for the Blessed Sacrament that they take away its dwelling places by destroying churches" (3:8, 51). Interesting especially since it was paramount to her reform that the Eucharist be the established Going-Before/Center/and Everlasting End of ALL that the Order was about or to be about. Indeed, this very persecution became a motivating, one might even say evangelical, inspiration in the establishment of the foundations.



Just as it had been from the very beginning, at St. Joseph's in Avila, among the first orders of business was to reserve the Blessed Sacrament. Of this moment she tells us: "Well, with me it was like being in glory to see the Blessed Sacrament reserved (Life 36:6, 242). St. Joseph's being the first foundation, Teresa experienced some of her worst moments of "spiritual battle," (Life 36:7, 242-43), as she called it: "With these and other reflections, drawing up all my strength, I promised before the Blessed Sacrament to do all I could to obtain permission to come to live in this house, and to make a promise of enclosure when able to do it in good conscience" (Life 36:9, 244)..."

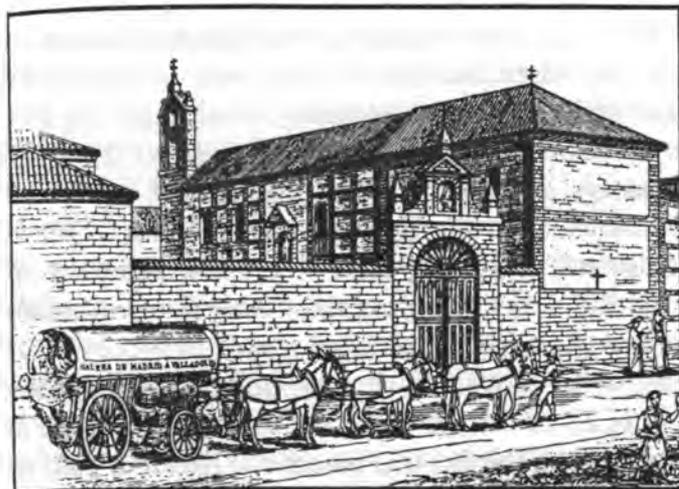
Teresa herself certainly recognized and called attention to kinship with the early Christians. With regard to the foundation in Palencia, she writes: "Truly, it seemed to me like being in the early Church, at least it is not usual now to see such a thing in the world... And if considered in the light of faith, what they said [ i.e.,

that God was doing them the greatest favor by having the house set up in their midst ], was the truth, for just, to have one more church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved is a great deal" (Found 29:27, 277). And when the Foundations were largely settled, she reminds her readers of the history, the early kinships again "fix your eyes always on the ancestry from which we come, those holy prophets. How many saints we have in heaven who have worn this habit! Let us adopt the holy presumption that with the Lord's help we will be like them" (Found 29:33, 279).

Within the house itself the Communion was established as the ongoing life nourishment for each nun and through each for the community in its work of prayer and devotion. Teresa provided clear guidelines in the Constitutions:

"Those who receive Communion should remain a short while in choir (4, 319); Communion will be received every Sunday, on feast days, and on days honoring our Lord, our Lady, our Father St. Albert, and St. Joseph, and on other days that the confessor designates in accordance with the devotion and spirit of the Sisters and with the permission of the Mother prioress. Communion will also be received on the titular feast of the house (5, 320); In houses that have a choir, within the enclosure, where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, and have chaplains or help for taking care of the church, there should be no door leading into the church (16, 323).

Seeing that such frequency of confession and Communion assured the sisters of staying close to faith (the Church) and the Word of love (Sacred Scripture), Teresa in fact claimed that if disunity appears, or any sort of thing against charity, "such as little factions, or ambitions or concern about some little point of honor" then they should "Seek a remedy: for if you don't find one after such frequent confession and Communion, there is reason to fear a Judas among you" (Way of Perfection 7:10, 70). Moreover, Teresa declares that one way to flee from the devil and crush his head is to realize the nature of his tricks: "If they are told there is danger in prayer, one of these servants of God will strive, if not in words then in deeds, to make known how good prayer is. If they are told that frequent Communion is not good, he will receive more frequently" (Way 21:9, 120).



## 5. Explicit Understanding of the Eucharist

In the works of St. Teresa there is only one concentrated reflection on the Eucharist, and this is in Chapters 33 to 36 of *The Way of Perfection*. Here she shares at length her understanding of Eucharist, from the point of view of Jesus and His prayer to the Father. First, she sees Eucharist as the Father's answer to Jesus' petition of perfect Love --as provision, as remedy" (Way 33:1, 166). "Now then, once Jesus saw the need, He sought out a wonderful means by which to show the extreme of His love for us, and in His own name and in that of His brothers He made the following petition: 'Give us this day, Lord, our daily bread'... He well understood that He was asking for more in this request than He was in the others, for He knew beforehand the death they would make Him die and the dishonors and insults He would suffer... [to] remain among us every day to suffer?" (Way 33:1-3, 166-67).

Not to suffer in the sense that the Suffering was Victorious on the Cross and through the Resurrection, but in the sense that every day the Eternal Father sees his Son "in such wretched hands," and "how many insults will be committed today against the Most Blessed Sacrament! Why must all our good come at His expense?"

It's as though Jesus tells the Father that He is now ours since the Father has given Him to us to die for us; and asks that the Father not take Him from us until the end of the world; that He allow Him to serve each day. May this move your hearts, my daughters, to love your Spouse, for there is no slave who would willingly say he is a slave, and yet it seems that Jesus is honored to be one by sharing in our nature He has become one

with us here below -- and as Lord of His own will -- He reminds the Father that because He belongs to Him the Father in turn can give Him to us. And so He says, 'our bread.' He doesn't make any difference between Himself and us, but we make one by not giving ourselves up each day for His Majesty."

"Reflecting upon why after the word 'daily' the Lord said 'give us this day, Lord,' that is, be ours every day, I've come to think that it is because here on earth we possess Him and also in heaven we will possess Him if we profit well by His company. He in fact doesn't remain with us for any other reason than to help, encourage, and sustain us in doing this will that we have prayed might be done in us... (34:1, 168).

"His Majesty gave us the manna and nourishment of His humanity that we might find Him at will and not die of hunger, save through our own fault. In no matter how many ways the soul may desire to eat, it will find delight and consolation in the most Blessed Sacrament... He is teaching us to set our wills on heavenly things... There is no need or trial or persecution that is not easy to suffer if we begin to enjoy the delight and consolation of this sacred bread" (34:2, 169).

"Thus, Sisters, let us ask the Eternal Father that we might merit to receive our heavenly bread in such a way that the Lord may reveal Himself to the eyes of our soul and make Himself thereby known since our bodily eyes cannot delight in beholding Him, because He is so hidden" (34:5, 170-71).

This heavenly food provides "sustenance, even for these bodies... [it is] a great medicine even for bodily ills" (34:6, 171). Teresa assures them, "in the most Blessed Sacrament they had Him just as truly present as He was when He walked in the world" (34:6, 171). She relates how she knew this: "I know a person [referred to herself] with serious illnesses, who often experiences great pain, who through this bread had them taken away as though by a gesture of the hand and was made completely well" (34:6, 171). "This person... strove to strengthen her faith so that in receiving her Lord it was as if, with her bodily eyes, she saw Him enter her house." And she "entered to be with Him" (34:7, 171). She considered herself "at His feet," weeping "with the Magdalene." "And even though she didn't feel devotion, faith told her that He was indeed there" (34:172).



Teresa teaches that "receiving Communion is not like picturing with the imagination... [for] In Communion the event is happening now, and it is entirely true -- "Now, then, if when He went about in the world the mere touch of his robes cured the sick, why doubt, if we have faith, that miracles will be worked while He is within us and that He will give what we ask of Him since He is in our house?" (34:8, 172).

She urges us to put away thoughts of being satisfied only with seeing with our bodily eyes. "Beneath that bread He is easy to deal with... (34:9, 172). He has many methods of showing Himself to the soul, through great interior feelings and through other different ways. Be with Him willingly; don't lose so good an occasion for conversing with Him as is the hour after having received Communion... This, then, is a good time for our Master to teach us, and for us to listen to Him, kiss His feet because He wants to teach us, and beg Him not to leave" (34: 10, 172-73).

"After having received the Lord, since you have the Person Himself present, strive to close the eyes of the body and open those of the soul and look into your own heart. For I tell you, and tell you again, and would like to tell you many times that you should acquire the habit of doing this every time you receive Communion and strive to have such a conscience that you will be allowed to enjoy this blessing frequently. Though He comes disguised, the disguise as I have said does not prevent Him from being recognized in many ways, in conformity with the desire we have to see Him. And you can desire to see Him so much that He will reveal Himself to you entirely" (34:12, 173).

And when one does not receive Communion but only hears Mass, "you can make a spiritual communion" which is "highly beneficial; through it you can recollect yourselves in the same way after Mass, for the love of this Lord is thereby deeply impressed on the soul" (35:1, 174). She cautions us "not to abandon this practice of "recollection after Communion" (Way 35:2).

And this bread which is offered out of love by Love for us, Teresa in turn sees is the only true offering to return: "Well, what is there for me to do, my Creator, but offer this most blessed bread to You, and even though You have given it to us, return it to You and beg You through the merits of Your Son to grant me this favor since in so many ways He has merited that You do so? Now, Lord, now; make the sea calm! May this ship, which is the Church, not always have to journey in a tempest like this. Save us, Lord, for we are perishing" (Way 35:5, 176).



## 6 Presence and the Eucharist

From the fifth and final grouping of references, where St. Teresa focuses upon the Real Presence and the Sacrament, we can begin to grasp, or take in, her conception of the Reality thus to be with us and to be present in the Sacrament. (for in all truth this can be believed since it is so" (Life 14:10, 101).

"And how is He here? The bodily presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament even though we do not see Him" (Interior Castle V:1:11, 340). "We have Him so near in the Blessed Sacrament, where He is already glorified and where we don't have to gaze upon Him as being so tired and worn out, bleeding, wearied by His journeys, persecuted by those



for whom He did so much good, and not believed in by the Apostles... Behold Him here without suffering, full of glory, before ascending into heaven, strengthening some, encouraging others, our companion in the most Blessed Sacrament: it doesn't seem it was in His power to leave us for even a moment... The Lord helps us, strengthens us, and never fails; He is a true friend" (Life 22:6, 146).

"Especially," she teaches us, "after receiving Communion --for we know that He is present, since our faith tells us this. He reveals Himself as so much the Lord of this dwelling that it seems the soul is completely dissolved; and it sees itself consumed in Christ" (Life 38:184).

The Reality of all that was revealed in visions she realized was "present in the Blessed Sacrament (the Lord often desires that I behold it in the host). The Reality is that here is the 'Wealth of the poor,' who without their seeing such great wealth, You show it to them little by little. When I behold majesty as extraordinary as this concealed in something as small as the host, it happens afterward that I marvel at wisdom so wonderful... How will a mouth that has spoken so many words against this very Lord be united with that most glorious body, which abounds in purity and compassion?" (Life 38:19-21, 263).

So she gives the wake-up call: "Oh, Christians, and my daughters!... Let us now, for love of the Lord, awake from this sleep and behold that He does not keep the reward of loving Him for the next life alone. 'The pay begins in this life... Now I see, my Bridegroom, that You are mine... for me You remain in the most Blessed Sacrament; and now You grant me so many wonderful favors" (Meditations on Song of Songs 4:8-10, 245-47).

When we do awaken to the Reality, as Teresa well knew, ready to draw near and be renewed, as Teresa well knew, there is yet a battle to be encountered, and the disturbance comes, she warns, "in many ways even to the point of making one give up receiving Communion and practicing private prayer." Instead of approaching the Blessed Sacrament, now "the time they used to spend in receiving favors is now spent in wondering whether or not they are well prepared" (Way 39:1, 189).



"Be on guard," she says over and over. "When such thoughts come with quiet, calm, and delight, they should be esteemed because they bring self-knowledge. But if they come with agitation, disquiet, and oppression of soul, and if the mind cannot be quieted, believe that they are a temptation and don't consider yourselves humble --humility doesn't come in this way" (Way 39:fn.2,477). The main thing to keep in mind is to "approach in order to please God," for then we "already know that He is pleased more by obedience than by sacrifice" (Found 6:22, 133).

The Reality revealed to Teresa is the presence of the Blessed Trinity. "Once... when I was about to receive Communion, and the host was still in the ciborium -- for it hadn't been given to me yet-- I saw a kind of dove that was noisily fluttering its wings... On another day, while hearing his Mass, I saw the Lord glorified in the host" (ST 13, 327).

On August 28, 1575, "After having received Communion... I understood... and almost saw... how the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, which I bear imprinted

in my soul, are one (42, 343)... all in the same year she recorded in this same work, the Spiritual Testimonies: "One day after having received Communion, I truly thought my soul was made one with the most sacred Body of the Lord. He appeared to me and by His presence caused me to make much progress" (44, 343).

She teaches that "there are deep interior secrets revealed when one receives Communion. It is a pity that our bodies do not let us enjoy them" (52, 346).

She "was given understanding of how the Father receives within our soul the most holy Body of Christ, and of how I know and have seen that these divine persons are present, and of how pleasing to the Father this offering of His Son is, because He delights and rejoices with Him here --let us say-- on earth" (52, 346).

The Reality made known to Teresa led her to go so far as to say "that if we were to approach the most Blessed Sacrament with great faith and love, once would be enough to leave us rich. How much richer from approaching so many times as we do. The trouble is we do so out of routine, and it shows. O miserable world, You have so covered the eyes of those who live in You that they do not see the treasures by which they could win everlasting riches!" (Meditations 3:13, 241).

At the end of her life, after she arrived in Alba de Tormes, Teresa exclaimed, "God help me, how tired I am," and to the surprise of the sisters went to bed earlier than she had in years. Still for the next eight days she "was up and down, receiving Communion daily, even reciting the Divine Office" (Found, Intro., 76). On the eve of her death, she asked that Communion be brought in to her. The editor/translators of The Foundations, drawing upon witnesses, disclose that "When the Eucharist was brought in, her countenance changed and grew radiant with a kind of reverent beauty, making her look much younger. The words she spoke are: "O my Lord and my Spouse, now the hour has arrived for us to go forth from this exile, and my soul rejoices in oneness with You over what I have so much desired" (Found, Intro., 77). □

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*Reprinted with permission. Please pray for the eternal welfare of Dr. Joyce Rogers who died a few years ago. She was allergic to something and died before she was able to receive treatment for an allergic attack.*

## BECOMING WHO WE ARE: THE IDENTITY OF THE SECULAR DISCALCED CARMELITE SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF OUR REGIONAL RETREAT

Given by Elda Maria Estrada, OCDS, as reported  
by Justine Tilger, Inge Whale, and other OCDS.

Anne Engo

Elda Maria  
Estrada

Loretta

Gallagher

Father

Theodore

Centala



What we are in our deepest selves is what God calls us to be. All is gift from God; we cannot effect our own transformation. All we can do is dispose ourselves for God's Action. Transformed, we become better friends of Jesus and learn to think, talk and feel like Him and love with His gentle love.

All people are called to **Union**, to live in an embrace of Trinitarian love. God's gift is Himself indwelling within us. All are called to experience a relationship with the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. The knowledge of God is dark in this life, always gradual, always general. We can know God as He knows Himself only through the Holy Spirit, only when we are emptied of all that keeps us from Him.

The Holy Spirit works through different charisms. As Secular Carmelites, we are called to adapt the essentials of our tradition to life in the world. Both Con-

templation and Zeal are integral to the Carmelite life. Carmelites can take as their own two Scriptural passages: 1) "The Lord lives before whom I stand"; and 2) "I am consumed with zeal."

The Secular Carmelite undertakes to live in the world an evangelical life of fraternal communion imbued both with the spirit of contemplative prayer in imitation of the Virgin Mary and of apostolic zeal according to the example and teaching of the Carmelite saints. This tradition emphasizes the universal call to **Union** with God. It maintains that the faithful use of mental prayer and self-denial is the central focus of our life, and is the surest way to receive God's gifts.

St. Teresa of Jesus of Avila, foundress of the Discalced Carmelites, proclaimed that God gives Himself totally only to those who give themselves **totally** to Him. St. John of the Cross said we can be tied down by slender threads as well as heavy chains. The Carmelite life requires **Detachment** from all created goods.

**Humility** is the basic foundation for this spiritual life. To be humble is to "Walk in the Truth," to know that all is gift from God. The third requirement is **Fraternal Charity**, to love our neighbor for love of God. **Charity** strengthens the bonds of community life where our humanness collides with the humanity of others.

The Carmelite charism is one of **Eremetical Spirituality**. The hermits of Mount Carmel chose a solitary life to foster contemplation through silence, penance and prayer. Carmelites choose to be "Alone with God Alone" not to escape the anguish of humanity but to become immersed in God and thus become His responsible stewards in the world. Healthy and holy solitude leads to community which then leads back to solitude.

The Kingdom of God is within, in the deepest recesses of our being. To find it, we need to be **Present** to that **Presence of God**. We know God through **Mediated Experience**. Every human reality, with the exception of sin, becomes a place of encounter with the Divine. If we truly believe in the Indwelling of the Trinity, there is no division between the sacred and the ordinary. Prayer becomes more constant, both in and out of season.

The great saints of Carmel each have a particular focus. For St. John of the Cross, it was **Union**, for St. Therese of Lisieux, **Merciful Love**, for Blessed Eliza-

## Holy Cross

### College

### Campus

### Loyola Hall & Conference Room

### Chapel

### Alumni Hall & Dining Room



of the Trinity, the **Indwelling** and for St. Teresa of Jesus, **Prayer**. Teresa of Avila was a great-souled woman with a dauntless spirit. She believed that with God all things are possible. As her famous bookmark says, "Let nothing disturb you ... God Alone suffices."

St. Teresa taught the primacy of **Prayer** which she described as an intimate sharing between friends, an entering into the heart of Jesus through prayer. Then prayer is transforming and culminates in the growth of self-knowledge, repentance and virtues. St. Teresa did not so much teach a method of prayer as a technique of turning within and a concentrating on that **Presence**. For her, everything was through Christ and His Sacred Humanity. By recollection and silence we should turn to Christ within. A spiritual book or a sacred image can be used, but only enough for the soul to catch fire. As she writes in her *Life*, "Look at Christ who is looking at you" and "turn your eyes to Him."

God calls us to wake up in our spiritual life. He always takes the initiative. Our role is to respond. We search for ourselves in Him and for Him in ourselves. Our inner tabernacle can be inhabited by God or by creatures. St. Teresa mentioned that Her Beloved would have come a lot sooner if she had been a better housekeeper. To be aware of **His Presence**, silence and recollection are necessary. We need both exterior and interior silence, to enter into the silence of God.

Go before the Blessed Sacrament to ask yourself: is prayer the primary value in my life? Do I give this prayer my best self? My best time? My best effort? My best hope? Do I allow myself to become transformed?

As St. John of the Cross says, **Love** is our only activity. As we become more open, we begin receiving delicate touches of the Holy Spirit. A kind of divine exchange occurs between our consciousness and the consciousness of God. We need to "Let Go and Let God." We must allow God to transform us. This surrender lets us be purified to become the friends of Jesus. The greatest gift God gives is the Indwelling of the Trinity. The Father engenders the Son inside of us in an absolute self-oblation, manifesting Himself totally in the Son. The Son accepts that love and from this reciprocity the Holy Spirit proceeds.

In our emptiness, we search for the beloved encounter with God. We move from the sense of God's **Presence** through **Prayer** to **Union**. We prepare for **Prayer** by avoiding sin and wilful imperfections and calming our body, intellect and emotions. It is often useful to begin the prayer period by reading and reflecting on the Word of God. The heart of prayer is a loving attention to God and a loving dialogue which can end with thanksgiving, petition and/or promise.

**Union** with God is personal and dynamic. As we increase in **Union**, the theological virtues of **Faith**, **Hope** and **Charity** grow deeper within us. **Faith** is directed toward God as its object and we develop a personal adherence to Jesus Christ. **Hope** resides in the memory. Beginning with trust, it grows into a consuming passion for God. **Charity**, residing in the Will, is the unitive element that makes us one with God. **Love** alone gives value to everything.

The main theme of St. John of the Cross is **Union** with God. He stresses the purification of our inordinate tendencies because these appetites rob us of freedom. God allows us to suffer to purify us. It is useless to dream about being transformed unless we are willing to be purified. We have need of the Dark Night because of our sinfulness and lukewarmness. Our penances, the ones we select for ourselves, do not reach to the roots of our vices. The Lord has to intervene to transform us. God uses the Dark Night to re-enact the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus within us.

The knowledge we have of the spiritual life makes us accountable. It is a knowledge that should lead to **Love**. My primary vocation in life is to become like Jesus: to think, talk, feel, love, and act like Jesus. Mary is total selflessness and takes us to Jesus and Jesus takes us through faith, hope, and love, to the union of Trinitarian love.

Through mediated experience --anything can become a means towards the end of union with God. Every person, event, circumstance (except sin) becomes a mediation towards God. No more divisions between the human and divine, between the sacred and profane, because Jesus through His action on earth, becomes mediated experience. Everything, everything except sin, becomes mediated experience.

Our real work begins when we leave the place of retreat and return to the world. Since we have been called, we are chosen and God gives us all the gifts we need. If we are truly humble, we will ask and will receive. God wants to establish a profound personal relationship with us. We can know God as He knows Himself only through the Holy Spirit. It is the mission of the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to us and to begin the process of making us like Jesus with the maternal help of Mary.

God is the great Pedagogue. He reveals Himself to us only gradually. We must, however, have great desires and approach Him with ardent longing. We need to cultivate an attitude of receptivity in imitation of Mary. We should allow God to take over, to be the Administrator of our lives. We must listen to the Word in silence and seek God through detachment in the desert of solitude.

The Dark Night sometimes takes very strong, and maybe even violent forms. Night doesn't paralyze our normal activities --we keep on living, because the Night is always mingled in our lives. We get into the thick of the Night and we don't notice it, mingled with depression, with abandonment, with lack of self-esteem, with guilt, with suffering, with extreme tiredness (existential tiredness). In the Night there are always some persons intervening (the one who cheated, hurt, ignored me). In the night are intervening events (sickness, accidents, death, economic failure, loss of a job). When we go through these sufferings, most of the time

we do not see, sense, or perceive the hand of God at work. We don't judge it as love. We only see them as events or disgraces, so it becomes difficult to identify our own Night as a trial of faith, because of all of the circumstances which identifies it from the human point of view. Perhaps in retrospect we see it. John qualifies the Night as a "passage" towards union, it constitutes a form of theological life that is firm and stable. It prepares us towards the plenitude of union. Our faith, hope, love become purified. The Dark Night filled the best years of the lives of the saints.

The Passive Night of the Spirit: reserved for only His friends, for those who want to walk all the way on the road, and those who want to fully live the totality of the spiritual life. It is passive (not our work, we don't make it happen).

Although it is God who transforms, we can prepare ourselves. There are basic practices that dispose us for receiving His Action. We need **Determination, Discipline** and **Fidelity** in season and out. **Biblical Reading** everyday (especially reading from the day's liturgy) as well as daily **Spiritual Reading** are practices most influential for the life of prayer. **Spiritual Reading**, being both informative and formative, gives us concepts and images for prayer.

**Daily Eucharist** and frequent reception of the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** are special channels of God's graces. We should strive to live in **Silence and Recollection** and in the **Presence of God's Presence**. We need the love, warmth, strength and support of our **Communities** and may find the practice of having a prayer partner beneficial. We should also have a **Spiritual Director** as guide and companion on our journey. Called as we are to be Secular Carmelites, our **Rule of Life** is the Will of God for us and we should know it to perfection. We should meditate often upon its great hidden treasures. Flexibility and adaptability are musts.

We are called not merely to be "good" but to be "holy" Secular Order Carmelites. We need to throw off the shackles of mediocrity. We have been blessed with every kind of spiritual blessing and our task is to cooperate with these gifts. Let us claim as ours what has been given to us! And let us together support, encourage and challenge one another to become who we really are, our true selves! □

## ANITA CANTIERI, OCDS, Servant of God



**Anita Cantieri** was born at Arancio (Lucca) in Italy, on the March 30, 1910 of Davino Cantieri and Annunziata Fanucchi. She was baptized in the Basilica of St. Frediano on April 3rd of the same year. She was vivacious and generous by temperament, and she revealed from her infancy an unconsciously imposing personality. On October 3, 1915 she was confirmed and on May 7, 1916 made her first Holy Communion.

As time went by some family members began to notice something very special about Anita. She was a happy, sweet, but resolute person. Her brother Oswald was the first to notice her strength of character. William, the eldest said, "She used to give us all good advice, something you wouldn't expect in someone so young. And her mother said, "It got to the point where she didn't even have to say anything, for her presence alone sufficed to quiet raised voices or placate quarrelsome brothers."

Anita received some of her primary schooling in a technical school, and some in a convent school of the Sisters of St. Dorothy, which she entered at twelve years of age. In her diary she referred to this time as a great "conversion". She was known to be humble and obedient, hardworking and devout.

One day as she descended a steep on her bicycle, she discovered that the brakes did not work. She was able to pray in this moment of panic that if the Lord saved her life she would consecrate herself entirely to Him in the religious life. Her life was spared. At fourteen she wrote, after two more years of faithful prayer, work, and love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, "I was enraptured by two great passions: love for Christ Crucified, and for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. These were passions necessary for me right from the beginning of my spiritual life." She received the permission of her parents to enter the religious life.

She entered the Carmelite Tertiary Sisters (founded in 1874 as a semi-contemplative order) at Campi Bisenzio near Florence on May 24, 1930. She wrote, "If I were to live a life which was not a search for all that is perfect, I should not be consistent with the requirement, that I use all my energy in tending towards complete sanctity."

After nine months of convent life Anita's health fails drastically. She is covered in bright red rashes, has a high fever, great physical weakness and moments of depression. After many attempts to treat the illness she returns home to her family. She has pulmonary-intestinal tuberculosis. She made a pilgrimage to Lourdes, but she went to ask for the strength to accept her sufferings out of love of God and for the expiation of sin.

During the first four years Anita had hopes of recovery and a return to the convent. Finally she realized that her vocation was to make her home her convent. She suffered for eight more years in an intense way. She was confined to her bed. "At the end of a whole day spent in pain over what the doctor told my family, I feel the need to thank Jesus for the strength He has given me, to be able to keep calm when all around me I saw the pain I have caused, and when I think that the rest of my life will not be what I should have liked. Deo Gratias!"

On July 1, 1935 she receives the brown Scapular as a Carmelite tertiary, a lay woman with a new name in Carmel, Therese of the Child Jesus. "St. Therese shall be my model with her example of abandonment and trust in God, something which everything in me cries out for, and so she can be my protector in my new Carmelite life....a life with abundant mortifications."



What great happiness! Our Blessed Lady has given me her Habit to wear, the Scapular! I have desired it for so long, and now I have it! It will be of inestimable value in the battle against the enemy! I am so happy that I purpose to improve, starting with silence. I shall live in silence, even when I might think it better to say something."

"I wish to begin to work for the Lord and for my spiritual director, who is the Lord here on earth. He told me a way of achieving this aim, and it is as follows: Remember Jesus many times during the day; be a bringer of peace and sweetness in the family; take your medicines at the appointed hour...I do not like staying in bed all the time, being served, depending on other people. But Our Lord wants it like that, so it is better to just accept it, because He is giving me a way to mortify myself and to show how capable I am of love."

Anita continued that marvellous ascent of her soul which was to lead to the summit of Christian mysticism by the sure way of the sound and substantial doctrine she was to discover in Carmelite spirituality.... "I can use St. Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart's words, 'I am happy not to be happy.'" (She died in Florence in 1770 and her body is still incorrupt.)

Her place to find God was to be her home in Via Romana, Lucca, where her cell was her sick room.

There, abandoning herself entirely to the will of Our Blessed Lord, she spent every instant of her life in a continual ascent with him of the rugged way of Calvary.

This very painful illness caused her unceasing suffering, a suffering that was for the great part known only to her divine Saviour and Spouse. She used this approach: "A smile must be my seal: in joy, in suffering, in contradiction of every kind, always, always to smile..." Her sick room for all those long years may be regarded as a sanctuary; her bed was an altar where she, a pure and voluntary victim, immolated herself moment by moment, for the glory of God, the salvation of souls, and in particular, for the sanctification of priests. Countless people visited that sickroom, now become a living school of sanctity; each receiving their own spiritual benefit. Many went there weighed down with sadness who afterwards left in joy, having learned to bear suffering with love.

On the 24th of August 1942 Anita closed her mission on earth. Smilingly, as if already anticipating the joys of the vision of God, she, died as she had lived.

Her funeral was a spontaneous triumph. It was a gathering in tribute of men and women who, through the humble Anita, had found peace again in Christ, energy and courage in God's service, as well as joy in suffering. Her little room where she fulfilled her apostolate of joyful suffering, as well as the tomb in which her virginal remains lie buried, has become a centre of pilgrimage for the many who invoke her aid in their bodily and spiritual needs and implore her to enlighten once more with her heavenly smile the darkness and trials of their lives here below.

The main points of spirituality were: frequent reception of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist; continual offering of prayers; humbly begging of prayers for herself; the acceptance of pain and illness by which she offers herself as a victim for the expiation of sin; seeking to carry out the Will of God as a means to fulfill her vocation; devotion to the Blessed Virgin, unconditional love of the Church, and her neighbors.

Anita's mother lived until 1956, long enough to see the introduction of her cause for beatification. Once she said, in great simplicity, "I just do not know how she turned out like that, so pretty and so good." □

## NOTICES

**THE SECOND NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL RETREAT WILL BE ON JULY 23-25, 1999.** It will also be conducted by Elda Maria Estrada and held at Holy Cross College in Worcester MA. Theme: Paths to Contemplation. The details on registration will be printed as soon as they are available. \_\_\_\_\_

**PLANNING OF REGIONAL RETREATS.** It may be prudent to use the Clarion Office as a clearing house if you are planning a regional retreat. The recent success of the one in Worcester may prompt many Groups in New England to start planning to do likewise. Most would fail because the area could not support that many regional retreats of larger size. Some thought should also be given to the members of each Group that do not attend the regional retreat. Where can they attend a Carmelite retreat? \_\_\_\_\_

**ROME - OCTOBER 11.** Please pray that the Canonization of Bl Teresa Benedict OCD will be a peaceful and prayerful event to the honor and glory of God, to the good of Carmel and the whole People of God. There will be a Seminar October 8-10 on the spirituality and teachings of our new Carmelite saint. \_\_\_\_\_

**LAME DUCK TIME.** Elections for both the Friars and the Secular Order are due during the Paschal Season: Ash Wednesday to Pentecost, 1999. We should be in the process of putting our office in order so that it may be taken over by another with a minimum of difficulty. It would be a deliberate imperfection to neglect to do so, depicting a subtle pride. \_\_\_\_\_

**PROVINCIAL DELEGATE'S OFFICE.** I am in the process of trying to abide by the above stated policy. All Groups that have applications in for canonical status from Rome will be forwarded very soon. There will be no new Groups started until the new term begins. There will be very few new Isolated members accepted during this time. The new syllabus and formation handbooks of lesson plans are being given priority. \_\_\_\_\_

**CRITERIA FOR CANONICAL STATUS.** Our Local Statutes mention that a minimum of two members in definitive promises and ten in temporary promises are needed for membership. This presupposes that the Group is also able to do the ordinary tasks involved in a viable Group. I might mention the

ability to hold elections without dividing into two camps, which can lead to one camp transferring out to other Groups. If a couple members then have to relocate for employment, and another goes into a nursing home, the new Group, which was 12 now has only 3 members at their monthly meetings. If the founding members are still in office I am very hesitant to accept their application for canonical status. \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL SECRETARIAT OF THE OCDS** will be meeting in Pasadena CA just before the Congress, which is October 1-4. The three jurisdictions will discuss various issues that we have in common in this country. Please pray for the success of both meetings. The next Congress, 1999, will be in Dallas Texas. \_\_\_\_\_

**NAIROBI, KENYA** - We are all well. Four of our students were downtown at the time continuing their summer courses in computer and printing. Two were about 100 feet from the bomb when it exploded. One would have been in the building, but his class started two hours later, so was accompanying the other to his class first. They are not injured. The other two were in buildings some blocks away. Even though the time of the explosion was about 10:40 AM on Friday August 7, 1998, it took them until 5:30 PM to reach home because of the confusion among the people and the transport. Such beautiful people. Our life continues.

We are safe. No threats, harassment or any other unkind treatment or behaviors. Our movements are not monitored or restricted. The reaction of the Kenyans to Americans is still positive and kind. Their only wish is that those who planted the bomb, if they want to fight Americans, would be to do it in America and not here. A very reasonable request from my viewpoint.

Br. Edmund is still in the Congo because of renewed fighting. All the borders and airports are closed. Pray for him that he may get out and continue his theology here with us at Tangaza and not lose a year because of the war. Our schools are scheduled to open on time.

Thanks for all the concern, phone calls and faxes. We need your prayers more than anything else. We're still forming and educating African Discalced Carmelite friars here and it's good work. Sometimes rewarding too. These men are a good promise for the future of Carmel in Africa. \_\_\_\_\_ Very Lucky, Larry of Nairobi

## Market Day Mania

July 1998

**Carmelite Community, PO Box 24109, Nairobi Kenya, East Africa.**

Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with you," prayed the African boy with hands folded upon seeing Sr. Pilar in her veil. Sr. Pilar was embarrassed but the boy persisted. He tagged along and would not leave her. He continued to follow her from station to station, drawing the laughter and attention of everyone in the open-air market. "But why are you praying to me?", pleaded Sr. Pilar in a plaintive voice. "Because you look like the Blessed Virgin!" A day at the market is usually punctuated with more earthly realities....

At the entrance to our building on Langata road, we have a water spigot that is in use every day in the afternoon. The local people who have no clean running water (we are blessed with a borehole) come to draw water. They carry 'jerry' cans that hold twenty liters of water. I am appalled by the descriptions on the sides of some of the cans (like petrol, or fuel oil, or other non consumables). One quickly learns that everything is used or recycled.

It is fascinating to watch the women (the men do not share the responsibility in this) maneuver these fifty pound water cans. They tie a piece of cloth around the jerry can. A loop is formed around the can and the woman raises the can to her head. The jerry can is then carried on the woman's back. Fr. Larry said he has seen some Africans carry as many as three cans at once. And I struggle with one can whenever our electricity fails and we have to carry jerry cans to our retreat house.

As I write this Fr. Larry is preparing to go to Malawi to attend the ordination of two of our Carmelite deacons who have completed their studies this spring. Brothers Paul and Philbert are among the second class of students from the Malawi region to be ordained priests. Br. Isaac who also completed his studies this spring will join them for the festivities.

Next month, I will be travelling to Nigeria to attend the ordination of four of our students. Deacons Chrysogonus, Remigius, Silvester, and Thaddeus, are the first students from their region to study theology in Nairobi. They will be ordained the day after Br. San-

tulino (from the Kenyan region) finishes the novitiate and makes his first profession of vows.

As you can imagine there is much good activity in our house. Last month we had over seventy religious sisters attend our monthly Day of Recollection. This month the students are consumed in further academic work. They scarcely finished classes at Tangaza College when they moved into summer courses. They enrolled in classes like tailoring, language study, computer technology, and other subjects that will help them in the future. In a few days they will be attending the seminar of Fr. John Sullivan. As you know Fr. John is very knowledgeable about Edith Stein. He will share his great wealth of knowledge about this influential German Carmelite nun.

As usual we are very grateful for the continued prayers and generosity of you our supporters. May I end with a blessing we received in a letter from one of our Rwandese students who is away for a few weeks. "May the face of every good news and the back of every bad news be toward each of you."

Mungu Akubariokini (God bless you), Fr Dennis Geng

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**Carmelite Friar Killed in Congo.** Brother Jean-Floribert Kamaragi Mandro, O.Carm., 29, theology student, was killed in Kinshasha on June 6th when a group of bandits broke into the Carmelite Monastery. He had taken his first vows in 1993 and was preparing for ordination to the priesthood.

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