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Carmelite Martyrs of Compiègne

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CARMEL CLARION

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Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.

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FRIENDS OF TERESA

St. Peter of Alcantara (1499 - 1562)

Tomas Alvarez

As an introduction to this issue of the Clarion I thought that I would use part of an introduction to a paper by William Bush, the author of *To Quell the Terror*, a book about the Martyrs of Compiègne. He writes:

"As a disciple of Georges Bernanos, I cannot begin without briefly evoking a phrase from his spiritual testament, Dialogues of the Carmelites. This phrase has long served me as a guide when I tried to understand that revolutionary world in which the Compiègne martyrs were to make their oblation. Through the dying prioress Madame de Croissy, Bernanos, who was also himself dying at the time, speaks to his young heroine, Blanche de la Force, regarding her fearsome nature to say: '... revolt is always a thing of the Devil.'

It seems to me that a Christian will instinctively recognize the profound truth hidden in this affirmation. Since nothing happens without the will of God, man must seek his sanctification through circumstances given by God. Our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ, did not revolt against the injustice of His own death. Nor has Christianity throughout its twenty centuries of history ever been a story of rebellion, but rather one of transfiguration, of a metamorphosis of human nature through a love stronger than death.



So it was with the sixteen Carmelites of Compiègne on July 17, 1794 at the Place of the Throne in Paris. They did not rebel at all against the revolutionary regime. Finding themselves involved in it by the will of God, they knew how to draw glory from it. Thanks to their prioress, Madame Lidoine, they also

knew how to make of their martyrdom an act of fervent, burning love for Jesus Christ in the great tradition of Carmel. For, with St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Avila, Madame Lidoine also sang that she was not dying from that rebellion, but from the love she felt for God incarnate in Jesus Christ.

*Oh! fix my hope, oh fix it all on dying!
Truly I die from not dying for thee.
And hasten, Lord, the end of all my sighing,
Freed from these chains to thee alone I'll flee!
Let thy blade cut, completing all my offerings,
For nothing but thy will for me is sweet.
My one desire is that thy hand be hovering
O'er me thy bride, the sacrifice complete!*

Accompanied by her fifteen daughters, it was given to Madame Lidoine to live out these high aspirations, so faithfully echoing the spirituality of Carmel." ■

Fr. Regis, O.C.D.

The Carmelite Martyrs of Compiègne

Fr. Phelim, OCD



Carmelite Foundation

The community of Carmelite nuns at Compiègne had been established in 1641. It was a daughter house of the monastery of Amiens. The community flourished and was renowned for its fervor and fidelity to the spirit of St. Teresa of Avila. It continued to enjoy the affection and esteem of the French court and so, a century and a half later it became an object of hatred to the leaders of the French Revolution. As the revolution progressed the nuns

had no illusions about the dangers of their situation. Their dynamic and discerning Prioress, Sr. Teresa of St. Augustine, read the signs of the times accurately and was inspired to prepare her community for the supreme sacrifice, should the need arise. In 1792 the community of twenty-one nuns offered themselves to God as a holocaust "to placate the anger of God, so that divine peace brought on earth by His Beloved Son would return to the church and to the state." Two years later 16 members of the Compiègne community gave their lives for God and country.

The Revolution

With the fall of the Bastille on July 14th, 1789 the French Revolution began. The new Assembly showed its anti-religious bias by proclaiming the vows taken by religious as null and void. The nuns, however, continued to live their religious life and refused to abandon their religious habit. Not so their parish priest, who abandoned his parish and took a civil appointment under the new regime. The nuns were providentially cared for spiritually by the Abbe Courouble and later, when he was sent into exile; the Abbe de la Marche S.J. took over complete responsibility for the community.

Riots and Orgies

Rumors of riots and orgies taking place in Paris continued to reach the nuns at Compiègne. In May 1790 they were visited by the newly appointed members of the local government who inspected the monastery and its accounts as well as interviewing each of the nuns. The Directory of the Compiègne district reported that there were 15 choir religious, 3 lay sisters and two extern sisters serving the monastery. Later on 5th August these gentlemen presented themselves again and insisted on being admitted to the enclosure. In the community room they interviewed each sister separately while soldiers kept guard outside. The nuns were offered full freedom from their 'so called vows' with a suitable pension should they wish to leave the convent. They one and all refused this offer. Next day a formal document was sent to the district Directory signed by each nun stating that they all wished to live and die as professed Carmelite nuns.

A Time of Trial

Mother Teresa, the Prioress, undertook at this time a regime of personal penance and of prayer in preparation for the trials, which lay ahead. She was helped and encouraged by Fr. De La Marche, her spiritual guide. During 1791 she endured great trials and darkness of soul, which gave way in time to deep peace and inner joy. It was then, at Easter 1792 that she communicated her inspiration to the community, of offering themselves as a holocaust to God; to appease His anger, obtain peace for the church and salvation for France. The nuns, after prayer and reflection came to their prioress and asked that they be allowed to make an offering of their lives with hers. From then

on they were conscious that their lives were no longer their own.

Looking Ahead

Hearing of the eviction of many religious from their monasteries Mother Teresa decided to make preparations for a similar emergency at Compiègne. She rented rooms in friendly houses and paid for them in advance. She also obtained secular outfits for the nuns in case they were obliged to discard their religious dress. These precautions were taken none too soon, as on September 12, 1792 local officials systematically searched the house and took whatever valuables they could find. On September 14th the property was confiscated and the nuns forced to adopt secular dress.

Four Groups

With apartments rented in four houses the community divided into four separate groups. The Prioress took charge of the first group and Mother Henriette de Croissy headed the second. Sr. St. Louis and Sr. Mary of the Incarnation took charge of the third and fourth groups respectively. Every effort was made to remain faithful to the Carmelite way of life. Individuals were appointed to look after cooking, laundry and shopping.

Civil Registration

When the nuns were safely installed they each went to the local town hall to register their names and apply for the pension, which they had been assured, would be paid them by the state. The official who met them there was none other than their former parish priest, now a state employee. He was quite upset on seeing them and secretly gave them the keys of the parish church of which he

was still the civil custodian, so they might be able to have Mass. Soon they were left without a chaplain. Fr. Courouble refused to take the Oath of Allegiance to the National Assembly and was given twenty-four hours to leave the country. He made his way to Belgium and continued his priestly ministry at Brussels.

A New Chaplain

God provided the community however with a new chaplain in the person of Fr. de la Marche S.J. Dressed in disguise he would meet the nuns secretly at the parish church and offer Holy Mass for them. That Mass, more than anything else prepared them for their personal sacrifice in union with the Crucified Savior. The Blessed Sacrament was also reserved whenever possible in the house where Mother Teresa lodged, through the kind offices of Fr. de la Marche. One of the sisters, an invalid at the time of the eviction, died in October 1792. Two others became ill and had to depart to be taken care of by relatives who lived some distance away. It was now possible to vacate one house and regroup in the remaining three.

Sr. Mary of the Incarnation

Contact with Paris and with the nuns relatives and friends was maintained by Sr. Mary of the Incarnation. She was the daughter of the Prince de Conty and a relative of the king.



While her father wished her to take her place at court she opted for the Carmelite way of life and was professed in 1786. She went frequently to Paris and operated under various assumed names. It was she who was able to procure secretly, materials for habits and mantles required by the nuns and used at the time of their execution. Sr. Mary made a trip to Paris early in 1794 and continued her activities outside Compiègne for some months.

Mother Teresa in Paris

In June 1794 Mother Teresa of St. Augustine went to Paris at the request of her mother who had finalized her preparations to seek refuge in Switzerland. During this visit to Paris the Prioress witnessed the full horror of the executions. As she saw the tumbrils pass by carry-

ing victims to their death she remarked to Mary of the Incarnation: "How happy I would be to think that I would have the joy of going thus to eternity." Sr. Mary, for her part, shuddered at the prospect and said so quite openly. When she bade her mother farewell, Mother Teresa of St. Augustine set out for Compiègne, but Mary of the Incarnation decided not to accompany her. She went instead to complete some business at the estate of her father near Paris. Later she wrote to say that she planned to travel with her family to Doubs, but the letter was intercepted and the civil authorities got on her track.

The Arrest

When Mother Teresa returned from Paris she found that the soldiers were waiting to arrest her and her community. It would seem that they had been carefully watched for some time and betrayed by a government agent. Once arrested the nuns were brought under tight security to Compiègne prison. Their food was meager and of poor quality and they were generally ill treated. On July 12th they were told to be ready to get into carriages that were to bring them to Paris. The carriages proved to be mere carts and their floors were covered with dirty straw. They traveled in discomfort all day and all night and on the evening of the thirteenth, which was a Sunday, they reached Paris.

In Prison Again

In Paris the group was imprisoned in the Conciergerie, nick-named the 'Morgue', since no one remained there for long. The aged Sr. Charlotte, unable to descend from the cart was roughly handled by attendants and fell heavily to the ground. After lying for some time motionless on the ground she was helped to her feet, her face all covered with blood. Turning to the attendants she assured them that she bore them no ill will and would indeed pray for them. As July 14th was a national holiday, no cases were tried. After spending two nights in the Conciergerie the nuns were put on trial on the morning of the seventeenth and condemned to be executed a few hours later.

The Trial

During their trial the nuns refuted with dignity the charges that they were spies, trying to overthrow the government and working in collusion with a foreign power. At the

end of the proceedings the judge condemned each sister to death. When pressed by Mother Henriette, a former Prioress, for what reasons they were to die the judge shouted: "You are to die because you insist on remaining in your convent in spite of the liberty we gave you to abandon all such nonsense." The aged nun replied: "Thank you, gentlemen, that is all we wished to hear." Then turning to the Prioress she said: "We have now heard the true reason for our arrest and condemnation. It is because of our religious beliefs that we are to die. We all wished to hear such a statement. Our eternal praise and thanks to Him who has prepared us for the road to Calvary."

The Way to Calvary

After their condemnation the sisters calmly expressed their joy and desire to offer their lives in union with the great sacrifice of Calvary. As they were led away from the dock one of the Sisters grew faint and stumbled because the group had been without food for many hours. A friend in the crowd procured them a drink of hot chocolate and sustained by this nourishment they returned with radiant faces to the dungeon to await execution. There they spent the time in prayer and in singing the Divine praises. There is a story that on the July 16th, the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, one of the sisters calmly asked a fellow prisoner with more freedom for something on which to write. Then using charred twigs she composed a song of jubilee and petition to Carmel's Queen in anticipation of martyrdom and adapted it to the melody of the Marseillaise.

Preparing to Die

In the interval between their condemnation and execution the nuns asked for a

pail of hot water to wash their soiled clothing. They doffed their civilian garb and put on their religious habits, which were made so as to facilitate the work of the executioner. They did this in order to give witness to their religious profession. Here mention must be made of a group of Benedictine sisters who met the Carmelites in prison after their condemnation to death. They were later to testify to the faith and fervor of the Carmelites in their last hours. Later when the Benedictines were told to remove their religious habits they protested that they had brought no other clothing. To comply with the prison order they were given the garments discarded by the Carmelites. Subsequently they were released through diplomatic negotiations and brought their prison garments with them as souvenirs. They are still preserved as precious relics in the Benedictine convent of Stanbrook.

To the Guillotine

With a roll of drums, the cart bearing the condemned nuns to execution emerged from the prison courtyard. It was the last cart in the cortege. Along the route the nuns were heartened to see among the onlookers their faithful and devoted chaplain Fr. de la Marche. As he raised his hand in blessing Mother Teresa intoned the Miserere and the nuns took up the chant. After the Miserere the prayers for the recommendation of the dying were recited together with other hymns and prayers. These included the Te Deum and the Salve Regina. Finally as the cortege turned into the Barriere de Vincennes (the modern Place de la Nation) where the platform with the guillotine was erected, the Veni Creator was intoned.

The Final Scene

In the hush that had fallen on the onlookers beside the guillotine the only voices to be heard were those of the praying nuns. Fr. de la Marche later related how one of the nuns remembered that she had not finished the office of the day and said so to Mother Teresa. "Have no worry," the latter replied, "we shall recite the office together when we get to heaven." At the foot of the scaffold the nuns in turn knelt before their Prioress and asked her permission to die. They kissed her scapular and a little statue of Our Lady she held out to each one as they renewed their vows for the last time on earth. As they awaited their turn to be executed they chanted the Laudate Dominum, the Salve Regina and the Magnificat.

Willing Victims

The soldiers had no need to help Constance, the novice, up the steps of the scaffold, for she ran up the steps like a young bride eager to meet her bridegroom. She placed her head willingly on the block and was the first to die a martyr's death. The two eldest sisters aged seventy-nine and seventy-eight had to be helped on to the scaffold. They thanked their executioners for their help and assured them of their prayers when they came into the presence of the Lord.

The Prioress was given the option of being the last to die. After she had encouraged each of her community and received their vows she knelt down and renewed her religious profession in a clear voice, kissed the statue of Our Lady as the others had done and handed it for safe keeping to a friend who years later returned it to the French Carmelites. With the heroic courage of the mother of the Macchabees she then mounted

the scaffold chanting the Salve Regina until her voice was silenced on earth and began the eternal canticle in heaven. It was around 8pm on a dark dull evening and soon the place was hushed in silence as darkness fell over Paris.

A Sign from Heaven

Later that evening the brother of one of the martyrs, Sr. Anne Pelleras, a notary, returned home. As he entered the dark hall he noticed a light shining on the wall, a light that followed him up the stairway. As he entered the room where his wife awaited him she asked what was the light that surrounded him. He turned round to see a bright globe that faded gradually. The next day, when he heard of the execution of his sister, he realized that she had been permitted to give this sign of her entry into glory.

The Roll of Honor

From existing documents and from the precious testimony of the three nuns who escaped martyrdom we can make an authentic list of the sixteen martyrs with their religious names and their names in the world. Teresa of St. Augustine (Lidoine); Sr. St. Louis (Brideau); Sr. Anne Marie (Piedcourt); Sr. Charlotte (Thouret); Sr. Euphrasia (Brard); Sr. Henriette (de Croissy); Sr. Teresa (Hanisset); Sr. Teresa (Trezel); Sr. Julia Louise (Neuville); Sr. M. Henriette (Pelleras); Sr. Constance (Meunier); Sr. Mary (Roussel); Sr. St. Martha (Dufour); Sr. St. Francis de Xavier (Verelot); Sr. Catherine (Soiron); Sr. Teresa (Soiron).

Burial

The bodies of the sixteen martyrs, along with their heads, were taken by carts during the night and thrown into the common pit in the Garden of Picpus, a former Franciscan monastery. Here, with thousands of others, the martyrs of Compiègne found their last resting place. Later the area was surrounded by a wall and became the cemetery of Picpus. In time it was bought by a company formed by the relatives of the victims and handed back to the church. Today marble plaques there carry the names of illustrious and noble families but none more glorious than the sixteen blessed women of Compiègne.



Escapee and Witness

When Sr. Mary of the Incarnation reached Doubs with her family she had no passport and found the frontiers blocked. It had taken her a month to make the long journey. She retraced her steps and arrived back at Besanson where she overheard in a small hotel where she stayed that her sixteen colleagues had been executed. She was still being sought after because of her royal connections and she sought refuge in the lower regions of the French Alps. Later on, when peace was restored, she returned to France and sought hospitality with the Carmelite nuns at Sens, but was never reinstated as a member of the community. She lived on until 1836 and her Memoirs plus the testimony of the other sisters who escaped death provided Fr. Bruno O.C.D., the French Carmelite, with authentic documentary evidence which he used to the full in his book entitled:



“Le sang du Carmel, ou la véritable passion des seize Carmelites de Compiègne.” (Paris, 1954).

Unexpected Publicity

It is of interest to note that St. Therese of Lisieux helped with great zeal to prepare for the centenary celebrations for the martyrs in 1894 when the Carmel of Lisieux supplied special decorations for the liturgical events. Madame Catez, mother of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity, of the Dijon Carmel, was present in Rome when Pope St. Pius X beatified the martyrs of Compiègne on May 13, 1906. Their feast has since been celebrated by the whole Carmelite Order and by the Archdiocese of Paris on July 17th, the day of their entry into glory.

More recently the sixteen blessed martyrs have attained unexpected publicity due to the literary work of Gertrude Von Le Fort (1931) in her novel entitled “Song on the Scaffold.” Gertrude was of Huguenot extraction, a close friend of Edith Stein and like her a convert to Catholicism. It is a pity that this novel departs considerably from historical truth and at times gravely distorts the true facts as Fr. Bruno is at pains to demonstrate.

The work of fiction however inspired Fr.

R. Bruckberger to produce a film on the subject. In 1937 he entrusted the writing of the dialogue to the well-known writer George Bernanos. Ten years later Bernanos (1947-’48) composed a literary work that death prevented him from perfecting. This work, *Les Dialogues des Carmelites*, met with enormous success when published in 1949.

New Developments

Because of the success of the work of Bernanos, it was soon adapted by A. Beguin for theatre and when staged encountered unexpected success. In 1957 *Le Dialogues des Carmelites* was set to music by Francis Poulence and produced in La Scala, Milan, thus further extending the work of Bernanos. Finally in 1959 Fr. Bruckberger was able to realize his dream of putting the work on screen under the direction of Philip Agostini. Thus, in quite an unforeseen way, the epic story of the sixteen martyred daughters of St. Teresa was made known to the whole world.

Epilogue

It is worth noting that within ten days of the execution of the Carmelites many of those who sat in judgment on them and had them condemned to death were themselves brought before a tribunal and sentenced to death. On July 28th, the head of Robespierre rolled beneath the knife of the guillotine. Others like Foquier and Tinville met a similar fate in due course amid cries of “down with the tyrants, down with the murderers”.

By the end of August the reign of the guillotine had come to an end. Can we doubt that the brave women of Compiègne had a hand in it? There is nobody so much alive as a dead saint. The death of the Carmelite community, which was so pointless, was by no

means futile or in vain. Their victory is the victory of love over hatred. As Mother Teresa of St. Augustine was wont to say: "Love will always be victorious. The one who loves can do everything." The events, which took place on July 17th, showed once again the insuperable power of the love of Christ.

Wise Virgins All

*Go out to meet Him virgins all exulting,
See He approaches, crowns you for your
nuptials -
Rapture and gladness when He leads you
homeward,
Sharing His kingdom.*

*Love for the Bridegroom filled your whole
horizon,
Making you fearless in the face of danger;*

*Like Him your Master, life itself you offered,
Sacrificed for Him.*

*Joyfully faithful to your holy calling
Nothing could daunt you or your lamps
extinguish;
Shining and glowing you would bear them to
Him
Through cloud and tempest.
(Hymn for the Feast)*

A Prayer: Lord God, you called Blessed Teresa of St. Augustine and her companions to go on in the strength of the Holy Spirit from the heights of Carmel to receive a martyr's crown. May our love be so steadfast that it will bring us the everlasting vision of your glory. ■

The Western Province OCDS Congress 2004

June 17, 2004 - June 20, 2004

The Desert Blooms: OCDS Constitutions 2003

will be presented by

Fr. Aloysius Deeney OCD, OCDS General Delegate	Fr. Reginald McSweeney, OCD
Fr. Michael Buckley, OCD	Thomas Moore OCDS
Br. Jose Luis Ferroni, OCD	Doreen Glynn Pawski, OCDS
Fr. James Geoghegan, OCD	Br. Phillip Sullivan OCD
Fr. Datus Kanjiramukil OCD	

Congress Fee: \$235.00, \$75.00 non-refundable deposit

Balance due upon registration at the Congress

The 2004 Western OCDS Congress will be held at Bally's Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Please contact Bally's Hotel at 1-888-742-9248 for your room reservations and mention you are with the OCDS Congress to get the special rate.

Please refer to the website at <http://www.endorphins.org/ocds/index.php?home> to register or call Marie Jones, OCDS at 702-256-4153 if you do not have access to a computer

Calling All Carmelites . . . and friends of Carmel!

To help us reflect on Carmel's role amidst today's challenges we have assembled an exciting list of speakers, such as Archbishop Jean Sleiman, OCD, the Latin Patriarch of Baghdad, as well as the two Carmelite Priors-General (Joseph Chalmers, O.Carm., and Luis Aróstegui Gamboa, OCD). Other speakers include Bishop Anders Arborelius, OCD, of Stockholm; Fr. Daniel Chowning, OCD, of the Edith Stein House of Studies in Chicago; Fr. Quinn Connors, O.Carm., past provincial of the Chicago Province of Carmelites; Dr. Christina Puchalski, OCDS, the director of the George Washington Institute for Spirituality and Health, and many more. But just as important as the fine presentations will be the opportunity to pray, ponder, and celebrate together as a global Carmelite family. Chicago is easily and economically accessible from most parts of the United States, and the Palmer House Hilton is a splendid convention hotel in the heart of a great city. Don't miss out! We look forward to meeting you at this truly important Carmelite gathering.

The Carmelite Institute is pleased to invite you to a major conference on "Carmel as a Sign of Hope and Healing in Our Troubled World," to be held 21-25 July 2004 at the Palmer House Hilton in downtown Chicago. As you know, the CI was established in 1993 by our Carmelite leadership to serve the needs of the Carmelite family in English-speaking North America. One of its chief tasks, according to the statutes, is "to conduct programs such as conferences, retreats, and seminars on Carmelite subjects." Over the past decade we have hosted three such conferences: on Elijah and The Book of the Institution of the First Monks (in Washington, DC), on Carmel and Mary (in Reno, NV), and on the Rule of Carmel (in San Antonio, TX). Each one has been even more successful than its predecessor, with the conference on the Rule attracting some 500 Carmelite friars, nuns, sisters, and laity. The upcoming conference in Chicago promises to be the best yet!

The theme of our 2004 conference was chosen especially to address recent developments in the light of our rich Carmelite heritage. Today we live in the shadow of 9/11 and in the midst of heated election year debates, bombarded with news stories about the impact of globalization, terrorist threats, tensions among world religions, scandals in the church and on Wall Street, concerns about the economy, increasing disregard for the sanctity of life, and so much more. At the same time, Carmel's growth especially among the laity and throughout the developing world offers us all a wealth of new experiences and resources for the tasks ahead.

Registration for the conference is \$295 until April 30, and \$320 thereafter. Rooms are available at the Palmer House Hilton for \$99 per room per night (single or double), or \$134 per room for triple or quad occupancy. Special travel discounts will be offered by United Airlines and ATA. Full details and registration materials are available from the Carmelite Institute, 1600 Webster Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017. You may also check our website at www.carmeliteinstitute.org.

Establishing God's Kingdom Within and Without

Suzanne Treis, OCDS

The Eastern Province of Secular Discalced Carmelites held their first regional Congress this January in Tampa, FL. It was organized by some of the Florida secular communities and Fr. Fred Alexander, OCD, Provincial Delegate for that area. Over 300 people attended this very enriching Congress. We prayed together, learned together and were nourished by knowledge, the presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist, Eucharistic Adoration and our Carmelite community.

As Fr. Jude Peters said in his introductory letter to the Congress, "The theme of the Congress 'Establishing God's Kingdom Within and Without' is indeed a timely topic. As Pope John Paul II reminds us: *Your experience as consecrated people in secular conditions demonstrates that one must not expect a better world to come about only from the choices of higher responsibilities and from the top of great institutions. The Lord's grace, which can save and redeem this historical epoch, is born and grows in believer's hearts. They accept, support and encourage God's initiative in history and make it grow from below and from within simple human lives, which thus become true messengers of change and salvation.*"

We're always told that the kingdom of God was at the heart of Jesus's preaching. We as Carmelites are called to live a life in allegiance to Jesus Christ so certainly establishing the kingdom should be part of our agenda, and a top priority.

The Congress took an in depth look at this topic from many different perspectives. The presenters covered the topics through the lens of our Carmelite saints, adding their own unique point of view. Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh started us off with a perspective on the Origin of the Kingdom in Scripture and St. Teresa's teaching about the Kingdom of God. As always, his clarity enlightened us and I am including some of that talk since he expressed it so well!

"We ought to be aware that the idea of God as king did not appear right from the beginning of the Old Testament. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was not looked on as a king. Even when God came to reveal his name to Moses, there was no thought of his





Fr. Kevin Culligan, OCD with Secular members attending the Tampa Congress.

being a king. It was after the Exodus and the march of the tribe out of Egypt into Canaan that recourse was had, and very quickly, to this symbolic representation. The image shows the respective situation of God and his people. God reigned over Israel. And the worship of God was looked on as the service of a king, a service that his subjects carried out here below as do his angels on high. The idea behind this worship was that God reigns forever (Ex 15.9) in heaven (Ps 11.4; 103.19), on earth (Ps 47.3), and in the universe created by God (Ps. 93; 95). God reigns over all nations (Jr 10.7).

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

Jesus gave the kingdom of God (as in Mark) or the kingdom of heaven (as in Matthew)

the first place in his preaching. What he announced in the small towns of Galilee was the good news of the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is a mysterious reality. Only Jesus could know its nature. The kingdom comes when the Word of God is addressed to human beings, like a seed thrown on the ground. It ought to grow. It will grow by its own power, like a grain of wheat. It will lift up the world like the leaven put in the dough. Its humble beginning thus contrasted with the future promised to it. The kingdom was to become a great tree where all the birds of heaven would nest; it was to receive all nations into its bosom because it was not bound to any of them, not even to the Jewish people. The little flock to which it was given takes on an earthly appearance that of a new

Israel, of a Church founded on Peter. This earthly structure was not to be that of a human kingdom: Jesus hid himself when they wished to make him king.

During his lifetime, Jesus showed himself very reserved in the use of a king's title. If he accepted it he had to strip it of its political overtones to reveal that the kingdom was not of this world. Describing the reward that awaited human beings, he assured his apostles that he would give them the kingdom as his Father had given it to him.

Accompanying the preaching, Jesus' miracles were the signs of the kingdom's presence. With its coming the domination of Satan, of sin, and of death over human beings was at an end. It followed that there must be a decision for the kingdom: it was necessary to be converted, to embrace the demands of the kingdom in order to be a disciple of Jesus.

What was necessary to become a disciple of Jesus? To become Jesus' disciple, intellectual or even moral aptitudes were not important. What mattered was a call, the initiative that comes from Jesus and behind him the Father who gives Jesus his disciples. To become a disciple of Jesus, then, it is not required to be a person of superior caliber. Indeed the relation that here unites disciple and master is not exclusively, or even primarily, one of an intellectual order. Jesus says to the disciple "follow me!" And we must understand that in the gospels the verb "follow" always expresses attachment to the person of Jesus. To follow Jesus is to love him and therefore wish to be like him, to fashion one's conduct on his, to listen to his lessons, and to conform one's life to that of the Savior's.

Jesus, as opposed to the prophets, did not simply speak words received from God to

human beings; he himself is the Word of God made flesh. The reason why God's self-revelation in Jesus is decisive, unsurpassed and unsurpassable is that Jesus experiences in his human consciousness the mystery of the divine life in which he participates personally. This transposition of the divine mystery into human consciousness enables it to be expressed in human language. In Jesus the revelation of this mystery thus has a qualitatively different and unique character, because as understood by the biblical witness, Jesus is himself the Son of God who expresses himself and affirms his divine origin in human terms, terms like the kingdom of God. So, to speak in one way, Jesus is the kingdom of God. When we enter the kingdom of God, we enter into relationship with Jesus.

The Kingdom of Heaven in St. Teresa

What does St. Teresa have to say, if anything, about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven? Many of you are familiar with her writings, and so you would probably first turn your thoughts to *The Way of Perfection*, to her commentary on the Our Father. There we find that our Lord tells us to ask for his kingdom and that we should ask for this as a part of our petition that his name be hallowed. Teresa's reflections are worth quoting fully:

"Now, then, the great good that it seems to me there will be in the kingdom of heaven, among many other blessings, is that one will no longer take any account of earthly things, but have a calmness and glory within, rejoice in the fact that all are rejoicing, experience perpetual peace and a wonderful inner satisfaction that comes from seeing that everyone hallows and praises the Lord and blesses his name and that no one offends

him. Everyone there loves him, and the soul itself doesn't think about anything else than loving him; nor can it cease loving him, because it knows him. And would that we could love him in this way here below, even though we may not be able to do so with such perfection or stability. But if we knew him we would love in a way very different from that in which we do love him."(30.5)

This text reveals how Teresa's own experience helped her to know something about the kingdom of heaven. First she mentions the total detachment there from earthly things and as a result a wonderful calmness, peace and inner glory. Immersed in this peace, calm and glory, the soul doesn't think about anything else than loving God, and it cannot stop loving God because it knows God. The kingdom of heaven then consists for the soul in the loving knowledge of God, which is communicated unceasingly and grounds all the thousand other ways the soul will know that inner calm, peace, and glory. But for Teresa the kingdom of heaven will also be a community of friends who know and love God and one another. This will contribute to their own love and glory. The soul will rejoice in the fact that all are rejoicing in God. Along with its own delight in praising God rising out of its intense love flows the special inner satisfaction of observing that everyone in heaven praises and blesses and hallows the Lord's name and that no one sins. Teresa ends by wishing that we could all love God with such perfection and stability here on earth. In a word she finds herself longing for the kingdom of heaven to come here on earth.

Teresa's understanding of the kingdom of heaven rose out of her experience of God in prayer and prayer's effects on her. How can

we pray the Our Father if we don't really know what we are asking for, what the kingdom of heaven is? We would have to be angels, Teresa muses, in order to understand. In a word, not all the scholarly research and reflection on earth could ever give us an understanding of what the kingdom of heaven is.

Taking her thoughts further, Teresa reasons that if we cannot understand with the perfection of the angels or even of those who have gone forth in her words "from the prison of the body," we can, through God's favor, get to know something, even though very imperfectly. Here are Teresa's words:

But there are times when, tired from our travels, we experience that the Lord calms our faculties and quiets the soul. As though by signs, he gives us a clear foretaste of what will be given to those he brings to his kingdom. And to those to whom he gives here below the kingdom we ask for, he gives pledges so that through these they may have great hope of going to enjoy perpetually what here on earth is given only in sips (WP 30.6).

Through contemplation, as understood by Teresa, God begins to give a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven. The reality of the kingdom of heaven little by little enters into her conscious awareness as she continues to walk the path of prayer.

The great success of St. Teresa's writings and her most valuable contribution to the history of spirituality is her teaching on contemplative experience as the center and axle of the Christian life, as the very heart of the faith. Just as Jesus gives the kingdom of heaven the first place in his preaching, Teresa

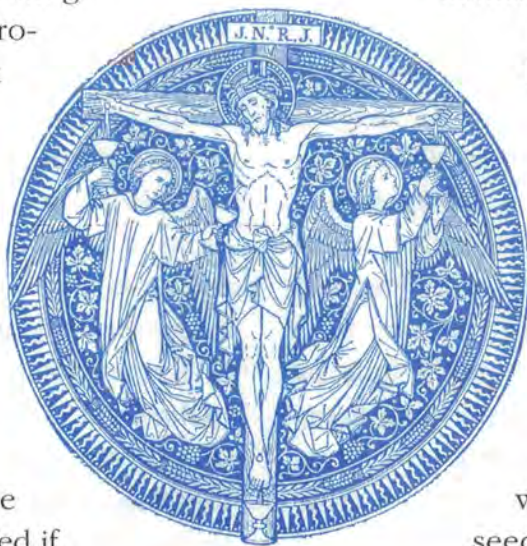
gives prayer the first place in her teaching. As the kingdom must grow from a small seed, so must prayer. In Teresa's surroundings the experience of God's presence in prayer, represented by the image of the "kingdom of heaven," did not yet stand out clearly in the Gospel: "And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and the one whom you have sent, Jesus Christ" (Jn. 17.3).

Like any good seed, the kingdom of heaven must be provided with the environment in which it can grow to fullness and bear fruit. Evil does not easily give up the battle; opposition to growth and the struggle against it continue to interfere with the increase of the kingdom. In the present reality of the kingdom, a struggle against evil cannot be avoided if the life of prayer is to thrive and flourish. Sin, like weeds, with all its consequences must be rooted out if a transformation is to take place.

In addition to a present reality, Teresa speaks of the kingdom as the goal of our earthly journey or pilgrimage. She looks at it from a future perspective that draws her forward. She counsels beginners in prayer that it is important to start out with the desire to serve their King at no salary, with detachment, and with their eyes fixed on the everlasting kingdom. "It is very important," she says "to keep this kingdom always in mind." But as contemplative love increases, the contemplative soul is happy to renounce the good things of this world (L 15.12); the fore-

taste of the kingdom frees it and fills it with desire to serve the King.

In her experience the kingdom of heaven is not a thing. The dominion and freedom given in prayer is the result of a relationship of love with the King, whom Teresa addresses as His Majesty. In fact, at the summit of prayer, Teresa is aware that the King is in fact a communion of persons and that she herself enters into this communion, participates in these very relationships.



These are the truths of the kingdom of heaven that Teresa learned in her pilgrimage of prayer and that she cries out in order to free from their illusions and captivities as many people as possible. Her effort as foundress and spiritual writer began in very small ways, but like the mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field, the smallest of all seeds, her work grew into the largest of plants. It became a tree and the birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches (Mt 13.31-33)."

The Nature of the Kingdom

Fr. Sal Scieurba gave a talk on "Establishing God's Kingdom by the Practice of the Presence of God: Br. Lawrence of the Resurrection. An excerpt from Fr. Sal's talk follows.

"The dream of Jesus' life, the vision that inspired him was the Kingdom of God. It was the content of his preaching and the rationale behind his miracles. Much of his teaching had to do with the kingdom and the signs and wonders he performed were indi-

cations it had dawned. It was the pearl of great price worth sacrificing everything for. Indeed Jesus would even die for it. It was not tied down to any geographical place nor limited by any political theory. It was God's dream for the whole of creation. It was the in break of God's power. It was his reign of love over us. The kingdom means God ruling as king: what God does and his relationships with those over whom he rules. God's rule creates a realm where he exercises and maintains his kingship.

Jesus doesn't give an objective definition of the kingdom. Instead he uses similes and figures of speech to describe it. The kingdom is like a seed that grows slowly, almost imperceptibly but it will grow, if the conditions are right, into something of power and beauty. The kingdom is already at hand yet the kingdom will not come in all its fullness until the end time, like the seed that contains and guarantees the future in some mysterious way. In the kingdom wheat and weeds grow up together. Good and evil co-exist and God's patience is always directed toward our salvation. He gives us time to grow and be

transformed. Yet a definitive judgment will take place, when the good and bad collected in the dragnet are separated.

The kingdom is gift and to enter it one must receive it like a dependent child who has no right or merits. The kingdom nonetheless calls for our response. We must use our talents, not bury them, so the kingdom expands. The kingdom calls for decisive action on our part.

St. Paul tells us that the kingdom of God is a matter of justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Where these fundamental, core values are present, there in some way, in some fashion, is the kingdom of God. When we think of justice, however, we are inclined to think in terms of judge and jury, verdict and sentence. In fact when we look for justice, we are sometimes seeking punishment for wrongdoing. This is not God's view of justice as we find it in the Bible. To know God, Jeremiah says, is to do justice, but the justice of God means setting things right. It means creating right order, fulfilling responsibilities, showing compassion to the needy. Justice is what God does, defending the poor and weak, vindicating victims, liberating the oppressed.

When Jesus began his ministry, his desire was to establish the kingdom and this entailed the re-establishment of the relationships on which the covenant was built. Jesus who reveals a God of tenderness and compassion was moved by an image of a God of love. While some preached a Day of Judgment and retribution, Jesus, in the spirit of Isaiah, proclaimed a kingdom where the blind see, the deaf hear, and the poor have the good news preached to them. He understood his mission in terms of justice, and that led him to seek out and save the marginalized and excluded. Jesus was especially sensitive to discrimination

Extra copies of the special issue of the Clarion which include the Rule of Saint Albert, and Constitutions and the Statutes. are available for \$3.00 each.

To purchase, please contact the office, address and phone number is on page ii.

of every kind: religious, social, cultural, national or gender related. So too must his followers be. Jesus was often in trouble because of his interpretation of, and the liberty he took, with the law. He was not opposed to the law, indeed he came to fulfill, not abolish it. But he was concerned about how it was interpreted. Law as wisdom, as revelation of God was good and to be revered but when law becomes burdensome or is used against people, something is wrong.

Jesus interpreted the law in terms of justice and compassion. He sought to establish right relationship with the marginalized and the outcast. He ate and drank with sinners. His table fellowship with them was highly controversial, but deliberate and a clear parable in action. Jesus sets a table where all are equal in God's sight because all are God's children. Jesus puts the so-called sinner and the righteous on the same level. In his time more than half the population was excluded: the disabled, prostitutes, tax collectors, widows, shepherds (the first to hear the good news in Luke's gospel). Jesus came to seek out and save the lost. He had pity, indeed compassion on the multitudes, and taught his disciples to follow his example. It is the mission of the church to continue to establish the justice of the end time.

Joy speaks of the fullness of life and love. It is the banquet of the end time where there is abundance. It is the finding of the treasure in the field. Joy is the experience of the kingdom as already present. It is the sign of the presence of the kingdom here and now, even in the midst of struggle and insecurity. When we glimpse the kingdom, when we experience it, even if only dimly, there is joy.

And what does the kingdom look like? What shape does it take? When the hungry

are fed, when the injured forgive, when inclusive community is formed and discrimination is eliminated, when violence is replaced by mercy, when love overcomes fear, there is the kingdom of God.

But how do we enter? How do we get there? What are the requirements? In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us the spirituality of the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are the ways to enter the kingdom. The Beatitudes present the spirituality of those who have entered the kingdom. They are the means to foster communion with God and neighbor. Once again Jesus teaches us the opposite of what the world would expect. Blessed are the rich, the powerful, the rejoicing, we might think. They can have and do anything they want. Instead he said blessed, happy are the poor in spirit, the gentle, those who mourn, those who suffer persecution for the sake of righteousness, the peacemakers, the pure of heart. They are happy because the kingdom is theirs. This happiness is not merely a psychological feeling though it may have psychological implications. This happiness is a deep inner composure that comes from the experience of God.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the anawim, those who rely completely on God. They are the ones who expect everything from God – those who hope in God's providence. Those who depend completely on God in humility and powerlessness, they are not self-righteousness or self-sufficient. Blessed are the meek, the gentle, those who are respectful of God's ways and refrain from anger. They accept God's time and will. They are not arrogant. Jesus himself was poor in spirit and meek and gentle of heart. Learn from me, he said. Jesus lived the beatitudes he preached.

Blessed are those who mourn where there is godlessness and violence. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Jesus teaches by word and example how to think and act as God wants.

Blessed are the merciful, those who show deep-rooted compassion to those in need. They are the ones who encounter God by responding to the needs of others. I was hungry and you fed me, naked and you clothed me, sick or imprisoned and you visited me, Jesus said. Blessed are the pure of heart. They search for the truth; they are honest, sincere and authentic. Blessed are the peacemakers. They search for wholeness and well-being. They abhor violence. Blessed are those who suffer because they work for peace and justice as did Jesus and the prophets before him.

The Beatitudes lead us progressively from openness to God to openness to others. They bring about a communion of love. They are rooted in the life and example of Jesus himself who lived in right relationship with god, self, neighbor and nature. These are the directives of Jesus explaining how to live in the reign of God. These are the characteristics of those who do so. They rely on God, they bear the pains of those who suffer, they long for justice and are merciful. They manifest integrity. They work for peace. They bear with adversity.

The kingdom of God was established in and through Jesus. To live in the reign of God means to live in union with him. Live on in me as I do in you, he said. Living in the reign of God means being with Jesus and sharing his life. Anyone who loves me will be true to my word and my Father will love him; we will come to him and make our dwelling place with him. We seek to love as he loved and be

merciful as he was merciful, laying down our lives as he did. We can only do so if we draw life and strength from him, like a branch from a vine, only by his grace.

Jesus teaches us that He and the Father dwell in those who love him. The Spirit of God is present in our hearts. This mystery, which we call the Indwelling of the Trinity, brings us to Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection and the practice of the presence of God. This practice simply means that we form the habit of recalling God's presence with silent acts of love without interrupting our activities. The doctrinal basis for this practice is the presence of God in all things by his immensity and the divine Indwelling. God is present to all things by his power for all creation is subject to him and God is present in the souls of the just through grace. This practice simply means we frequently turn to God who dwells within our hearts and foster brief conversation with him in keeping with the graces he gives us and our needs at the moment. Br. Lawrence of the Resurrection, though lacking formal theological training, understood well the mystery of



Clarion staff members attending the Congress. Rosemary Moak, Fr. Regis Jordan, and Suzanne Treis.

the Indwelling and practiced this devotion so faithfully it becomes a way of life for him. By this means he entered the kingdom of God.

We have seen how the beatitudes first open us up to God and then open us up to our neighbor. We depend on God completely and by his grace we move toward encountering God by responding to the needs of others. The beatitudes are ways of communion in love that express the reality of the kingdom of God. Brother Lawrence lived the beatitudes and entered the kingdom of God by the practice of the presence of God. He experienced the presence of the great King in the depths of his heart. He responded to his graces and grew into ever-deeper union with him. His love for God was expressed in love of neighbor; thus his understanding of the kingdom was not only a personal, interior reality. The kingdom was extended to those he met by the love he showed them. His awareness of the presence of God fostered his experience of the kingdom within; his experience of God led him to establish the kingdom without.”

Through the Eyes of St. John of the Cross

Fr. Steven Payne presented the Kingdom of God Within and Without through the eyes of St. John of the Cross. “John of the Cross uses the expression kingdom of God only about a dozen of times and then only in passing. He seems to spiritualize the concept of the kingdom of God completely, as if the phrase referred only to Heaven, the afterlife or the interior life and had nothing to do with the social and political environment in which we find ourselves. John hardly ever touches directly on the second aspect of the theme of the Congress, establishing the kingdom of

God without. He seldom uses the precise words kingdom of God in his writings, but just as truly the reality is present in his teaching.

On those rare occasions when he does re-

Letters to the Editor

I am so blessed to receive the Carmel Clarion. I was deeply impressed with the June-July '03 issue dedicated to our Holy Patron, St Elijah. It was a prayer that was fulfilled for me. I have a deep devotion to him and there was little I knew about him other than little vignettes here and there. Thank you. Also, the whole Carmelite Calendar for a year is great! And the lovely cover icon of Mary, our Mother, and the Baby Jesus makes a good springboard for Mental Prayer.

VK, OCDS, Saint Louis MO

I can't explain adequately enough my delight and surprise at receiving the 2004 calendar of quotes from our Carmelite saint brothers and sisters. The more I hear, read and know of these dear ones helps me to revive my faith and hope and love of my Catholic heritage. It helps me to immerse myself in their thoughts and to shield myself from outside conditions of errors.

I appreciate your outside cover of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt Carmel. That particular image of Mary graces my hermit home with the statue of Our Lady of Mt Carmel and a beautiful picture from Rome via a Carmelite Sister. For this my Carmelite heritage under my loving Mother Mary's care and protective presence I can go on.

JB, OCDS, Pittsford, NY

fer explicitly to the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven, John tends to interpret its meaning in terms of his favorite topic, namely how to reach divine union quickly. He tends to treat them as synonyms for the transforming union of the individual soul, which reaches a certain fulfillment in this life in spiritual marriage, but will only be perfectly fulfilled in Heaven.

St John does appear to focus on the kingdom within, but we must look at his doctrine in its totality to see how he views the kingdom without. Jesus calls us to change of heart because the kingdom is at hand and John guides us through the radical conver-

sion necessary to prepare for the coming of the kingdom in our lives.

John is convinced that for disalced Carmelites prayer itself is our most effective service to others. Teresa founded us precisely to pray for the needs of the Church and the world and to the extent that we grow in prayer, then we carry out that ministry more effectively. So for Teresa's sons and daughters, the task of establishing the kingdom of God within and without is not an either/or. It's not either contemplation or apostolate. For us prayer is already ministry and it is our prayerful union with God that compels us into every other form of service. If our prayer

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will be presented by

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The Carmelite Friars who attended the Tampa Congress.

lacks this apostolic dimension it's not truly Teresian prayer at all. By the same token our apostolic efforts are rooted in and nourished by our prayerful friendship with the Lord. If they're not, they won't be fruitful. John says in Ascent 3,16,1 that his texts are intended simply to help us carry out the first and greatest commandment, to love God with our whole heart and mind and soul and strength. But certainly he believes that if we follow that first commandment and we fulfill it perfectly, the second will not be lacking, to love our neighbor as ourselves, because whoever does not love the brother whom he has seen cannot love the God whom he has not seen.

Although John uses kingdom of God only a few times in his writings as an expression, he's well aware of the reality behind the phrase. No other Christian writer better explains the radical depths of conversion to which Jesus calls us if we're going to enter

the kingdom. John shows us how Carmelites can contribute to the building of the kingdom especially through our commitment to prayer for the sake of the church and the world. When we take time frequently to be alone with the one who we know loves us, according to Teresa's definition of mental prayer, we become ever more like Christ and we learn to love the world with His own love. "

St. Elijah – Prophet of Carmel

The new constitutions of the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order state that the ancient biblical prophet Elijah, who lived more than eight centuries before Christ, represents "the prophetic tradition of Carmel" for contemporary Carmelites who live in the 21st century after Christ. Drawing primarily upon the Scriptures, Fr. Kevin Culligan reviewed the life of Elijah, indicating how he exemplifies the prophetic nature of the Carmelite voca-

tion, especially the call today to establish God's Kingdom from within and without.

We can learn 3 lessons from Elijah and all three are addressed in our new Constitutions.

1. Witness to the primacy of the living

God – Section 2 of the

Constitutions - Following Jesus.

Elijah's life was all

about God and doing

whatever God

asked of Him. We

need to proclaim

that God alone has

first place in our

lives, especially in

this time of science and

technology where man

sees no need of God and

places many gods before Him,

such as science, medicine, standard

of living, etc. Our role is not to op-

pose human progress and evolution,

but to support it and remind all people

to put no gods before Him.

2. Daily seek a direct experience of God in prayer

(Section 3 of the

Constitutions - Witnesses to the Experi-

ence of God). Section 3 commits us to

daily mental prayer. Elijah experienced

God directly in the sound of silence on

Mt. Horeb.

3. Serve the needs of Gods people and the Church

(Section 4 of the Con-

stitutions - Serving God's Plan.) All of

Elijah's work was directed to that goal.

In fact he reclaimed Israel for God, no

small feat. As a prophetic com-

munity, Carmel must serve

the needs of God's

people in the world.

Section 4 of the

Constitutions re-

quires that we

have an apos-

tolate and

John, Ch. 1

says, "If we

love one an-

other, God

dwells in us."

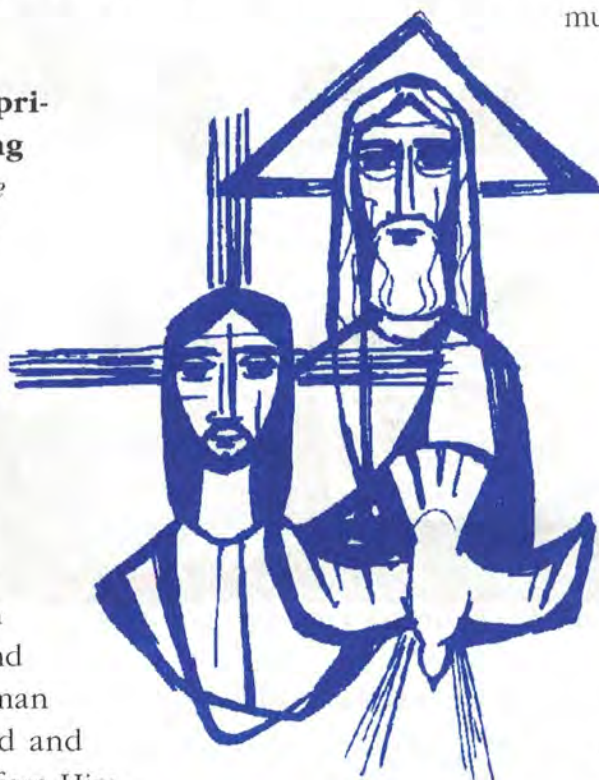
Contemplative

prayer draws us

into greater love

of God and our

neighbor.



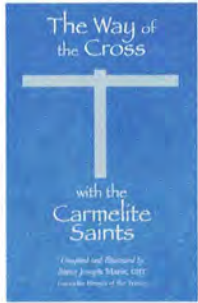
Carmel has now taken on the mantle of Elijah. We are the ones who are to continue the prophetic work in our world. This is the challenge that our constitutions place before us today. We can do this in many ways in addition to our prayer. The action doesn't have to be big. However, it is primary for Carmel to witness to the primacy of God and this is most effectively done by experiencing God ourselves – God's soul touching our soul in the sound of silence.

Our Carmelite tradition is rich with knowledge of the kingdom and how to attain it. Our new OCDS Constitutions and the original Rule of St. Albert provide us with a roadmap for the journey. ■

ICS PUBLICATIONS

The Way of the Cross with the Carmelite Saints

Compiled and Illustrated by Sister Joseph Marie, CHT
Carmelite Hermit of the Trinity



The Carmelite saints in their prayers and reflections reveal a deep communion with the Passion of Jesus. In the light of Christ crucified they beheld the depths of the heart of God and discovered there as well the meaning of the human heart. We cannot reach the thicket of God's riches for which we were created, Saint John of the Cross says, without

peering into the thicket of his sufferings
97 pages paper \$9.95 WOC

God is Love St. Teresa Margaret: Her Life

Margaret Rowe

St. Teresa Margaret of the Sacred Heart was born into a large devout family in Arezzo, Italy in 1747. From the earliest days of her childhood, Anna Maria was filled with a deep love of God, questioning the adults around her as to "Who is God"? Already she

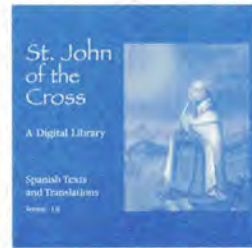


was dissatisfied with answers given her. Only the contemplative life of a Carmelite nun could begin to quench her thirst to know and give herself completely to God. Her entire life was driven by the desire to "return love for love." She entered the Carmelite convent in Florence at the age of seventeen, advanced rapidly in holiness, and died an extraordinary death at twenty-two. Her spiritual director reflecting on her death remarked, "She could not have lived very much longer, so great was the strength of the love of God in her."

276 pages paper \$12.95 G

St. John of the Cross: A Digital Library

This CD contains St. John of the Cross's works in Spanish: the Kavanaugh/Rodriguez English translation; the E. Allison Peers English translation; and the Douay-Rheims translation of the Bible from the Latin, the version St. John used when quoting the Bible. With this CD one can search for favorite themes, compare an English translation with the Spanish, or compare the two English translations. The CD includes a tutorial which will show you how to use all its possible capabilities. System requirements: Windows 95, 98/ME/NT/2000/XP Microsoft Office 2000 or later.
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This opening date is absolutely firm! Now we need to raise an army, and get to work even harder than before, as we have a little less than six months to build the groundswell of support that will put this film into many theaters across the country and throughout the entire world. **YOU CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN!** Here's how:

- **TELL TEN FRIENDS TO HIT THE WEBSITE AND REGISTER:** www.theresemovie.com Let's show Hollywood just how popular Saint Thérèse is, and how much we all want to see positive Christian movies in our local theaters. Distributors and cinema owners **NOTICE** when website activity is high. We must see the demographic registrations from your area to really increase.
- **VOLUNTEER** to build support at churches, youth groups and conferences to get the word out that **THÉRÈSE IS COMING THIS FALL!** Become a volunteer for **THÉRÈSE**.
- **Contact:** volunteerprogram@theresemovie.com

movie.com Schedule a screening of the trailer in your church, and even bring Leonardo Defilippis, the film's director, Lindsay Younce, the star of the film, or our PR team to large conferences of youth and other groups this spring or summer. Call our office at 503 524 7760 to make the arrangements, or email pr@theresemovie.com

- **SEND A DONATION!** What we are trying to do is **HUGE**. It costs so much money to publicize and distribute a movie. Luke Films is small, but we are fearless, because "Nothing is impossible with God." Your gift makes the difference, because we are going the "little way," and look where it's got us so far! Donate on www.stlukeproductions.com
- **PRAY!** Right now, stop and say a prayer for this movie. All we want is to do the will of God, and to bring Saint Thérèse to our world. She will give hope to our youth. But nothing will be accomplished without prayer and sacrifice.

We are planning many exciting new opportunities for you to get involved behind the scenes. Watch your email next week for some big changes in how you can get motivated and motivate others to **HIT THE WEBSITE** and build a momentum for **Thérèse**. ■

FRIENDS OF TERESA St. Peter of Alcantara (1499 – 1562)

Tomas Alvarez

Saint, Franciscan, reformer, spiritual writer, a great friend and collaborator, St. Teresa said of him, “it seemed he was made of nothing but tree roots” (L. 27,18). Born in Alcantara (Caceres) in 1499; he died in Arenas de San Pedro (Avila) on October 18, 1562. His secular name was John Garavito. He studied in Salamanca (1511-1515?). In 1515 he entered the Franciscan Order and was professed in Santa María de los Majaretos in 1515, taking the name Peter. In 1532 he was the guardian of the monastery of San Onofre de La Lapa and provincial in 1538. He traveled to Portugal and Rome. In Barcelona he befriended Francis Borja still a layman (1541). He wrote the “Treatise on prayer and meditation around 1556. In 1559 he founded the monastery of San José. He died in Arenas, not far from the city of Avila, in the house of a friend, shortly after his meeting with St. Teresa in August of 1562. He was Canonized in 1669.

Although his relationship with St. Teresa was very brief (1560-1562), it was intense. He is one of the contemporary personages whose name appears in the Life. The first meeting between the two took place in August, 1560 through the mediation of Doña Guiomar de Ulloa, a mutual friend. This meeting proved to be decisive for Teresa’s



mystical life, which she shared with this “holy and most spiritual man” (L. 27,3). She wrote,

“I gave him a summary account of my life and manner of proceeding in prayer as clearly as I knew how. I always tried to speak with complete clarity and truthfulness to those with whom I conversed about my soul. I desired that they know even about any first stirrings, and I accused myself of matter that was doubtful and questionable with arguments against myself. Thus without any duplicity or covering over I discussed my soul with him....Almost from the outset I saw that he understood me through experience, which was all that I needed....This holy man enlightened me about everything and explained it to me,...” (L. 30,3-5). “Afterward the Lord was pleased that I receive more help from him — through the counsel he gave me about many matters...” (L.27,17).

Teresa sought St. Peter’s counsel as she prepared to found the Carmel of San José in Avila. This began a correspondence between them in 1560. Peter went to Don Alvaro, bishop of Avila asking him to accept

under his jurisdiction the first Teresian foundation. Teresa writes concerning this: "The very night I reached this city (Avila), our patent and our brief for the monastery arrived from Rome....I found here the bishop and the holy Friar Peter of Alcantara and another gentleman. The two of them succeeded in getting the bishop to accept the monastery under his jurisdiction, which was no small thing since the house was to be poor...And because this holy old Friar Peter approved it and urged now some, now others, to help us, it was he who did everything" (L. 36,1-2).

Even after St. Peter's death he mysteriously intervened in Teresa's life and in her mission. Teresa writes: "While I was in prayer the night before this matter (founding St. Joseph's in poverty) was to be discussed, and I had already begun to agree, the Lord told me not to agree....That same night the holy Friar Peter of Alcantara appeared to me, for he was already dead. And before he died he had written to me...that he rejoiced the foundation was being so vehemently opposed, that it was a sign the Lord would be very much served in this monastery...in the letter he urged me... two or three times not to accept an income, and that if I followed this advice everything would come about as I desired. I had already, two or three times since his death, seen him and the great glory he possessed; so I wasn't frightened" (L. 36,29).

Teresa was also influenced by St. Peter's oral teaching but also through his writings which she praised: "He is the author of some small books in the vernacular on prayer that are now popular, for as one who practiced it well himself he wrote in a

very helpful way for those who are given to prayer." (L. 30,2). She recommended his writings to her Carmelite nuns (Const. 2,7).

Concerning the prayer of recollection that preoccupied Teresa, she turns to St. Peter, fifteen years after his death, for assurance. In the Interior Castle (4,3,4,) she writes: "One of them tried to convince me with a certain book by the saintly Friar Peter of Alcantara...to whom I would submit because I know that he knew. And we read it together, and he says the same thing I do...that love must be already awakened."

Finally she will recall the qualities of his love for Christ, associating it with the craziness of St. Francis' love: "To be silent and conceal this great impulse of happiness when experiencing it is no small pain. St. Francis must have felt this impulse when the robbers struck him, for he ran through the fields crying out and telling the robbers that he was the herald of the great King; and also other saints must feel it who go to deserts to be able to proclaim as St. Francis these praises of their God. I knew a saint named Friar Peter of Alcantara — for I believe from the way he lived that he was one — who did this very thing, and those who at one time listened to him thought he was crazy" (IC. 6,6,11). ■

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