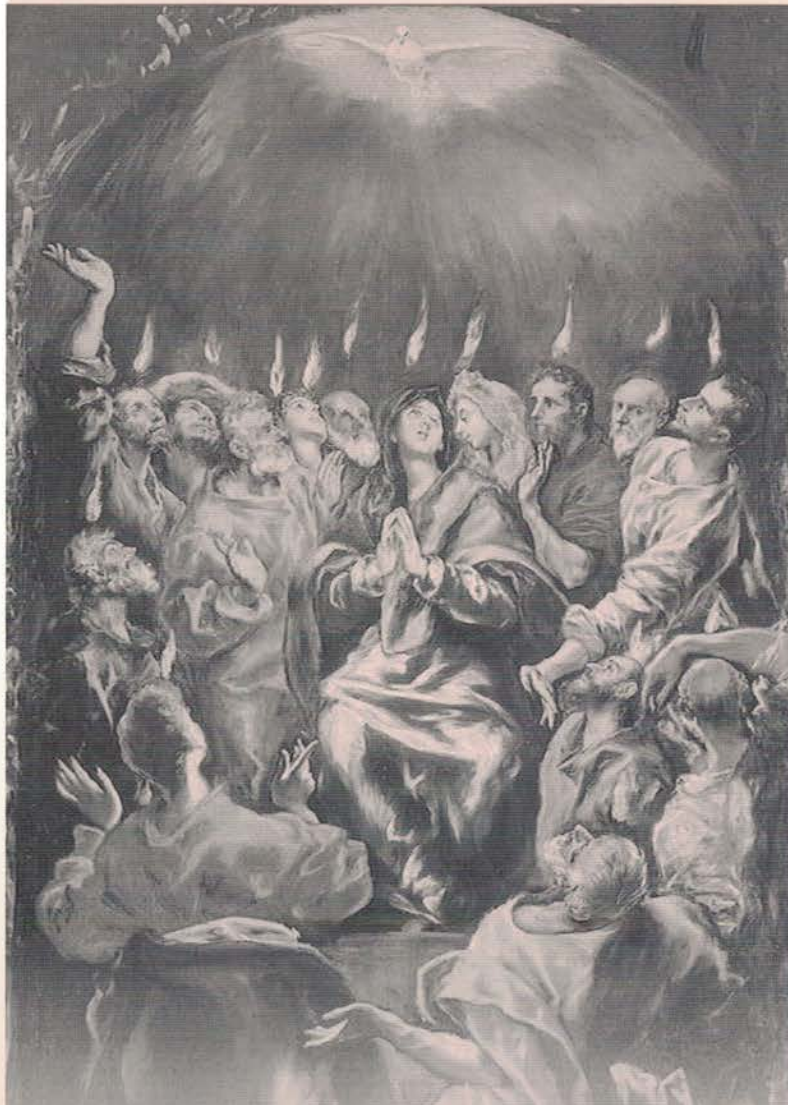


CARMEL CLARION

APRIL – JUNE 2014 † VOLUME XXX, NO. 2



OUR VOCATION

...in Teresian Carmel

CARMEL CLARION

APRIL – JUNE 2014 † VOLUME XXX, NO. 2

Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington Province

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ABOUT THE COVER:

On our cover is the painting by El Greco (1541-1614) called the *Sending of the Holy Spirit, or Pentacost*.

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Editorial

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the Holy Spirit fill our souls and transform our hearts as we journey together in Carmel.

Father Jude Peters, O.C.D., became our Provincial Superior at the Chapter Meeting of the Washington Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. During the OCD Provincial Council meeting that followed, I was named Provincial Delegate to the Secular Order and asked to assume responsibility for the OCDS Main Office in Washington, D.C.

Regional Assistants (formerly called delegates) were appointed as Superiors of OCDS Community Councils in each Region. I was asked to assume responsibility for the Florida Region. Father Paul Fohlin is Northeast Regional Assistant. Brother Robert Sentman is Mid-Atlantic Regional Assistant, and Father Donald Brick is Mid-West Regional Assistant until Father Daniel Chowning returns from his year of ministry in Avila. Liane Melvin will continue in her role as OCDS Administrator, so the transition should go smoothly with no disruption of service in the Main Office.

I am grateful to Father Regis Jordan for his years of hard work and dedicated service to our Secular Order and expect to benefit from his experience and expertise in the days ahead. Thanks also to Father John Grennon for his generous service to the Province. We are hopeful that this new arrangement will promote unity of vision and policy throughout the whole Province. We, the friars, recognize that the Secular Order is a great blessing for us and we remember you in our prayers as you continue to live out the Teresian charism in your own state of life.

My key goal for the 2014-2017 triennium is for both friars and seculars to collaborate together in moving towards the characteristics of Teresian Communities as defined in the Amendment to the OCDS Constitutions, Fraternal Communion.

The writings of our holy parents, St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross, form the basis of a firm foundation for the Order's expectation of OCDS Communities. These are complimented by the Church's need for the laity as written in the Vatican II Documents *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*; and Saint John Paul II's teachings in *Christifideles Laici*. Excerpts that apply to Communities of Teresian Seculars will be published in the next three issues of the Clarion.

May God bless you for your goodness to us.

In Carmel,
Fr Salvatore Sciorba, OCD
OCDS Provincial Delegate
Washington Province of the
Immaculate Heart of Mary

Governance of the Secular Order

The Discalced Carmelite Order is hierarchical, as is Holy Mother Church.



Pope Francis
Vicar of Christ

OCDS Constitutions

41. The Secular Order is juridically dependent on the Discalced Carmelite Friars[34]. The Superior General establishes the local communities and makes pastoral visitations. He may dispense, in particular cases, from the *Constitutions* and local statutes and can grant juridical exceptions. He has the authority to resolve cases which are not foreseen by this legislation and which cannot be resolved by local authorities.



Superior General
Fr. P. Saverio
Cannistra, O.C.D.

OCDS General Delegate
P. Alzinir Debastiani, O.C.D.



41. (cont.) A general Delegate assists the Superior General. His responsibility is to further relations between the Religious and the Seculars and to maintain contact with the Provincial Delegates and Assistants to each community to insure the purpose and wellbeing of the Secular Order.



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

43. The Provincial Superior, usually aided by the Provincial Delegate, is the Superior of the Secular Order within his territory[37]. He is responsible for the well-being of the Secular Order within the territory of his jurisdiction.

OCDS Washington Province Provincial Council

43. (cont.) He is to make visitations of the communities in his jurisdiction and, after consultation with the Council, appoint a Spiritual Assistant for communities[38]. In case of disputes, appeal will be made in the first instance to the Provincial.



Provincial Delegate
Fr. Salvatore Scirba, O.C.D.

57. Where there is an organized circumscription of the friars of the Order, the Secular Order is to form a Provincial Council to assist one another better in formation and the apostolate, but not for intervening in the government of the local communities.

Br. Robert Sentman, O.C.D.
Mid-Atlantic Region

Fr. Donald Brick, O.C.D.
Mid-West Region

Fr. Paul Fohlin, O.C.D.
Northeast Region

Fr. Salvatore Scirba, O.C.D.
Florida Region

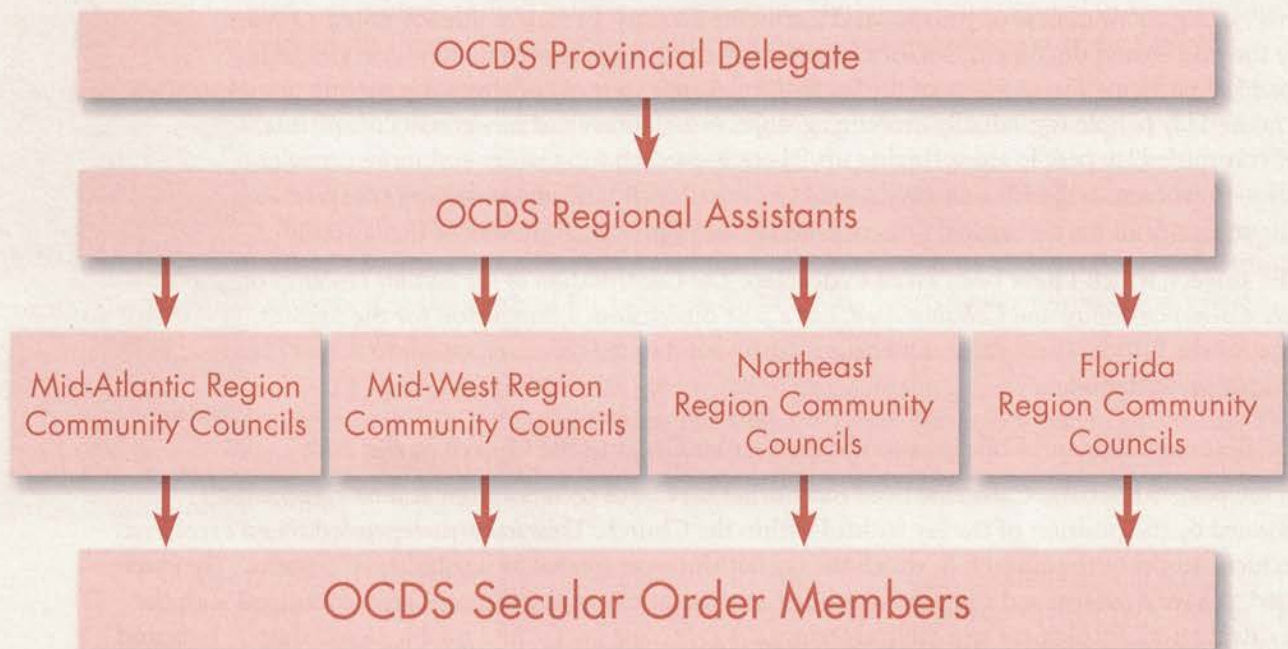
Four OCDS Regional Assistants of the Province

The Secular Order Is Juridically Dependent On The Discalced Carmelite Friars OCDS Constitutions #41 and #43

“The responsibility of the friars to the seculars is exercised in two ways, governance and formation. These two ways must go together for either to be effective. When governance and formation go together it is an experience of guidance, not control. Guidance illuminates the mind and makes the burdens of the Christian life lighter to bear. Indeed, the greatest emphasis in the renewal of the Secular Order since the Second Vatican Council is that of the responsibility for an adequate formation of mature members of the Church and Order.”

Saverio Cannistrà, Superior General, Discalced Carmelite Order
January 6, 2011 letter to the Secular Order, *Carmel Clarion*, July-September 2011

HIERARCHICAL AUTHORITY



The Provincial Delegate of the OCDS in the Washington Province is appointed by the Provincial for a 3-year term after each OCD triennial election. He has the same authority as the Provincial unless it is limited in a specific area. The Regional Assistants are the Superiors of local OCDS Community Councils in the Region.

The immediate authority of OCDS members in each Community is the Council, which is composed of the President and three Councilors. They are elected by eligible community members every three years. The Formation Director is elected by the new President and the three Councilors. The responsibility of this 5-member Council is governance and formation of the OCDS members of the Community ([cf. *Constitutions* #46, #47, #50, #52 and as defined in the OCDS *Statutes* of the Washington Province]).

The Contribution of the Secular Order to the Church

By: Father Camilo Maccise, OCD

Editor's note: This talk was given by the former Father General Camilo Maccise OCD at the 2000 OCDS International Congress held in Mexico.

CO-RESPONSIBILITY AND COLABORATION

Whenever I look out over an assembly of Carmelites, I can't help but think of the mystery of the Church, the pilgrim People of God, throughout the world. We are here, in effect, lay people, religious, priests, women and men, from different races, speaking different languages, expressing a rich variety of cultures. The common faith in the Risen Lord unites us, we who must bear witness to His presence in the heart of the world. At the same time, the Teresian-Carmelite charism unites us, a gift of the Spirit for the service of the Church and the world. You, members of the Secular Carmel, form part of the Carmelite Order of Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross.

The celebration of this Second International Congress of the Secular Carmel signifies a step towards raising an awareness of your lay and Carmelite identity. In fact, as already noted 13 years ago by the post-synod document *Christifideles Laici*, the Spirit has stirred up new energies of holiness and of participation in many of the lay faithful. A new style of collaboration among priests, religious and lay people is gradually evolving; groups, associations and movements of spirituality and of committed lay people are springing up. There is a search for a wider and more active participation of women in the Church and in society. Nowadays it is all about finding concrete ways to bring to reality all the theoretical reflection about the dignity and mission of the lay faithful.¹

The subject, which I have been asked to develop: *The Contribution of the Secular Order to the Church: Co-responsibility and Collaboration*, has a past dimension, a dimension for the present, and one for the future. These three dimensions correspond to the three sections into which I have divided my presentation.

The Co-Responsibility and Collaboration of the Secular Order to the Church in the Past

In the past, the Secular Carmelite lived out his/her service of collaboration and co-responsibility conditioned by the position of the lay faithful within the Church. This, in turn, depended on an excessively hierarchical model of the Church in which the lay faithful were treated as second class "citizens." They were expected to have a passive and receptive attitude to the authority of the Church. This, combined with the scarce catechetical, theological and biblical training, was leaving lay faithful unable to collaborate fully and effectively in the field of evangelization.

Within the religious Orders, the so-called Third Orders, even though they formed part of the Religious Institute, they did so without a clear lay identity. They were called upon to be practically "religious in the world." The co-responsibility and collaboration were reduced to very secondary aspects which, in general, were not related to the charism and spirituality of the religious Order. Rather, they were directed to very secondary aspects of a practical, organizational nature involving activities, initiatives, services connected with the celebration of religious festivals and private devotions such as the Scapular.

As a consequence of the position of the lay faithful in the Church on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the lack of a strong charismatic-spiritual identity, the Secular Order was unable to undertake full collaboration and joint responsibility at pastoral levels, in decision making, and in the promotion of the Christian way of life within the Church. With a few exceptions, there was also a lack of adequate training in Carmelite spirituality. This reduced the realistic opportunities for the Carmelite charism to make a distinctive contribution to the Church. Of course, participation in the liturgy, recitation of



St. Teresa of Jesus dancing!



¹ *Christifideles Laici*, n. 2

the Little Office, completion of some ascetic exercises (fasting & abstinence), and the practice of certain devotions were a means of collaborating in the mission of the Church through prayer, the source of all missionary service. Equally, witness through a Christian way of life was a means of evangelizing others.

Moving from the personal level to the community level of the Secular Carmel, we encounter an absence of qualified personnel in the pastoral field. This latter was entrusted almost exclusively to priests and religious, as much in the Church as in the Carmelite Order. The Secular Carmelite assisted with organizational structure or materials. The situation was far removed from that expounded in *Christifideles Laici* when it affirms that the evangelical images of salt, light and leaven, which apply to all followers of Christ, are more specifically connected to the lay faithful because it speaks of their complete absorption in the world and in humanity for the purpose of spreading the Gospel.² Although it was affirmed that not only the Pastors instituted by Christ could and should take on by themselves the complete saving mission of the Church in the world, in reality, the service and charism of the lay faithful were not recognized, nor, as a result, was their active collaboration in the field of evangelization.

The rediscovery of the Church as the People of God, brought to reality in Vatican II, marked the beginning of a new age for the lay Christian. Recognition was given to his/her dignity and mission which is rooted in joining with Christ through baptism, combined in the People of God, and involves him/her, in their own way, "in the priesthood, prophetic and royal, of Christ"³ to carry out in the Church and in the world, Christ's mission according to their own vocation. The lay person is invited to associate him/herself with the work of the hierarchy since s/he is participating in the saving mission of the Church.

In Vatican II we start to speak of collaboration and joint responsibility of the lay people in the Church. It underlines that they are called "to make the Church present and active in those places and circumstances in which She can only become the salt of the earth through them... Thus it is incumbent on all lay faithful to collaborate in the clear task of ensuring that the divine plan of salvation increasingly reaches out to men across all time and throughout the earth. Therefore, open up the way to them wherever it may be, following the opportunities and according to the needs of the times, so that they may participate enthusiastically in the saving work of the Church."⁴

The bishops of the Church are invited to promote the dignity and responsibility of lay people in the Church; to give them freedom and opportunity to work; to encourage them to take on initiatives. Lay people, for their part, have an obligation "to express their opinion about issues concerning the well-being of the Church ... thus strengthening in the lay faithful a sense of their own responsibility."⁵

The post-synodal exhortation *Christifideles Laici* underlined some specific fields in which the co-responsibility of the lay faithful in the missionary Church might be exercised: the promotion of the dignity of the person, defense of life and religious freedom, the family as the first area of social commitment, witness of a charity demonstrated in solidarity, putting the human person at the center of socio-economic life, and evangelizing our culture as well as other cultures.⁶ It also spoke of personal and joint forms of participation in the life and apostolate of the Church.⁷ The Secular Carmel would be one of those group forms of participation.

Finally, the same post-synodal document invites the lay faithful to find their own vocation and mission and speaks of the need to give them a thorough training so that their human and Christian vocation may exist together. To achieve this vital combination, what is required above all, is a spiritual and doctrinal training, which might enable them to confront the challenges of our times and of their socio-cultural context from the perspective of Christianity and the preaching of the Gospel.⁸

2 Ibid., n.15.

3 *Lumen Gentium*, 31; (See our page 10).

4 Ibid., 33; (See our page 11).

5 Ibid., 37; (See our page 14).

6 *Christifideles Laici*, nn. 36-44.

7 Ibid., nn. 28-30.

8 Ibid., nn. 57-60.



These changes and new requirements of the Church concerning the lay faithful deeply questioned the structures and priorities of the Secular Orders of the Religious Institutes. While their legal connection to the Religious Orders remained firm, new challenges and rich prospects for the present and future appeared.

Co-Responsibility and Collaboration of the Secular Order with the Church in the Present

Having set as a background to our reflection a brief panoramic view of the distant and more recent past concerning the concept and position of the lay faithful in the Church, we may now speak more specifically about the Secular Carmel and what the Church expects of it in the field of joint responsibility and collaboration in its mission of evangelization.

The post-synodal Document on the Consecrated Life, speaking of the cooperation and communion of the lay faithful with the Religious Institutes, explicitly mentions the Third Orders: “In continuity with the historical experiences of the different Secular or Third Orders, we can say that a new chapter has begun, rich with hope, in the history of relations between religious and lay.”⁹

The same document concentrates especially on three areas in which the lay faithful participate – in the case of the Secular Orders that form part of the Institute – in the life of the Religious Institutes: *charism*, *spirituality* and *mission*. It is only within the context of these three aspects that we can understand and direct the joint responsibility and collaboration which is asked of the Secular Order in today’s Church. This requires a training which has as a basic objective the discovery of its lay vocation within the charism and spirituality of the Institute, to be able to live it out through the completion of a mission characterized by joint responsibility and collaboration with the Church.

Charism is a gift from the Spirit, given freely for the service of the Church. Each Order or Congregation to the consecrated life has its own charism expressed in its *Rule* and *Constitutions*. From the charism arises a style or way of living out the Christian and religious life, in other words, a *spirituality*. This spirituality emphasizes certain elements of the Christian way of life and, on the basis of these, lives out what is considered fundamental: life in Christ and from the Spirit, which is received in faith, expressed in love, and lived out in hope. Charism and spirituality lead to apostolic commitment in all fields of evangelization, but more specifically enable and guide one of these. It is as if they provided an experiential and practical specialization in order to create a qualified service for the Church.

I believe it is important to remember, with regard to this position, what the essential elements of the charism and spirituality of the Teresian Carmelite consist of. In the light of the *OCD Constitutions of the brothers*, we may say that its fundamental elements are the following:

- to live giving thanks to Jesus Christ, leaning on the imitation and care of the Blessed Virgin, whose form of life constitutes for the Carmelite a model of imitation of Christ;
- to seek the ‘mysterious union with God’ by the path of contemplation and apostolic activity, indissolubly linked to the service of the Church;
- to accord a particular importance to prayer which, nourished through listening to the Word of God and the liturgy, should lead to the covenant of friendship with God, not only when we pray, but when we live. We commit ourselves in this life of prayer, which must be nourished by faith, hope and above all, charity, to live in the presence and the mystery of the living God;
- to immerse oneself in prayer and in life with apostolic zeal in a climate of human and Christian brotherhood;
- to live out a life of self-sacrifice according to the Gospel from a theological perspective.¹⁰



What is required above all is a spiritual and doctrinal training.



⁹ *Vita Consecrata*, 54.

¹⁰ *Constitutions OCD*, n. 15.

From this charism and spirituality arises a type of apostolic service which, in particular, should be given as much priority in the consecrated way of life as in the Secular Carmelite: *the mission or pastoral nature of spirituality*. Being open to the needs of the Church and the challenges of the world today, we must also give priority to this apostolic service in the Secular Carmelite. This would be the practical means of offering, in co-responsibility, a more efficient collaboration to the Church, on behalf of its Carmelite-Teresian identity.

To Face-up to the Challenges of the World Today as Lay Carmelites

"Do not wait for leaders; do it alone, person to person."
—Mother Teresa



Change in the world is rapid and continuous. Today changes take place in a short time which previously took centuries. On the other hand, these changes are universal due to scientific, political, economic, cultural and technical interdependence. They have a profound effect because they impact the whole human being and his personal existence. Some people and groups create the changes, others are affected by them, but nobody is excluded. Rather than talk of changes, one might consider one change of the age characterized by modernity and post-modernity, by subjectivity and ideologies in crisis. In particular, one recognizes secularization, freedom, globalization and new ethics.

Secularization brings with it a transformation of the relationship between the human being and nature, with others and with God. It is the phenomenon of de-sanctification in order to affirm the legitimate autonomy of the person, of culture, and of technology. This causes certain imbalances between the autonomy of the human being and the loss of the sense of transcendence that leads to secularization; between religious values and new myths and idols. This phenomenon offers the Secular Carmelite the possibility of living and bearing witness to the presence of God in the heart of the world; of helping others to discover in earthly realities the presence of God, as our saints did; but, at the same time, to open them up to the transcendence of a God also present in the deepest center of our being. And this can be made possible through the witness of one's life and with an apostolic commitment which can be present in varied forms.



Tragedy (1903), by Pablo Picasso

Another phenomenon which cannot be ignored is that of **liberation**. People, groups, nations and cultures do not want to be objects in the hands of those who hold on to power. They want to be protagonists in an environment of equality, responsibility, participation and communion. And this cannot happen when new forms of oppression, marginalization and exploitation of the weakest arise. Acknowledgement of the dignity of the human being creates a desire to search for the means to realize this dignity through the exercise of one's fundamental rights, effectively recognized, guarded and nurtured. In this field one must also include the feminist movement which seeks to give woman the position she deserves in society and in the Church. The members of the Secular Carmel are called upon to promote the defense of human dignity, proclaimed by our saints when they reflect on the calling of the human being to be transformed in God. St. John of the Cross said that "a man's thought is worth more than the whole world and, in consequence, only God is worthy of it [thought]." In addition, the way to internal freedom, the source of all true freedom, appears in the spirituality of Carmel.

One element also which characterizes the present day is undoubtedly **globalization**. Today the world is living through a process of unification due to growing interdependence in all spheres of life. The earth is a "global village" with economic, commercial, political and military links. The mass media and communications have brought people close to each other in a world full of news, communications and meetings. It is a process full of contradictions. Economic power is concentrated in the hands of a few, as are the means of communication and information. Everything is controlled. Deep imbalances appear between rich and poor countries and the growing phenomenon of large, poor groups in rich countries, and of rich minorities in poor countries.

There are different dimensions in globalization: technological, economic, political, and cultural. Positive aspects in this are the possibility of extensive global interconnection, access to information and the shortening of distances which can improve the quality of human life. Nevertheless there are negative as-

pects: the excessive search for economic profit which reduces the person to no more than a consumer, the increasing gap between rich and poor, the break-up of cultures and ways of life which globalization tries to standardize. Confronted with this challenge, the Secular Carmelite is called upon to spread the concept of solidarity throughout the world as a requirement of the Gospel. The Carmelite-Teresian charism places the emphasis on brotherhood: to be 'small schools of Christ' like the apostles and the early Christian community in which the believers had "one heart and one soul ... and there was no one among them who needed anything." (Acts 4: 32, 34)

At the core of the changes is the **crisis of the ethics** of the past and the search for a new ethic without the religious institutions and which relegates God and religion to the private domain. We are witnessing the development of bioethics with the great challenges of genetic engineering which threatens to create a standardized humanity. Through manipulation of the human genome scientists sometimes try to 'play God.' There is an urgent need for an ethic based on the dignity of the human person created by God, the only Absolute. It is here too that the experience and writing of the Carmelite saints outline the ways to bear witness and give guidance when making decisions.

However, not all is negative in this world of change. There are also positive tendencies such as the awareness of personal value and the fundamental rights of the individual, the search for a new harmony between humanity and nature, sensitivity to the problems of life, justice and peace, awareness of the value of individual cultures, responsibility of the human being towards the future, a greater feeling for religious and mystical experiences as a means of advancing the process of liberation and personal growth, and a new position for women in society. In all these spheres the spirituality of Carmel has something to say: **Teresa of the Child Jesus, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, Elizabeth of the Trinity, Edith Stein, Titus Brandsma** and many others light up and reinforce these signs of the times with their experiences and teaching.

The Church asks of the Secular Carmel a collaboration and co-responsibility to assist it in "deeply scrutinizing the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel in a manner which, by adapting to each generation, the Church might be able to respond to the timeless questioning of humanity about the meaning of life - present and future, and how these are related."¹¹ To achieve all of this, it is necessary to have practical pathways and specific strategies in the Secular Order to facilitate co-responsibility and collaboration with the Church. This brings us to the possibilities for the future.

Joint Responsibility and Collaboration Between the Secular Order and the Church in the Future

The invitation made by the Church to the religious to renew their charism with creative faith can and must also be extended to the Secular Order. Creative faith implies a return to basics in order to confront actively the challenges of the moment. Within this compromise it is necessary to plan practical ways and to identify the means by which creative faith can be enabled.

Practical pathways: In the effort to make a contemporary interpretation of the identity and mission of the Secular Carmel we must, above all, follow three 'ways': spirituality, training, brotherhood.

Spirituality is the first element which must be present in the process of creative faith for the Secular Order. Only a spiritual experience can lend authenticity to the search for new forms of life and existence. We are talking about Christian Spirituality in general and Carmelite spirituality in particular. Spirituality is the starting point of creative faith. It is the unifying element.

For the renewal of the Secular Carmel to evolve in dynamic faith, an initial and continuous program of **training** is also required. The initial training requires a dialogue and collaboration with today's generation from the standpoint of the reality of modern life and the challenges which they have to face. In this way the charism and spirituality of the Teresian Carmelite can be constantly active through the lay faithful empowered to release the energy which they themselves possess. Continuous training aims to provide the ability to reinterpret the charism and spread the word using language which is realistic and which can be understood by a world very different from past ages.



"There is an urgent need for an ethic based on the dignity of the human person created by God, the only Absolute."



Christ the Teacher

¹¹ *Gaudium et Spes*, 4.

Another important point which must be emphasized in the Secular Carmel is **brotherhood**. In fact, the community dimension of the history of salvation must be highlighted for all Christians. We must help to create a community mentality in the various fraternities, so that the commitments of the Secular Carmel within individual parishes not only possess an individual dimension, but are also collective. The fraternities will have to be able to discern their faith in the light of the times and situations in order to create a united plan of service containing diverse charisms and personal points of view.

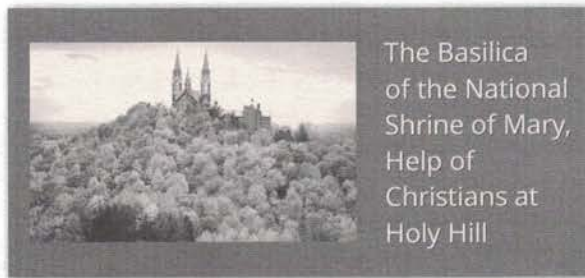
Means by which these journeys may be travelled: Among the methods which experience has shown to be effective in raising awareness and, especially in bringing the journeys mentioned above to reality, we have, in the first place, community reflections, provincial reflections, and those at a general level. These reflections are the starting point for opening new horizons and for controlling the tensions which arise out of this time of change. Another great help in this process is the organization of continuous training courses on the charism and spirituality of Carmel and on the new position of the lay faithful in the Church. This helps to reinforce the distinctive identity of the lay Carmelite and facilitates the re-interpretation and absorption by the lay faithful of the Teresian-Carmelite charism.

An effective method is also that of periodic meetings with the regional office bearers of the Secular Carmel and with their religious helpers. In that wider forum of those in charge it becomes possible to better evaluate the various circumscriptions and to plan projects in the certain knowledge that they can depend on the joint support of those who nourish the spiritual and apostolic life of the members of the Secular Carmel.

Finally, national, regional and international congresses, such as this one, are a valuable means to take stock of who we are, and for a combined resolve to face the challenges of the moment, a time of transition and search for new models which will give back to the Secular Carmel an understandable, existential language.

Conclusion


At the end of these reflections we may conclude that the new ecclesiastical and Carmelite consciousness are an occasion of grace to re-interpret the contribution which the Secular Carmel must make to the Church and of the meaning of its joint responsibility and collaboration.



The Basilica
of the National
Shrine of Mary,
Help of
Christians at
Holy Hill

The Secular Carmel is called upon to offer, in local parishes and on the level of the universal Church, a particular contribution similar to that of the friars and sisters of the Teresian Carmelites: to give witness and to spread the riches of the experience of God and a life of prayer as a way towards transcendence, a source of hope and commitment, common ground for the Christian faiths and the great religions. And to make this contribution at all levels: popular religious practice, broadcasting, academic studies, prayer groups, bible meditation, preaching of spiritual exercises, publications.

The different Institutes are called upon to provide a 'specialized' service which emerges from their charism and spirituality. This special apostolate has shown a notable increase within the Order in recent years. We now have 159 houses dedicated, in one form or another, to this distinctive characteristic of our charism in the church: 68 retreat houses, 67 prayer houses, 24 Institutes of spirituality, 47 Sanctuaries. The active presence of Secular Carmelites in these areas will undoubtedly enrich them and will also reveal the lay face of the Carmel-Teresian charism. This should be the distinctive contribution of the Secular Order of the Carmel to the Church.

Mary, Mother and Sister, extends to us from Our Lord the gifts of evangelical discernment and an acceptance of the risk of faith and the pathways of God at the start of the Third Millennium. 

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *LUMEN GENTIUM* (1964)

Chapter 4: THE LAITY

30. Having set forth the functions of the hierarchy, the Sacred Council gladly turns its attention to the state of those faithful called the laity. Everything that has been said above concerning the People of God is intended for the laity, religious and clergy alike. But there are certain things which pertain in a special way to the laity, both men and women, by reason of their condition and mission. Due to the special circumstances of our time the foundations of this doctrine must be more thoroughly examined. For their pastors know how much the laity contribute to the welfare of the entire Church. They also know that they were not ordained by Christ to take upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the Church toward the world. On the contrary they understand that it is their noble duty to shepherd the faithful and to recognize their ministries and charisms, so that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one mind. For we must all “practice the truth in love, and so grow up in all things in Him who is head, Christ. For from Him the whole body, being closely joined and knit together through every joint of the system, according to the functioning in due measure of each single part, derives its increase to the building up of itself in love.”¹
31. The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.

What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature. It is true that those in holy orders can at times be engaged in secular activities, and even have a secular profession. But they are by reason of their particular vocation especially and professedly ordained to the sacred ministry. Similarly, by their state in life, religious give splendid and striking testimony that the world cannot be transformed and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes. But the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.

¹ Eph. 4:15-16.

32. By divine institution Holy Church is ordered and governed with a wonderful diversity. "For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we, the many, are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another."² Therefore, the chosen People of God is one: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism;"³ sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity. There is, therefore, in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because "there is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus."⁴

If therefore in the Church everyone does not proceed by the same path, nevertheless all are called to sanctity and have received an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God.⁵ And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ. For the distinction which the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God bears within it a certain union, since pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by a mutual need. Pastors of the Church, following the example of the Lord, should minister to one another and to the other faithful. These in their turn should enthusiastically lend their joint assistance to their pastors and teachers. Thus in their diversity all bear witness to the wonderful unity in the Body of Christ. This very diversity of graces, ministries and works gathers the children of God into one, because "all these things are the work of one and the same Spirit."⁶

Therefore, from divine choice the laity have Christ for their brothers who though He is the Lord of all, came not to be served but to serve.⁷ They also have for their brothers those in the sacred ministry who by teaching, by sanctifying and by ruling with the authority of Christ feed the family of God so that the new commandment of charity may be fulfilled by all. St. Augustine puts this very beautifully when he says: "What I am for you terrifies me; what I am with you consoles me. For you I am a bishop; but with you I am a Christian. The former is a duty; the latter a grace. The former is a danger; the latter, salvation."

33. The laity are gathered together in the People of God and make up the Body of Christ under one head. Whoever they are they are called upon, as living members, to expend all their energy for the growth of the Church and its continuous sanctification, since this very energy is a gift of the Creator and a blessing of the Redeemer.

The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself. Moreover, by the sacraments, especially holy Eucharist, that charity toward God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished. Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth. Thus every layman, in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself "according to the measure of Christ's bestowal."⁸

2 1 Rom. 12:4-5

3 Cf. Eph. 4:5

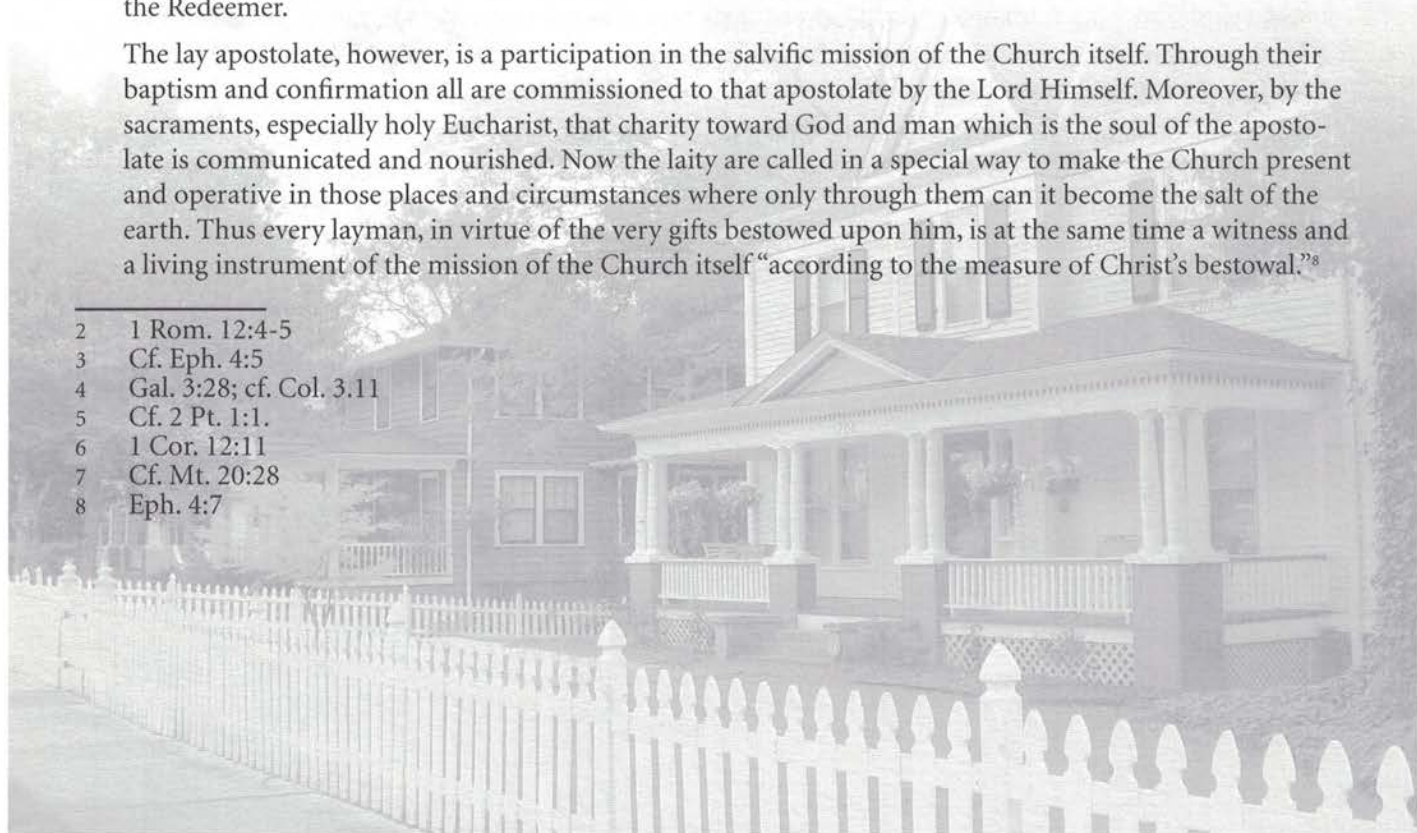
4 Gal. 3:28; cf. Col. 3:11

5 Cf. 2 Pt. 1:1.

6 1 Cor. 12:11

7 Cf. Mt. 20:28

8 Eph. 4:7



Besides this apostolate which certainly pertains to all Christians, the laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy. This was the way certain men and women assisted Paul the Apostle in the Gospel, laboring much in the Lord.⁹ Further, they have the capacity to assume from the Hierarchy certain ecclesiastical functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.

Upon all the laity, therefore, rests the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation to all men of each epoch and in every land. Consequently, may every opportunity be given them so that, according to their abilities and the needs of the times, they may zealously participate in the saving work of the Church.

34. The supreme and eternal Priest, Christ Jesus, since he wills to continue his witness and service also through the laity, vivifies them in this Spirit and increasingly urges them on to every good and perfect work.

For besides intimately linking them to His life and His mission, He also gives them a sharing in His priestly function of offering spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of men. For this reason the laity, dedicated to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and wonderfully prepared so that ever more abundant fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them. For all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne—all these become “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”¹⁰ Together with the offering of the Lord’s body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, as those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.

35. Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the Kingdom of His Father both by the testimony of His life and the power of His words, continually fulfills His prophetic office until the complete manifestation of glory. He does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in His name and with His authority, but also through the laity whom He made His witnesses and to whom He gave understanding of the faith (*sensu fidei*) and an attractiveness in speech¹¹ so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life. They conduct themselves as children of the promise, and thus strong in faith and in hope they make the most of the present,¹² and with patience await the glory that is to come.¹³ Let them not, then, hide this hope in the depths of their hearts, but even in the program of their secular life let them express it by a continual conversion and by wrestling “against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness.”¹⁴

Just as the sacraments of the New Law, by which the life and the apostolate of the faithful are nourished, prefigure a new heaven and a new earth,¹⁵ so too the laity go forth as powerful proclaimers of a faith in things to be hoped for,¹⁶ when they courageously join to their profession of faith a life springing from faith. This evangelization, that is, this announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by the spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world.

9 Cf. Phil. 4:3; Rom. 16:3ff

10 Pt. 2:5

11 Cf. Acts 2:17-18; Rev. 19:10

12 Cf. Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5

13 Cf. Rom. 8:25

14 Eph. 6:12

15 Cf. Rev. 21:1

16 Cf. Heb. 11:1

In connection with the prophetic function is that state of life which is sanctified by a special sacrament obviously of great importance, namely, married and family life. For where Christianity pervades the entire mode of family life, and gradually transforms it, one will find there both the practice and an excellent school of the lay apostolate. In such a home husbands and wives find their proper vocation in being witnesses of the faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children. The Christian family loudly proclaims both the present virtues of the Kingdom of God and the hope of a blessed life to come. Thus by its example and its witness it accuses the world of sin and enlightens those who seek the truth.

Consequently, even when preoccupied with temporal cares, the laity can and must perform a work of great value for the evangelization of the world. For even if some of them have to fulfill their religious duties on their own, when there are no sacred ministers or in times of persecution; and even if many of them devote all their energies to apostolic work; still it remains for each one of them to cooperate in the external spread and the dynamic growth of the Kingdom of Christ in the world. Therefore, let the laity devotedly strive to acquire a more profound grasp of revealed truth, and let them insistently beg of God the gift of wisdom.

36. Christ, becoming obedient even unto death and because of this exalted by the Father,¹⁷ entered into the glory of His kingdom. To Him all things are made subject until He subjects Himself and all created things to the Father that God may be all in all.¹⁸ Now Christ has communicated this royal power to His disciples that they might be constituted in royal freedom and that by true penance and a holy life they might conquer the reign of sin in themselves.¹⁹ Further, He has shared this power so that serving Christ in their fellow men they might by humility and patience lead their brethren to that King for whom to serve is to reign. But the Lord wishes to spread His kingdom also by means of the laity, namely, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace. In this kingdom creation itself will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons of God.²⁰ Clearly then a great promise and a great trust is committed to the disciples: "All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."²¹

The faithful, therefore, must learn the deepest meaning and the value of all creation, as well as its role in the harmonious praise of God. They must assist each other to live holier lives even in their daily occupations. In this way the world may be permeated by the spirit of Christ and it may more effectively fulfill its purpose in justice, charity and peace. The laity have the principal role in the overall fulfillment of this duty. Therefore, by their competence in secular training and by their activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them vigorously contribute their effort, so that created goods may be perfected by human labor, technical skill and civic culture for the benefit of all men according to the design of the Creator and the light of His Word. May the goods of this world be more equitably distributed among all men, and may they in their own way be conducive to universal progress in human and Christian freedom. In this manner, through the members of the Church, will Christ progressively illumine the whole of human society with His saving light.

Moreover, let the laity also by their combined efforts remedy the customs and conditions of the world, if they are an inducement to sin, so that they all may be conformed to the norms of justice and may favor the practice of virtue rather than hinder it. By so doing they will imbue culture and human activity with genuine moral values; they will better prepare the field of the world for the seed of the Word of God; and at the same time they will open wider the doors of the Church by which the message of peace may enter the world.

17 Cf. Phil. 2:8-9

18 Cf. 1 Cor. 15:27

19 Cf. Rom. 6:12

20 Cf. Rom. 8:21

21 1 Cor. 3:23

Because of the very economy of salvation the faithful should learn how to distinguish carefully between those rights and duties which are theirs as members of the Church, and those which they have as members of human society. Let them strive to reconcile the two, remembering that in every temporal affair they must be guided by a Christian conscience, since even in secular business there is no human activity which can be withdrawn from God's dominion. In our own time, however, it is most urgent that this distinction and also this harmony should shine forth more clearly than ever in the lives of the faithful, so that the mission of the Church may correspond more fully to the special conditions of the world today. For it must be admitted that the temporal sphere is governed by its own principles, since it is rightly concerned with the interests of this world. But that ominous doctrine which attempts to build a society with no regard whatever for religion, and which attacks and destroys the religious liberty of its citizens, is rightly to be rejected.

37. The laity have the right, as do all Christians, to receive in abundance from their spiritual shepherds the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the word of God and of the sacraments. They should openly reveal to them their needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which is fitting for children of God and brothers in Christ. They are, by reason of the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which they may enjoy, permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church. When occasions arise, let this be done through the organs erected by the Church for this purpose. Let it always be done in truth, in courage and in prudence, with reverence and charity toward those who by reason of their sacred office represent the person of Christ.

The laity should, as all Christians, promptly accept in Christian obedience decisions of their spiritual shepherds, since they are representatives of Christ as well as teachers and rulers in the Church. Let them follow the example of Christ, who by His obedience even unto death, opened to all men the blessed way of the liberty of the children of God. Nor should they omit to pray for those placed over them, for they keep watch as having to render an account of their souls, so that they may do this with joy and not with grief.²²

Let the spiritual shepherds recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity in the Church. Let them willingly employ their prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative. Attentively in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity. However, let the shepherds respectfully acknowledge that just freedom which belongs to everyone in this earthly city.

A great many wonderful things are to be hoped for from this familiar dialogue between the laity and their spiritual leaders: in the laity a strengthened sense of personal responsibility; a renewed enthusiasm; a more ready application of their talents to the projects of their spiritual leaders. The latter, on the other hand, aided by the experience of the laity, can more clearly and more incisively come to decisions regarding both spiritual and temporal matters. In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each one of its members, may more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world.

38. Each individual layman must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and a symbol of the living God. All the laity as a community and each one according to his ability must nourish the world with spiritual fruits.²³ They must diffuse in the world that spirit which animates the poor, the meek, the peace makers—whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed as blessed.²⁴ In a word, "Christians must be to the world what the soul is to the body." ❧

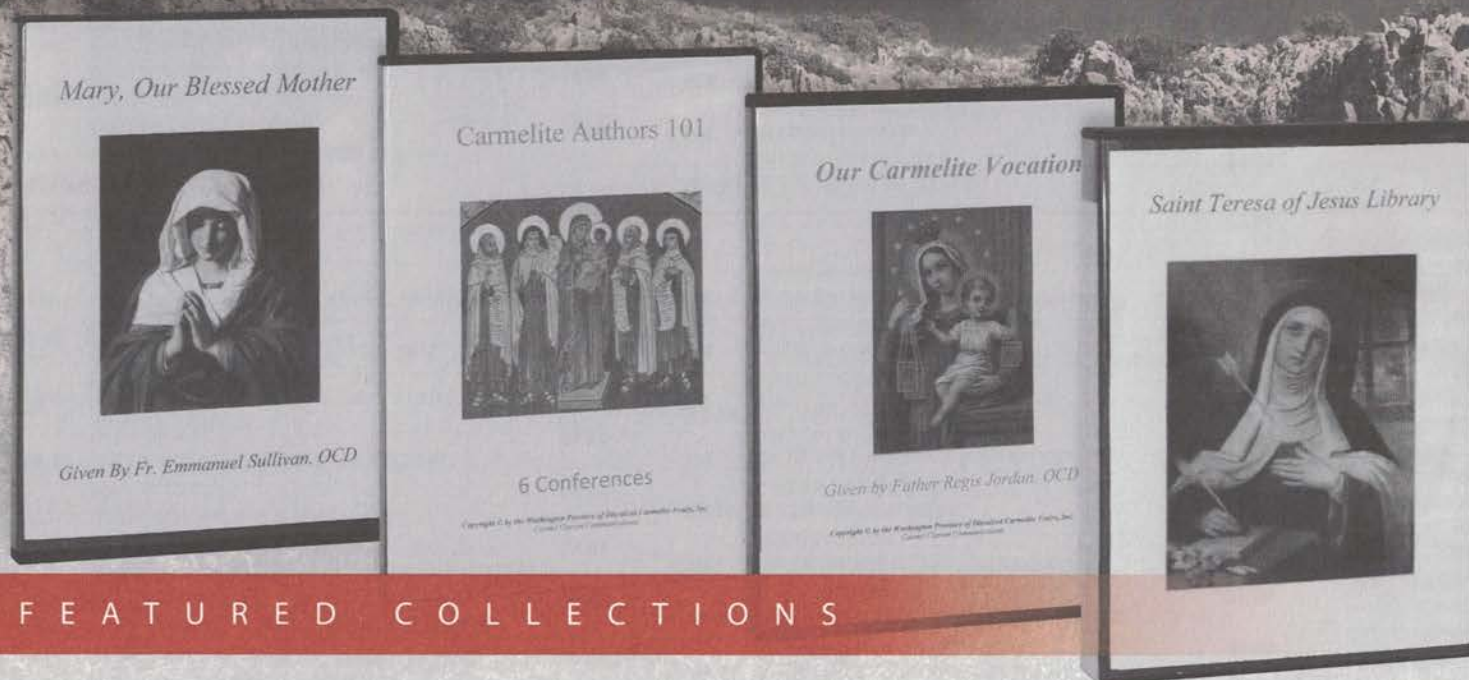
22 Cf. Heb. 13:17

23 Cf. Gal. 5:12

24 Cf. Mt. 5:3-9

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Reconciling Sanctity and Service: The Perfect Way of St. Teresa of Avila

By Susan Muto, PhD

But those who do what is true come to the light, so, that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God (John 3:21).



"Christ with Mary and Martha" by Johann Friedrich Overbeck

Who of us has not felt the tension between our call to live a holy and sanctified life modeled after Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus and the inner urging to serve others for his sake like Martha cleaning the house, setting the table, and preparing the meal (cf. Luke 10:38-42 and *Way*, 17:5-6)?* We know from the experience of having done many tasks in our life that the ways in which we can live a life of dedicated service to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Master are as many and varied as the faces of his followers throughout the world. At the base of all these ways is the life of prayer, which, in the oft-quoted words of St. Teresa of Avila, "is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends" (*Life*, 8:5), a frequent heart-to-heart conversation with him whom we know loves us. The problem I want to address is not how to pray—Teresa already does that in her reflections on the Lord's Prayer in *The Way of Perfection* (chapters 19-42)—but how to become living prayer while finding the right rhythm between work and worship, labor and leisure, participation and contemplative presence in everyday life.

Teresa sought the harmonious integration of solitude with his Majesty and solidarity with her community. She strove to live in cloistered simplicity behind the walls of Carmel, but her life records an excess of necessary involvement that in due time affected the reform of the entire Church. At the heart of her wisdom is a wholehearted commitment. She ties herself to the crucified Christ, but she refuses to be bound by mere worldly concerns, neither for personal honor and popularity, nor for visible success. She knows from experience that to find our deepest self we must lose ourselves in Christ; to gain inner freedom and the joy of being daughters and sons of God, we must renounce all for his sake (cf. John 12:25).

Throughout her life, Teresa tried to blend the inspirational and the incarnational, the uplift of contemplation and the ordinariness of action, ranging from peeling the potatoes for the sisters' supper to composing spiritual masterpieces. From 1560 until shortly before her death in 1582, she was active in founding new convents throughout Spain. In the midst of this detailed organization, she was receiving interior graces so intense that she records for us the exact date on which the grace of spiritual marriage was given to her, Nov. 18, 1572 (*Testimonies*, 31). Truly Martha and Mary met in Teresa of Avila. She was a living example of total abandonment to Christ and of loving service to his Church.



"Girl peeling potatoes" by Albert Anker

In her description of prayer as "an intimate sharing between friends," she assures us that we can tell our Spouse, our Brother, our Comforter, our Redeemer whatever we feel and think. There is no place for secrets between lovers. Ours may be prayers of petition or ground swells of praise. No matter what form prayer takes, it signifies our conviction that without God we are and can do nothing. For Teresa, the foundation of Christian prayer is humility by which she means to "walk in truth before God" (*Castle*, VI, 10:6). We have to experience, as it were, a kind of "ego desperation"—the failure of plans and projects that are humanly engineered because we have neglected to listen first to God. In such moments of loss of control, we recognize humbly that God alone is our strength, that in her words, God alone suffices!

Once we learn to walk in the truth of who we are as wholly dependent on God, we can practice the second core virtue of detachment, which, Teresa indicates, is not an exclusive but an inclusive virtue. When we embrace God totally, we embrace everything not for its own sake but as an epiphany of divine generosity. The more we live in the liberating disposition of detachment, the more we die to egoism and regain our true self as made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Genesis 1:26-27).

The fruits of this embrace flow forth in the self-giving quality of Christian love marked by peaceful reconciliation, discretion, patience, forgiveness, and empathy. "In this house," she wrote in *The Way of Perfection*, "all must be friends, all must be loved, all must be held dear, all must be helped" (*Way*, 4:7). The emphasis on *all* prevents anyone from playing favorites or collecting community "pets" or violating the rules of humble, detached charity. It was not Teresa's purpose to burden her sisters with more rules than they already had to observe. Life had taught her that there were only three virtues that were of the utmost importance: "The first of these is love for one another; the second is detachment from all created things; the third is true humility, which, even though I speak of it last, is the main practice and embraces all the others" (*Way*, 4:4). If these virtues become the basis of life in a community of nuns who work diligently and pray always, what follows will be the practice of charity; the avoidance of making anyone or anything but God ultimate; and the illumination of daily life by being true to oneself and God.

GROWING IN INTIMACY WITH CHRIST

Excellent directress that she is, Teresa wastes no words. She lives what she teaches and expects her sisters to act like the called, committed, and consecrated women they are. Certain inner and outer conditions may facilitate their life of prayer, but its efficacy will be revealed not through a Jesus-and-I piety but in selfless service of others for Christ's sake. Teresa talks to her sisters and to us in this book [*The Way of Perfection*] as if she were an ambassador of the Lord to whom he has entrusted teachings of great importance for our personal and ecclesial salvation. His friends are few, but they must be of vintage stock, not succumbing to the seductions of the demonic.

To acquire the virtue of constant awareness of Christ within us, we need to remember that "the Lord does not leave us so abandoned; for if we humbly ask him for his friendship, he will not deny it to us" (*Way*, 26:2). Only lovers of the Lord know how to love others with respect and discretion. To remain in his presence, we must look at his cross. This loving glance helps us to focus our thoughts and to make continuous acts of faith, hope, and love. Soon we may begin to acquire the virtue of detachment. By turning to Christ and affixing our memory, imagination, and anticipation on him, we find that nothing can separate us from so great a lover. The more we exercise this power of picturing Christ alive in us, the more we will feel his presence. It keeps us humble to know that "... if we cannot succeed in one year, we will succeed later. Let's not regret the time that is so well spent. Who's making us hurry? I am speaking of acquiring this habit and of striving to walk alongside this true Master" (*Way*, 26:2). Such is the best way to please God and to gain his friendship. Habits like these remedy our distresses, failings, and weaknesses.

The reconciliation of sanctity and service is gauged by the depth of our intimacy with the Lord. Wherever we are on the path to holiness, we must see Christ as our model and seek whatever means of grace we need to make him present in our lives. Devotion to the sacred humanity of Jesus is never an impediment to prayer or service. Teresa insists that however lofty our presence to the mystery may be, we must remain devoted to Christ as our constant companion in weal and woe, in consolation and desolation. He is there for us in his passion and resurrection and preeminently in the Blessed Sacrament. Not for a moment does he leave us, even though we often forget about him. As Teresa laments in *The Book of Her Life*: "And what a pity it was for me to have left you, my Lord, under the pretext of serving you more" (*Life*, 22:6).

Nosce te ipsum.

Know thyself. If men would search diligently their own minds, and examine minutely their thoughts and actions, they would be more cautious in censuring the conduct of others, as they would find in themselves abundantly suf-



Only when we live in intimate nearness to the Lord can we endure whatever demands a life of service makes upon us. A true friend like him knows what we must endure to follow him in this world. He assures us that we do not walk alone, that he is always at our side. As John, the beloved disciple, said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Christ in the fullness of his divinity and humanity is the Great Reconciler of any tension we may feel between contemplation and action.



FACETS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH CHRIST AND OTHERS

The rules governing friendship in the natural order apply as well to the supernatural order, though certainly divine friendship has to be purified from the imperfections of human bondings. Inspired by Teresa, we learn that to be a close friend of Christ in all that we are and do, we need to foster four degrees of mutual-ity. The first is *mutual encounter* comparable to the give-and-take that happens spontaneously between two loving, affectionate people. Even then they may have to engage in years of testing their relationship, but not so with Christ. "What more do we desire than to have such a good friend at our side, who will not abandon us in our labors and tribulations, as friends in the world do" (*Life*, 22:7). What cancels any possibility of spiritual friendship is the burden of habitual sin. To be friends with Christ and others, our lives must mirror the actual and sanctifying graces that continue to transform our hearts.

The second degree concerns *mutual knowledge*, mindful of the familiar saying that "to know you is to love you." Humanly speaking, shared values and interests create closer bonds between us. In a similar vein, frequent conversations with Christ enhance our receptivity to revealed truths and our awareness of the commissions he has in mind for us. Admiration is as important in this context as admonition. Much knowledge of her life and work came to Teresa through substantial locutions. Without this inner clarity, she might have succumbed to demonic seduction or chose her own way over God's guiding will (cf. *Life*, chapters 25 and 26).



The third degree entails growth in *mutual love*, which moves us initially to embrace God and want to be a captive of love's call. Submission and surrender become habitual dispositions of souls awed by what Christ has done for them. As love increases, so does the desire for discipleship. "For now, as one who is in his house, you glorify the Lord and praise him with more affection and desire; and it seems you cannot fail to serve him" (*Way* 3 1:13).

The fourth degree signifies the unceasing gift of *mutual presence*, mindful of the promise made by Jesus to his disciples: "Abide in me as I abide in you" (John 15:4). We are with him whom we know loves us. Human friendships, however deep, are limited by time and space. Naturally, friends cannot

meet everyday, but the same is not true in the supernatural sphere. Through **Baptism** and **Holy Communion**, we enjoy the sacramental presence of Christ moment by moment. He is nearer to us than we are to ourselves.

Being with him and in him is not a gift given for personal pleasure or contentment but to make us more effective instruments in helping Christ to apply the graces of his redemption to every soul in need of forgiveness. The life of prayer and presence, of sanctity and service, is the most efficacious way to cooperate with Christ in the work of salvation. Our whole life becomes an opening to the mystery of being of one mind and one heart with him and of participating in his salvific mission. While we must make every effort to be in an habitual state of grace, free from even venial sin and striving at all times to do good, we must humbly acknowledge that "Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15).

Teresa knew our hearts were a veritable battlefield on which we had to resist the attacks of mortal and venial sins, but she also said that we ought not to look at our sins but at our Blessed Lord who redeemed us (cf. *Way*, 3:8). Any time we offend his Majesty, we inflict some damage on our life of prayer, deliberately putting our whims before his will, but this is no reason to despair. So great is his mercy that he reaches down to our misery and enables us to retain the grace of our friendship with him. Sin may cool the fervor of our love but forgiveness sets it aflame again. Lessons learned in pain by true servants make their souls more pleasing to the Lord. Though his best friend Peter betrayed him, Christ accepted his repentant heart and made him the rock on which he built his Church (cf. *Way*, 27:6). Like this repentant fisherman, the more we acknowledge our weaknesses, the closer to Christ we will be. This is why Teresa concludes that humility embraces all other virtues. In fact, were we playing a game of chess, humility would resemble the queen, the one piece capable of checkmating the king. As she explains:



“St. Peter Penitent” by Guido Reni

The queen is the piece that can carry on the best battle in this game and all the other pieces help. There’s no queen like humility for making the King surrender. Humility drew the King from heaven to the womb of the Virgin, and with it, by one hair, we will draw him to our souls. And realize that the one who has more humility will be the one who possesses him more; and the one who has less will possess him less. For I cannot understand how there could be humility without love or love without humility; nor are these two virtues possible without detachment from all creatures (*Way*, 16:2).

Humility is the bridge in Teresa’s life and writings between living a holy life and giving all to God. She characterizes humble persons as those who never lose sight of who they are—creatures absolutely dependent on God for everything; recipients of undeserved gifts who never “stop thanking God” (*Way*, 3 8:3). As a result, they feel an even greater obligation to serve him in whatever way he decrees. Such souls place little confidence in themselves and spend a great deal of time thanking God from whom they receive all that is good:

Self-esteem is far removed from these persons. They like others to know about their sins and like to tell them when they see themselves esteemed... In what amounts to his greater service, they are already so forgetful of self that they can’t even believe that others feel some things and consider them an affront (*Way*, 36:10).

Customarily, such servants flee from praise, prefer to accept criticism, and find in it a grain of truth. They would rather be humiliated as Christ was before his accusers than be on the defensive. As Teresa says, “This is a wonderful way to imitate the Lord who took away all our faults” (*Way*, 15:1). When it comes to serving the Lord with gladness, Teresa found that one accomplished more for his holy reign by being held in little esteem, by living the hidden life, and by remembering that our physical, mental, moral, and spiritual help comes from the Lord, who is our strength (cf. *Way*, 15:2).

SERVANT-HOOD AS THE AVENUE TO HOLINESS

The traits of true and holy servant-hood include, among others, not ambitiously seeking high offices or ranks for the sake of personal honor or gain (cf. *Way*, 12:7) and not looking at others’ faults before we examine our own. It is important to guard against taking credit for accomplishments that are only possible because of virtues given to us by the Lord (cf. *Way*, 38:9). If we do have a work of significance thrust upon us, we must humbly seek the advice of others, especially our confessors (cf. *Way*, 40:4). In the face of our own misdeeds, we must not become irritated or depressed nor expect to make progress on our own, but always be happy and joyful before the Lord since, whether God made us “Marthas” or “Marys,” we must come to see that “true humility consists ... in great readiness to be content with whatever the Lord may want us to do ... and in always finding oneself unworthy to be called his servant.” Teresa goes on to say, with the wisdom that can only come from experience:



“Christ Washing Peter’s Feet” by Ford Maddox Brown

If contemplating, practicing mental and vocal prayer, taking care of the sick, helping with household chores, and working even at the lowliest tasks are all ways of serving the Guest who comes to be with us and eat and recreate, what difference does it make whether we serve in the one way or the other (*Way*, 17:6).

What better words than these could reconcile the conflict in us between sanctity and service? Teresa is a great proponent of the wisdom of promoting a “both/and” rather than an “either/or” approach to life. She seeks what we would call today “win/win situations,” because she has a secret only the wisest among us are given: without Christ we lose; with him we gain a hundredfold. In other words, when we walk in the truth of who we are, we cannot help but love one another and be detached from the sinful traps of power, pleasure, and possession. The heart of the Gospel message is that God has “first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Anyone, poor or rich, illiterate or learned, may be chosen by his Majesty to do good works and never to hurt anyone by word or deed. The virtue of detachment helps us to be other-centered. The first person from whom we have to be detached is ourselves! Only then can we grow more like Christ, empty ourselves of all that is self-aggrandizing for his sake, and purify our intentions to do whatever must be done out of love for God, in a disinterested but most effective way.



*“Penance of Mary Magdalene”
by El Greco*

What often causes a serious split between sanctity and service is excessive stress. Were Teresa to uncover its causes, she might say that distress is inevitable if we exclude Christ from whatever we do. It is a myth to imagine that we can operate alone. Bad relationships full of resentment, jealousy, and absorption in irrelevant issues all cause stress, not only in our own interiority but in the family or community or workplace to which we belong. Unhealthy attachments and the arousal of passions that sever us from Christ and his Church shift our stress quotient into high gear. We soar from normal stresses to “off-the-chart” distresses that erode respectful collaboration and pit individualistic egos against each other. Lost in the process is even courteous decorum, further exploding already hypertensive hearts. Stress rises when we ourselves do not care any longer for the overall spiritual good of ourselves and others; when we become trapped in subjectivistic feelings with little or no energy left to assess wisely an objective situation; and when prejudgments of who and what is worthy of love block the outflow of compassion and make it impossible to see, beneath the surface posturings of seemingly unlovable persons, the presence of Christ.

The directives St. Teresa gives us to reconcile sanctity and service can only be obeyed if we embrace everything in God and for God’s sake, keeping nothing for ourselves. In this way we gain everything, including freedom of spirit, perfect peace, and a blessed release from ingrained egoism and spiritual pride. As we see in the life of another holy woman, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, “who described herself as a tiny pen in a mighty hand,” the mountaintops of spirituality and the trenches of functionality are two branches on the one vine.



Anyone, in any walk of life, longing for liberation from self-preoccupation and union with God, can benefit from Teresa’s gentle yet firm counsel. She offers sensible, clear directives all sincerely seeking lovers of God can follow. Humility lets us find our most congenial self in Christ. Detachment enables us to live in each situation with a high degree in compatibility. We can be near to others in genuine care while maintaining reasonable and respectful distance. Charity flows over into compassion for our own weaknesses and for the vulnerability of those who people our world.

Teresa was not only a fine directress of formation, she was also an obedient directee. She placed herself under the guidance of spiritual directors, confessors, and superiors. She knew how important it was to find combined in a confessor both learning and wisdom. Lacking one or the other of these virtues, a confessor might do great harm to a penitent. This happened in Teresa’s case. She tells about the time she spoke of a matter of conscience with a confessor who had gone through many courses of theology. He did her a great deal of harm by telling her that some matters did not amount to anything. She trusts that he did not intend to misinform

her, but that he simply did not know what else to say. The ideal is to speak to learned persons who are also wise and experienced. She says emphatically, “If the appointed confessor is not spiritual and learned, they [her sisters] should at times seek out others” (*Way* 5:4). Even if a confessor has these qualities, it is still good to consult with others, because it is possible for him to be mistaken.

Wisdom, learning, and experience are spiritual gifts that reveal the integration of sanctity and service in the realm of spiritual direction as well as in daily life. These gifts come to us from God. Our responses to his generosity lead us to pursue constant prayer as well as the meditative reading of Holy Scripture and other classical Christian writings like *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, which Teresa mentions as a key to her own conversion (*Life*, 9:8). She herself writes with womanly sensitivity, with a sharp intellect, and an innate capacity for reflection worthy of a Doctor of the Church. She is not baffled by the paradoxes of Christian living but handles them with humor and humility. She shows that it is possible to experience a variety of good but challenging relationships while preserving recollection. She herself functions in a “man’s world” while experiencing the heights of mystical union in her feminine soul. If one lives with Christ as the core and center of one’s life, one can serve the Church tirelessly while maintaining inner tranquility.

Teresa is a living witness to the marriage of ministry and mysticism, of service and sanctity, grounded in humility, detachment, and fraternal charity. These virtues constitute a Trinity of “be-attitudes” embodied fully in Jesus Christ, who is the humble, detached, charitable model we must emulate, whether we go forth in service or return to our “cell” in solitude. 🏰

Notes:

*All citations to *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila* are taken from Volume One, containing *The Book of Her Life* (hereafter abbreviated *Life*, followed by the chapter and paragraph number) and *Spiritual Testimonies*, (hereafter abbreviated *Testimonies*, followed by the chapter number) and Volume Two, containing *The Way of Perfection* (hereafter abbreviated *Way*, followed by the chapter and paragraph number) and *The Interior Castle* (hereafter abbreviated *Castle*, followed by the number of the dwelling place, the chapter, and the paragraph). Both volumes are translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD, and Otilio Rodriguez, OCD (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1976 and 1980).



Northeast Retreat News

October 11, 2014, District 5, Day of Recollection at Saint Mary’s in Mansfield, MA
Directed by Fr. Mark Develis, OCD St. Teresa & Suffering.

October 17-19, 2014, District 6, OCDS Weekend Retreat given by Fr. Leonard Copeland, OCD at Betania II, 154 Summer St., in Medway, MA (www.betania2.org), contact Debby Anderson, OCDS, 116 Castle Hill Road, Windham, NH 03087

October 24-26, 2014, District 3, OCDS Weekend Retreat given by Fr. John Grennon, OCD at Christ the King Retreat Center, Syracuse, NY. Contact: Joyce Ponserella at secularcarmelit@gmail.com or 518-248-4291.

In Remembrance



The Sacred Heart of Jesus of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Clarkston MI reported the loss of four members. **Mary Ann, St. Therese, Shiff, OCDS**, made Definitive Promise on May 18th 2008 and entered eternal life on December 1, 2010. **John, Joseph, Shiff, OCDS**, made Definitive Promise in 2005 and entered eternal life on August 4th, 2012. **Joan, Lucia Terese of the Holy Face, Reilly, OCDS**, made Definitive Promise on May 16th 2010 and entered eternal life on August 18th, 2013. **Florence, Rose Mary Elizabeth of the Trinity, Celesky, OCDS**, made Definitive Promise in 1999, took vows and entered eternal life on December 7th 2013.

Mary, Rose of Crown of Thorns, Carter, OCDS, made Vows on March 9, 1986 and began eternal life on March 16th, 2014. She is a deceased member of the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel & St. Teresa of Jesus Community in Essex, MD.

The Flos Carmeli Community in Jacksonville FL report two members who entered eternal life in the same month. Serving President **Frances of Mary of the Sorrowful Passion and Divine Mercy, St. Germain, OCDS**, made Vows in May 2010 and began eternal life on May 1st, 2013. **Alice, of St. Joseph of the Holy Family, McClellan, OCDS**, made Definitive Promise on May 17th, 2013 in artinilo mortis and began eternal life on May, 21st, 2013.

Helen, Regina of the Holy Wounds, Fajt, OCDS, made Definitive Promise on November 16th 1988 and began eternal life on May 9th, 2014. She is a deceased member of the Community of Mary and Joseph in Latrobe, PA.

Theresa, Elizabeth of the Trinity, Swansegar, OCDS, made Vows on November 13th 2005 and began eternal life on April 5th, 2014. She is a deceased member of the Our Lady of Loretto Community in Loretto, PA.

The Queen of the Holy Rosary Community in North Port, FL reported the loss of three members. **Phyllis, Mary Terese of the Mystical Rose, Knorr, OCDS**, made Definitive Promise on October 9th, 2011 and entered eternal life on April 18th, 2014. **Catherine Marie McEntee, OCDS**, was born on March 31st, 1923, made Promises in the former Immaculate Heart of Mary Community in Montclair, NJ, and entered eternal life on June 19th, 2014. **Lillian, Mary Therese of the Blessed Sacrament, Reilly, OCDS**, made Definitive Promise on October 9th, 2011 and entered eternal life on July 14th, 2014.

Martha Lilly, OCDS, made Definitive Promise on June 28th, 2012 in artinilo mortis and began eternal life on July 20th, 2012. She is a deceased member of the Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Community in Owensboro, KY.

Delores, Therese of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Houseman, OCDS, made Vows on May 11th 2003 and began eternal life on May 26th, 2014. She is a deceased member of the Our Lady of Mercy Community in Schenectady, NY.

LaVerne, Joseph Helen, Calvaresi, OCDS, made Vows in May 1999 and began eternal life on June 5th, 2014. She is a deceased member of the Our Lady of the Rosary and St. Joseph in West Reading, PA.

Janet Patricia, Joan of the Sacred Heart, Fairbank, OCDS, made Definitive Promise on June 12th 2011 and began eternal life on December 14th, 2013. She is a deceased member of the former Community of Joseph and Mary in Winchester, VA.

Mystics All?

A Carmelite Nun

“It seems that I am contradicting in this last chapter what I had said before.”



With this sweetly ingenuous remark, written at the beginning of chapter 20 of her *Way of Perfection*, St. Teresa of Avila laid the fuse for what would be, in the following centuries, the most disputed question in spiritual theology: the question of whether or not all Christians are called to the mystical life.¹

The contradiction to which she refers may be presented thus: in chapter 17, paragraph 2 of the *Way of Perfection*, she writes, “Thus, although in this house all are engaged in prayer, it does not follow that all are to be contemplatives. This is impossible.” In chapter 19, paragraph 15 of the same book she writes, “Note that Our Lord invites all ... If this invitation were not general, the Lord would not call us all, and if he did call us he would not say, ‘I will give you to drink.’ ... But ... I hold it for certain that all those who do not stop on the way shall not lack this living water.”

These two passages have been discussed and interpreted time and again since she wrote them. The first one is obviously the more explicit: “It does not follow that all” even of her own nuns “are to be contemplatives. This is impossible.” The second passage is more ambiguous. To have a clear understanding of it, one must decide what she meant by “this living water.” Was she in truth talking about infused contemplation?

Much ink would flow through the centuries in discussing these matters. The controversy exploded openly some hundred years ago with the publication of *The Degrees of the Spiritual Life* by Auguste Sauré in 1896 and *The Graces of Interior Prayer* by Father Augustin Poulain, SJ, in 1901.² Both authors claimed to present the traditional teaching on contemplation of St. Teresa of Jesus, and each came to a different conclusion. So much so, their opinions met head on. Over the next 25 years (the controversy was not even interrupted by World War I), more than two dozen articles and books would appear, centering for the most part on these three points: whether the ascetical life and the mystical life are two separate ways to perfection, or whether they are two stages in the same way; on what constitutes the mystical life; and, finally, on whether or not there may be more than one form of supernatural contemplation. The essential question behind these discussions is: *Are all Christians called to the mystical life and to infused contemplation?*

The most outstanding representatives of the two opposing opinions were Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, and Father Joseph de Gibbered, SJ. Father Garrigou-Lagrange energetically defended the unity of the spiritual life. “The mystical life, which is characterized by infused contemplation and infused love of the divine goodness, is thus seen to be in the normal way of sanctity. ... The principles formulated by St. Thomas on the gifts of the Holy Ghost, received by all the just, and the doctrine of St. John of the Cross on the passive purifications thus lead us to admit the general and remote call of all interior souls to infused contemplation.”³

Father de Gibbered, aware of the varying definitions of the word “mystical,” does not himself say whether all souls are called to the mystical life. He does however state: “‘Mystical’ can also be taken in its proper and wider sense as meaning the state of a soul which acts under the habitual influence of the gifts of the Holy

- 1 All quotations from the works of St. Teresa of Jesus are from the *Obras Completas*, Editorial de Espiritualidad, Madrid, 1963. This writer is responsible for all translations in this article, unless otherwise indicated.
- 2 Both of these works were translated into English soon after their first publication: *The Degrees of the Spiritual Life*, trans. by Dom Bede Camm, OSB (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne Ltd., 1907); *The Graces of Interior Prayer*, trans. by Leonora L. Yorke Smith (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Truebner and Co. Ltd, 1910; and St. Louis: B. Herder, 1910).
- 3 *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, trans. by Sister M. Timothea Doyle, OP, Vol. II (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1944), 321.

Ghost. In this sense the mystical state is per se the state of the perfect; and, a fortiori, the same can be said if the mystical state is identified with the unitive way.”⁴

However he also holds: “The way or state of infused contemplation is not the only normal way to perfect love. ... Souls can ascend to any degree of sanctity without habitually walking in the way of infused contemplation. ... Though we concede that the way of infused contemplation is in itself a more excellent way, since it begets a greater conscious intimacy between God and man even while he is still on earth, yet we assert that the way of infused contemplation is not the only way to sanctity, and that it is not universally and in every case the more efficacious way. Hence there is no degree of love, and therefore no degree of perfection, which cannot be attained outside this way.”⁵



What made this matter so important was the fact that a large number of fervent and practicing Christians could not claim to have experienced infused contemplation to any marked degree. If infused contemplation is meant to be an integral part of the Christian spirituality, then one would have to conclude that such people, fervent though they were, were in some manner deficient in their spiritual life. If, on the other hand, infused contemplation is an extraordinary grace, then there is nothing unusual in its absence.

Surprisingly, the Carmelites were late in entering the controversy. Occupied as they were with reestablishing conventual life in the Spanish peninsula following the suppression of religious orders in the 19th century, it was only after World War I that they were free to deal with these matters, which concerned them so closely. St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross had been claimed as authorities by both sides. Beginning with a series of articles, the Carmelites came to the defense of the “traditional” Teresian doctrine of two ways of holiness, the ordinary and the extraordinary, and of the distinction between acquired and infused contemplation. Their efforts culminated in the Teresian Congress, held in Madrid in 1923, and the Congress of St. John of the Cross, held five years later.

The Teresian Congress brought together the most outstanding teachers of spirituality. It sought to summarize St. Teresa’s teachings. Its formal declarations begin:

In our present condition, the spiritual life can be practically identified with the supernatural life, and its animating principle consists in the union with God through grace.⁶

In what concerns mental prayer, the Congress stated:

Those persons who, for reasons of character or because they are sufficiently advanced in perfection, are not at ease with discursive methods, may use the method called “acquired contemplation” in one of the two forms recommended by St. Teresa: that of a simple gaze of affection, or that of interior recollection.⁷



Infused contemplation, [on the other hand], is the mystical operation par excellence ... Consequently, in the hierarchy of means, it is the ultimate ideal and, as it were, the ultimate stage for souls called to mystical union with God. The state of contemplation is characterized by the growing predominance of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and by the superhuman mode by which, through means of these Gifts, are produced all good actions...It therefore follows that contemplation is the ordinary way of sanctity and of virtue lived to an heroic degree.⁸

To underline its view that mystical union is not the only form of perfection, the Congress went on to say, “In the Interior Castle, the Holy Mother encountered two completely distinct orders of phenomena: those

4 *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, by Joseph de Gibbered, SJ, trans. by Paul Barrett, OFMCap (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1953), 282.

5 Ibid. 346-47.

6 “La Escuela Mistica Carmelitana,” by Crisogono de Jesus Sacramentado, OCD, in *Mensajero de Santa Teresa y de San Juan de la Cruz* (Madrid, 1930), 282. This author, himself a firm defender of the “two way” theory and the distinction between acquired and infused contemplation, gives a blow-by-blow account of the controversy.

7 Theme IV, no. 7, quoted in “Escuela,” 287.

8 Theme V, nos. 1, 3, 4, and 5, Ibid. 288-9.



“St. John of the Cross” by
Celine Martin

in which the soul acts of itself with the help of grace; others in which the soul is moved supernaturally by God.”⁹

The Congress of St. John of the Cross, held a few years later, emphasized this last point even more strongly, stating:

The states of perfection, by which the soul gradually reaches the summit of perfection, are three: that of beginners, that of proficients or the advanced, and that of the perfect; these can be found proportionably in the ascetic way and, even more fully, in the mystical way.¹⁰

The prayer of contemplation ... indicated by St. John of the Cross in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, and into which the soul actively enters in due time, is truly acquired, active, ordinary contemplation of the first category. It is not infused, passive or mystical (contemplation). ... According to St. John of the Cross, this acquired contemplation in faith is reached with ordinary or ascetical graces by souls faithful to the exercise of mental prayer and self-mastery, unless, for reasons which God alone knows, they belong to the number of those — less than half — who are called to infused contemplation.¹¹

Not all Carmelites shared this view. Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen took part in the Congress of St. John of the Cross, and already before then he had stated: “We hope to show that St. John of the Cross saw in the transforming union the normal goal of the path of spirituality.” Furthermore, he was convinced, “This infused contemplation necessarily falls within the framework of the normal development of the spiritual life.”¹² This view he maintained until the end of his life. In *Union With God*, published in 1951 and written explicitly for “persons living in the world,”¹³ he says,

St. John of the Cross shows to all the direct way to [intimacy with God], and for that reason we are presenting him as the Master of the contemplative life. ... This is “the form of Christian life which aims at intimacy with God through the assiduous practice of prayer and mortification.” ... The contemplative life leads to contemplation which is the goal and the end of the contemplative life. ... [Moreover], between the state of union and the contemplative life by means of which we tend toward that state, there exists a sort of ‘continuity.’ ... Union is the full perfection of a life which develops within us gradually, a life which this union itself alone can crown.¹⁴

This teaching was taken up, though more cautiously, by his confrere, Father Marie-Eugene of the Child Jesus, OCD, who said,

Every soul possessing the seven gifts (of the Holy Spirit) received at Baptism can be moved by God and brought to Him to the plenitude of the mystical life, including supernatural contemplation. ... All those who have experienced hunger and thirst for God must consider the proximate call (to contemplation and the mystical life) as unquestionably for them.¹⁵

Slowly these opinions gained ground. A great step forward was made at the Second Vatican Council, which officially stated: “All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”¹⁶ This did not decide the question of whether “the fullness of Christian life” means the

9 Theme VII, no. 5, Ibid. 292. The author of “Escuela” states that this attempt to establish the existence of two distinct paths to perfection met with “the most lively opposition of certain Dominicans,” so much so that “the presider was obliged to suspend the session (!) ... For this reason, and since time was short, they renounced formulating the thesis denying the unity of the spiritual life,” that is, denying the theory that the ascetical and the mystical states are two stages in the one spiritual life, a position strongly defended by the Dominicans.

10 Theme I, no. 3, Ibid. 325.

11 Theme III, nos. 1 and 2, Ibid. 328-9.

12 “The transforming union according to the doctrine of St. John of the Cross,” by Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, OCD, printed in *The Spiritual Life* (March 1925), quoted in “Escuela” 318-19.

13 *Union with God*, by Father Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, OCD, (Rome: Scuola Salesiana del Libro, 1956), 12.

14 Ibid., 31, 33, 216.

15 *I Want to See God*, by Father Marie-Eugene of the Child Jesus, OCD, trans. by Sister M. Verda Clare, CSC (Chicago: Fides Publishers Assn., 1953), 477, 483.

16 *Lumen Gentium*, 40, 2.

mystical life, though the phrase “the perfection of charity” suggests that it does. Charity is God’s own life, and this “has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”¹⁷ To act under the habitual influence of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit is one of the generally accepted definitions of the mystical life.¹⁸ Still, this teaching of the call of all Christians to perfection does not, as one Carmelite writer pointed out, explicitly answer the question:

... [W]hether all are called to the mystical life as the only way to the fullness of divine love and total service to humanity. We touch here on the greatest single controversy in the history of spiritual theology, a controversy seemingly settled by the Second Vatican Council in favor of the proponents of mysticism for all; seemingly, I say, because I doubt very much whether the Council Fathers were really pronouncing on mystical matters. For this we have to wait for Vatican III, and perhaps the undoing of the seventeenth century destruction of the great tradition of mystical contemplation.¹⁹



Fortunately this prophecy has proven to be overly pessimistic. We have not been forced to wait for another ecumenical council in order to have an authoritative answer to these questions. The recently published *Catechism of the Catholic Church* deals with these matters, though from an unexpected angle.

The *Catechism* reiterates the conciliar teaching on the call of all Christians to holiness.²⁰ It then goes on to say:

Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called “mystical” because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments — “the holy mysteries” — and, in him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity.²¹

Such a use of the word “mystical” is startling to us, but it is certainly not new. It is as old as the Church itself, for “mystical” is simply the adjective derived from the noun “mystery.”²² St. Paul spoke of himself and the other apostles as “stewards of the mysteries of God.”²³ This use of the word “mysteries” to designate the sacraments has been perpetuated in the Eastern Churches.²⁴

Does this mean, then, that every Catholic who frequents the sacraments is a mystic? It should. The infinite abundance of grace flowing through the sacraments is more than enough to make a saint, even in this life, of each human being who could ever exist. But grace is a gift, and a gift needs to be not only received but also accepted and accepted by the whole person. Grace exists to unite us with Christ, and spiritual progress tends toward this union. But, as the *Catechism* points out,

Spiritual progress entails the ascesis and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes ... [for] the way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle.²⁵

If grace is not evident in our lives, it is because our grasp of it is too languid, our cooperation with it too fitful.

Yet “God calls us all to this intimate union with him,” to “this union (which) is called ‘mystical’ because it participates in the mystery of Christ ... and, in him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity.”²⁶ All mysteries come down to this one mystery, for “there is no other mystery of God, except Christ.”²⁷ He is the Door to “the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity ... the central mystery of Christian faith and life.”²⁸

17 Rom 5:5.

18 See note 4.

19 *Lovelier than the Dawn*, by Father Noel Dermot O’Donoghue, OCD, (Dublin: Carmelite Centre of Spirituality, 1984), 28.

20 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, English Language Edition (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 2013.

21 *Ibid.* 2014.

22 “Mustikos: connected with the mysteries,” from *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), 1156.

23 1 Cor 4:1.

24 *Catechism* 774.

25 *Ibid.* 2015.

26 *Ibid.* 2014.

27 St. Augustine, Ep. 187, quoted in *Catechism* 774.

28 *Ibid.* 234.

“Mystery” and “mystical,” then, are personal words. They refer to a person. What they denote is a living relationship, an intimate union with Christ, an intimate union with the Trinity. All other uses of these words are secondary and flow from this. It is union with Christ, the whole Christ, which makes the mystic. This is what made St. Paul cry out “I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me.”²⁹ At the same time, he also insisted on his union with every other member of Christ: “Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is made to fall and I am not indignant?”³⁰ Because the Church forms “as it were, one mystical person with Christ the head,”³¹ inasmuch as I live the life of the Church, identifying myself with every one of its members, Head and Body, saint and sinner, to that extent I am living a mystical life. This is confirmed by a study of the way the *Catechism* uses the word “mystical.” In each case, it is applied to the “Mystical Body of Christ.”³²

What then of all the phenomena so commonly associated with mysticism? Do they have any place at all in this use of the word?

Certainly they do, for none of God’s gifts is meaningless. The *Catechism* sums it up succinctly:



“St. Paul” by El Greco

God calls us all to this intimate union with him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.³³

This is quite clear and in one sentence puts an end to many mind-boggling discussions on the subject. This mystical life of union with Christ is a gratuitous gift given to all. However, because it is a mystery, it is not easily perceived. For this reason, God gives “special graces or extraordinary signs” of it to some members of the Mystical Body in order to make manifest the life circulating through the whole Body, and of which many Christians undoubtedly are unaware or which they take for granted. So we see that special graces and extraordinary signs act like a highlighting pen: they draw our attention to a reality that is present all the time but which we might easily miss.

In that case, where is the place of infused contemplation that was identified so closely with the mystical life? Is it a special, an extraordinary grace, or an essential part of the life of the Mystical Body?

The *Catechism* does not use the term either of acquired contemplation or infused contemplation. It uses the phrase “contemplative prayer,” translating in this way the word *oraison* used in the original French edition.³⁴

The *Catechism* gives St. Teresa’s famous definition of contemplative prayer: “Contemplative prayer [oración mental] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends: it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.”³⁵ Both vocal prayer and meditation are meant to bring us to contemplative prayer.³⁶

Is contemplative prayer something we undertake ourselves or is it wholly given by God? The *Catechism* does not answer this question directly. Instead, it describes what contemplative prayer entails.

[O]ne makes time for the Lord; ... we “gather up” the heart, recollect our whole being under the prompting of the Holy Spirit, abide in the dwelling place of the Lord which we are, awaken our faith in order to enter into the presence of him who awaits us. We let our masks fall and turn our hearts back to the Lord.³⁷

29 Gal 2:20.

30 2 Cor 11:29.

31 *Catechism* 1119; see also 1474.

32 Cf. *Ibid.*, 771, 791, 863, 886, 958, 1070, 1119, 1396, 1474, 1477, 2014.

33 *Ibid.*, 2014.

34 *Catechisme de l’Eglise Catholique* (Mam’e/Plon, 1992), 2709ff. The French word *oraison* is defined as “1. Language, speech, (cf. English ‘oration’); 2. Prayer to God... ‘Faire oraison’ (to ‘make prayer’) to put oneself in mystical communion with God,” *Dictionnaire Usuel* (Paris: Quillet-Flammarion, 1963).

35 *Catechism* 2709.

36 *Ibid.*, 2704, 2708.

37 *Ibid.*, 2710, 2711.

All these phrases indicate actions that we perform. But we perform them “under the prompting of the Holy Spirit.” The Catechism goes on to say:

Contemplative prayer is the prayer of the child of God ... who agrees to welcome the love by which he is loved and who wants to respond to it by loving even more. But he knows that the love he is returning is poured out by the Spirit in his heart, for everything is grace from God ... Contemplative prayer...is a gift, a grace; it can only be accepted in humility and poverty.

This is unequivocal: contemplative prayer is a grace to which we open ourselves, for it is “the poor and humble surrender to the loving will of the Father in ever deeper union with his beloved son.”³⁸

To speak of “union” is to return to the *Catechism’s* definition of the mystical life. We have seen that all Christians are called to the mystical life of union with Christ. That contemplative prayer is equally meant for all Christians is shown by the *Catechism’s* comment on meditation: “This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.”³⁹

This person-to-person relationship of union is the essence of contemplative prayer. “Contemplative prayer seeks him ‘whom my soul loves.’ ... In this inner prayer we can still meditate, but our attention is fixed on the Lord himself.”⁴⁰ It is this shift of attention from oneself to Christ that marks the passage from meditation to contemplative prayer, from asking “Lord, what would you have me do?” to “the unconditional acceptance of a servant and the loving commitment of a child” that “participates in the ‘Yes’ of the Son become servant.”⁴¹ “This focus on Jesus is a renunciation of self,” of our way of seeing, thinking, reacting. “The light of the countenance of Jesus illumines the eyes of our heart and teaches us to see everything in the light of his truth and his compassion for all men.”⁴²

As we have seen, all Christians are called to intimate union with Christ. For this, contemplative prayer is necessary, for it “is a union with the prayer of Christ insofar as it makes us participate in his mystery.” Union with Christ is not a piecemeal matter; it is not possible to be united with him totally in one area and not at all in another. We will not be united with him in his actions if we are not united with him in his prayer. “The mystery of Christ is celebrated by the Church in the Eucharist, and the Holy Spirit makes it come alive in contemplative prayer so that our charity will manifest it in our acts.”⁴³

How far this union is meant to go is shown in the last paragraph. “Contemplative prayer is a communion.” It not only conforms us to the likeness of God,⁴⁴ it is also “a communion of love-bearing Life for the multitude, to the extent that it consents to abide in the night of faith.” Contemplative prayer is a sharing in “the Paschal night of the Resurrection (which) passes through the night of the agony and the tomb — the three intense moments of the Hour of Jesus which his Spirit ... brings to life in prayer.”⁴⁵

We see then that the Christian life calls us all to enter into the mystery of Jesus Christ so that his life, death, and resurrection may be made present in each of us. To the question “Are we called to be mystics all?” The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* answers with a resounding “Yes!” ✠

Source: “Mystics All?” by A Carmelite Nun, *Carmelite Digest*, Vol. 14 No. 4 Autumn 1999.

38 Ibid., 2712, 2713.

39 Ibid., 2708.

40 Ibid., 2709.

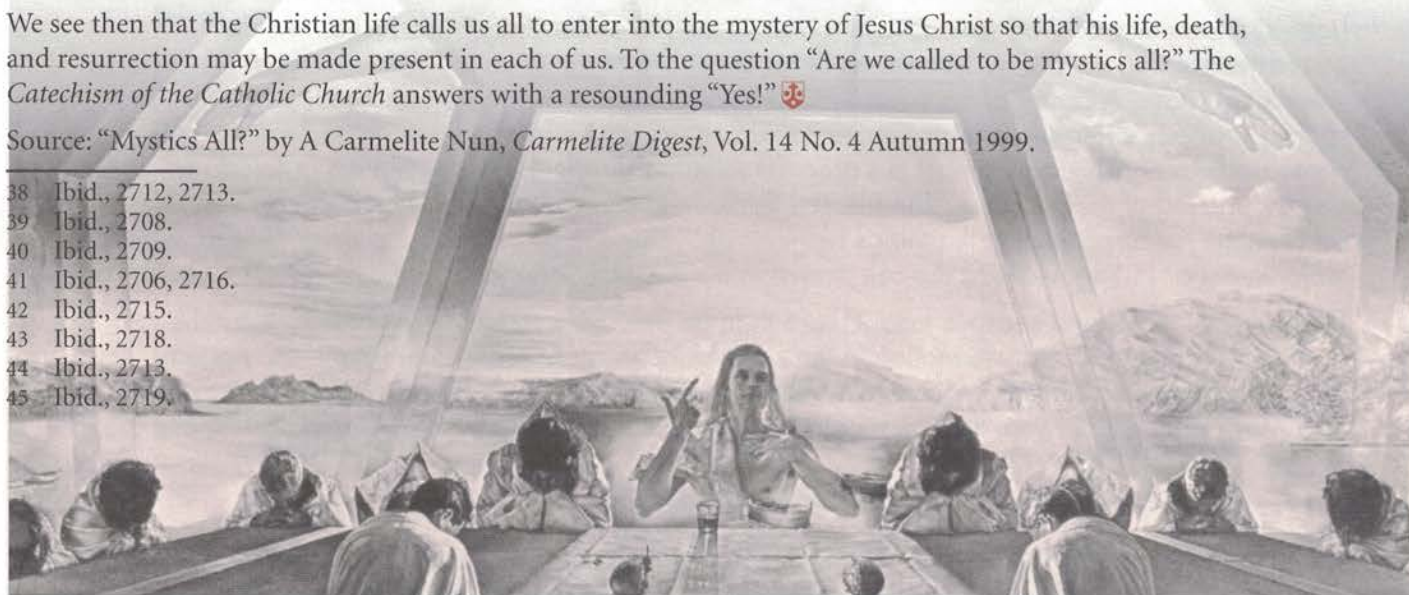
41 Ibid., 2706, 2716.

42 Ibid., 2715.

43 Ibid., 2718.

44 Ibid., 2713.

45 Ibid., 2719.



Teresa & John Speak

Sacraments

In *Lumen Gentium 33*, we read, "The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself. Moreover, by the **sacraments**, especially holy *Eucharist*, that charity toward God and man which is *the soul of the apostolate* is communicated and nourished." The Church today and our beloved Carmelite mother and father are in agreement about the life-giving nourishment found only in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, in which true strength is given to fulfill a supernatural call in the world.

TERESA SPEAKS

The Book of Her Life: Chapter 19

5. O my Jesus! What a sight it is when You through Your mercy return to offer Your hand and raise up a soul that has fallen in sin after having reached this stage! How such a soul knows the multitude of Your grandeurs and mercies and its own misery! In this state it is in truth consumed and knows Your splendors. Here it doesn't dare raise its eyes, and here it raises them up so as to know what it owes You. Here it becomes a devotee of the Queen of heaven so that she might appease You; here it invokes the help of the saints that fell after having been called by You. Here it seems that everything You give it is undeserved because it sees that it doesn't merit the ground on which it treads. Here, in approaching the **sacraments**, it has the living faith to see the power that God has placed in them; it praises You because You have left such a medicine and ointment for our wounds and because this medicine not only covers these wounds but takes them away completely. It is amazed by all this. And who, Lord of my soul, wouldn't be amazed by so much mercy and a favor so large for a betrayal so ugly and abominable? I don't know why my heart doesn't break as I write this! For I am a wretched person!

JOHN SPEAKS

Selection from *General Introduction: Biographical Sketch*, "A Portrait of a Saint"

[John's] experience of God was always rooted in the life of the Church, nourished by the **sacraments** and the liturgy. Witnesses of his life spoke of the devotion with which he celebrated Mass. A center of his contemplation, Mass often proved to be an occasion for special graces. During the celebration he could become so lost in God that he had no consciousness of his surroundings. His greatest suffering during the imprisonment in Toledo was being deprived of the Eucharist. The Blessed Sacrament was "all his glory, all his happiness, and for him far surpassed all the things of the earth." The one privilege he accepted when major superior in Segovia was the cell closest to the Blessed Sacrament.

The liturgical feasts and seasons meant more than an external commemoration; they were the occasion of an interior transformation in the spirit of the mystery being celebrated. On the day before Christmas he used to organize with the friars a kind of paraliturgical procession to recall how Mary and Joseph went in search of lodging for the divine Infant. At Christmas time above

all he felt his heart pulsate with love for the Child Jesus. One Christmas, seeing a statue of the Infant lying on a cushion, he cried out, "Lord, if love is to slay me, the hour has now come." Another Christmas, taken with love, he took the statue of the Infant in his arms and began to dance with enraptured joy.

His countenance, in fact, corresponded with the Church's liturgy. Once during Holy Week he suffered so intensely from the Passion of Christ that he found it impossible to leave the monastery to hear the nuns' confessions. Among his favorite feasts, besides those of the Blessed Trinity and Corpus Christi, were the feasts of the Blessed Virgin. In his prison cell, on the Vigil of the Assumption, after nine months of severe privation, he was asked what he was thinking of. He replied, "I was thinking that tomorrow is the feast of our Lady and that it would give me great joy to say Mass." The sight of an image of the Mother of God brought love and brightness to his soul. Once, on seeing an image of our Lady while he was preaching to the nuns in Caravaca, he could not conceal his love for her and exclaimed: "How happy I would be to live alone in a desert with that image."

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- ⇒ Click on "**Book List**" to see the full-text of all books contained in the CDL
(NOTE: the full-text of all Collected Works of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross are included in the ICS, Peers, English and Spanish translations. Search within one author or across both at the same time.)
- ⇒ Select **Search in all book lists**
- ⇒ Choose "**Document Scope**", select **Body**
- ⇒ Check box for "**Use exact word match**" when searching for a phrase
- ⇒ Place cursor at the end of "**Find**" criteria and press [ENTER]
- ⇒ "**Found**" shows how many occurrences are shown below by:
 - "Author" - St. John of the Cross
 - "Source" - Translation
 - "Book"
 - "Chapter"
 - "Ranking"



CDL Product Description and Order Form is located on page 18.

REMINDERS

Changes to the Washington Province OCDS Statutes

Effective immediately upon publication in the Carmel Clarion

9. The Secular will:
 - a) faithfully attend monthly meetings
NOTE: Absences should be for serious reasons and in accordance with the **Provincial** Attendance Policy.
11. While the size and unique circumstances of various communities point to a local approach to the specifics of attendance policies, some general principles **with regard to the Provincial Attendance Policy** should be kept in mind:
 - a) The need for each member to complete formation (initial and ongoing).
17. Closing of Communities:
 - c) A Group in Discernment or a Recognized Community at the discretion of the Provincial Delegate may be closed.
34. **Intentionally left blank**
36. There are three periods of formation: Change to paragraph following d)
Discernment of a vocation is a **mutual responsibility of the candidate, the Community, and the Council.**

Local Community Elections [cf. Constitutions #50-#55]

#60 - #66 are intentionally left blank in this revision. Legislation will be promulgated prior to the 2017-2020 OCDS Triennial Elections.