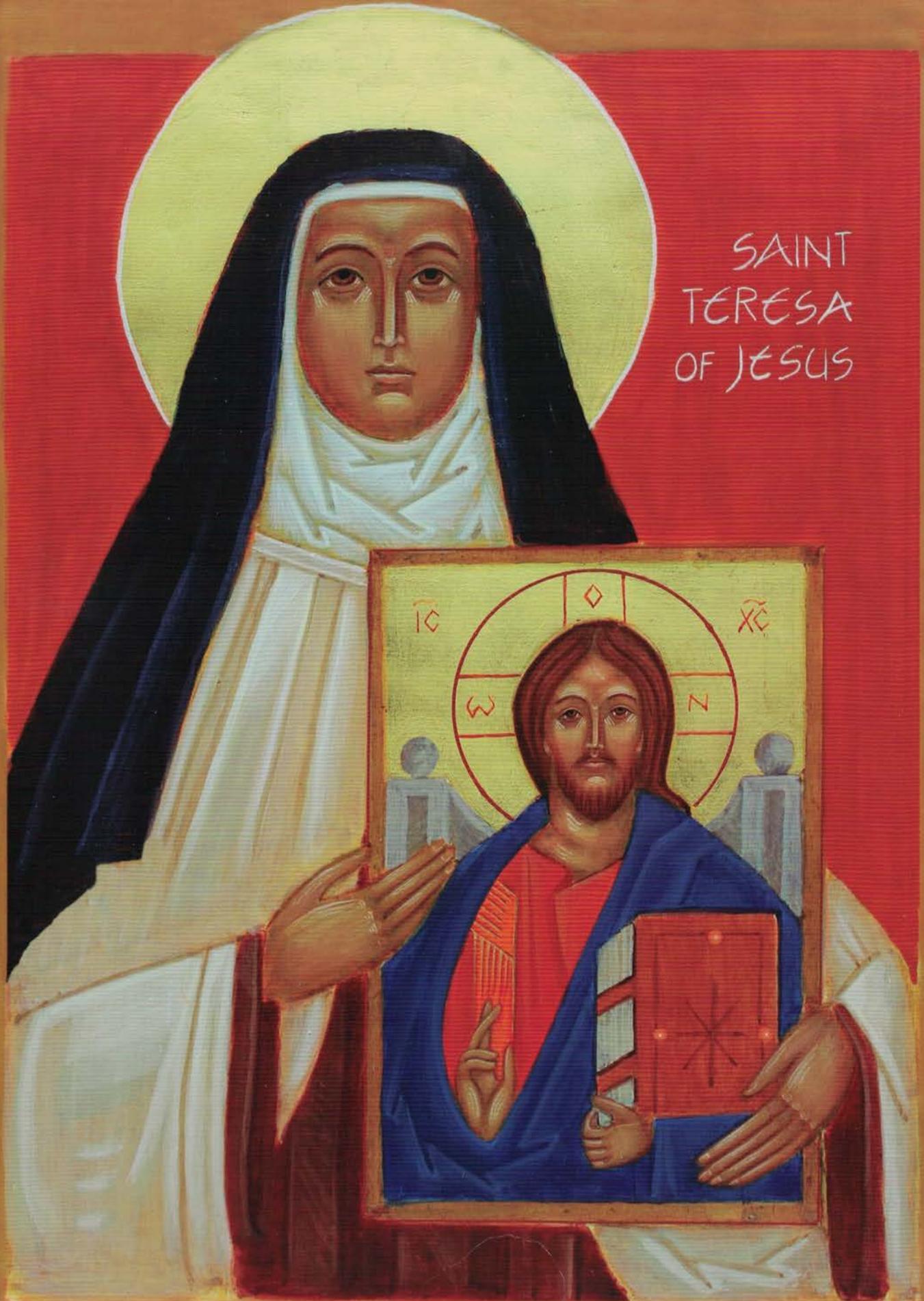


SAINT
TERESA
OF JESUS



Carmel Clarion



Summer 2015
Volume XXXI, No. 3

The vibrancy and luminosity of the days suddenly make a change that is felt in the air, heard in the outdoor sounds, and ever so slightly seen in nature because, it still is summer, and all that energy still fights and struggles to go about its work. The undeniable sense of change makes me feel an inner tension. I know that the season is changing and that I cannot do a thing to make it stay in place a while longer. The thought of losing light in the sky, though gradually, makes me look at what I have not yet accomplished. I wonder if I have the time to do it soon enough. Letting go and adjusting to the movement that carries into the next season is inevitable, and requires that I remain a participant in things ever changing for as long as I live.



I am very familiar and very grateful for the seasons of each year, but somehow, the end of summer always reminds me of having to slow down (particularly as I grow older). Autumn, naturally exhibits all the traits that I wish could remain far more permanent in place than the activity of summer. The fact is, that in each of our aging stages throughout life, there is an entire seasonal change within the hours we are awake. Here is an analogy: Parents, for example, typically experience spring daily for almost 20 years depending on how many children they have and how close in age they are to each other. Waking up each day and percolating coffee, preparing breakfast and lunches, and making sure matching socks are on at least one of the younger children's feet is a repetitive "getting it started spring routine." The hurriedness of getting to school, working for many hours learning, and then participating in a sport is a "daily summer of activity" for many years in a student's life. Once back home, and after a little break that allows for play or entertainment (that helps slow down the pace before settling into homework, which can be less intense yet still demand attention) is the "daily fall season" for each family member. All this prior to the routine of getting ready for night's rest which is "the silent daily winter season" at the end of the day for everyone.

Each day we have inner seasons too. These seasons require more attentiveness on our part as we identify the movement within us that calls us to stop and spend some minutes quietly listening to the silence. And while in the silence, whether there is an intellectual revelation or not, whether we are given a sense of peace or not, whether we receive the direction we have been praying for or not, or whether we have the dream that shows us the answer to our hopes, we are called to make the effort to be still and know that God is in the silence. The change of this season can come strongly like a quick jolt, or gently like waves slowly crawling making their way up to the highest point reachable on a beach, and just as gently returning back to the vast ocean waters. However it comes, it comes, and is meant for us to acknowledge that we are made for God, who desires many seasons with us throughout the day. These happen when God chooses.



So mysteriously, this listening to the silence is God's will for us and only God knows how this time is used for our benefit; to build for the future or to heal the past, to strengthen the present, or to remove weeds from among the wheat. While not knowing what truly is happening, we believe that it is God's time and work within us. We cannot add or take away from what is meant at that precise time. What we need to trust is that our faith and our love will lead us interiorly to simply be present, and know, that God does not allow any of those *seasons* to go without God's work and mercy in our lives. May these inner seasons, so many of them throughout the day, sustain us through the dramatic changes in all the exterior, ever changing seasons, that challenge us.

Mary Edith Rodriguez-Harrington, O.C.D.S.
Editor



Carmel Clarion

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From the Provincial Delegate

This letter from Fr. Salvatore Sciorba, O.C.D., was read to the participants of the celebration of the Fifth Centenary of the Birth of St. Teresa of Jesus, sponsored by the St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus community in Annadale, VA.

It was a full-day event with Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., Fr. Marc Foley, O.C.D., and Ken Vaughan, O.C.D.S. as speakers, and with testimonies by Monica Goza, O.C.D.S., and Penny Hickey, O.C.D.S. It was held in the Crypt of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on Saturday, September 19, 2015.

Many secular carmelites and friends from the metropolitan area attended and the Eucharistic Celebration was presided by Rev. Barry C. Knestout, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, DC. Our Carmelite presence was truly evident to others visiting the Basilica and witnessing the celebration honoring St. Teresa of Jesus.

What a joy to know that so many of our Secular Carmelites are gathering today in so holy a place as the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. You are here to honor our holy Mother, Saint Teresa of Jesus during this year when we observe the fifth centenary of her birth. Surely she must be pleased to see the devotion of so many of her sons and daughters. This special event reminds the church of the beauty and depth of the Teresian charism and the treasures she has left us.

This event is a witness to the prophetic role of Carmel in the world: both its contemplative and apostolic dimensions. This event gives hopeful evidence of your experience of God in a seemingly godless world. This gathering, moreover, gives us a greater appreciation of the scope of our Carmelite family.

I am grateful to the Annandale community whose work made this day possible. I pray that God bless you all abundantly.

In Carmel,
Fr. Salvatore, O.C.D.
Vicar Provincial and Provincial Delegate
to the Secular Order
Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Saint Teresa of Jesus
has been awarded the degree
Doctor Honoris Causa
by the Catholic University of Avila.

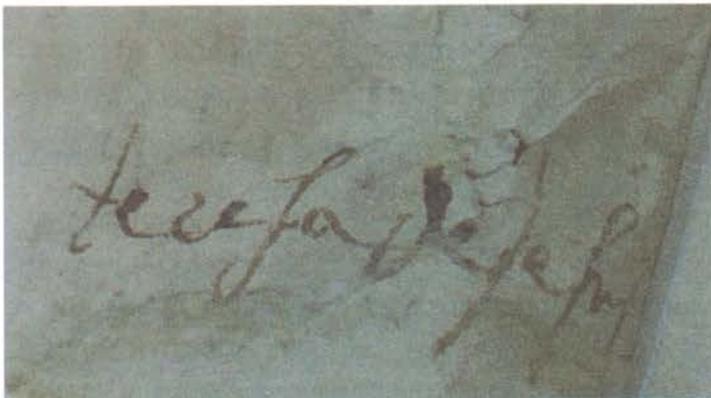


This solemn tribute was endorsed by the rest of the Catholic universities taking part in the convocation of the "Saint Teresa of Jesus, Master of Life" inter-university congress celebrated from 1st to 3rd August in Avila.

The distinction of *Doctor Honoris Causa* is a honorific title granted, in this case by the Catholic University of Avila to Saint Teresa of Jesus, their patron saint, as part of the celebrations for the 5th centenary of her birth. The sponsor of the act who pronounced the *laudatio* was the Cardinal of Valencia, Antonio Cañizares Llovera.

The reply was given by the General of the Order, Fr. Saverio Cannistrà. In his conference Fr. Saverio pointed out that " a doctorate for Teresa is, finally, a tribute to the teacher of the ways of the Spirit, to the teacher of prayer. At the same time, it urges us to listen to her experience, acknowledging that the way she proposes is accessible to all: Teresa teaches us to pray, and what is more important, she stimulates us so that we pray, urges us to pray, forces us to recognize that prayer is an essential task, because it brings a myriad of goods for the believer and the Christian community."

Avila, Spain, August 5, 2015



Discalced Carmelites

Sexennium 2015-2021

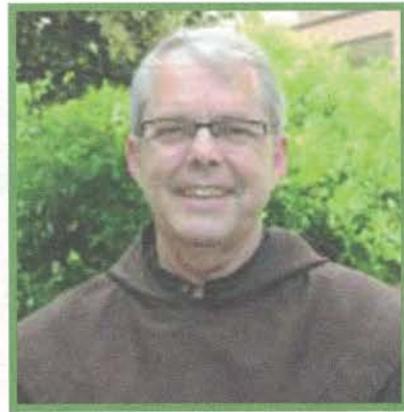
In early June the Order began a new sixennium, 2015-2021, and in the spirit of St. Teresa of Jesus, our mother, teacher, and foundress, the Friars have set out with availability and decisiveness to go forward to wherever the Spirit of God leads them.

The new team of the general government of the Order is now at the service of all our brothers and sisters of our great family extended throughout the world. The group is made up of the Superior General, Saverio Cannistrà (Central Italy), and the general definitors Agustí Borrell (Iberia, formerly Cataluña and Balears), Łukasz Kansy (Warsaw), George Tambala (Navarre-Malawi), Johannes Gorantla (Andhra-Pradesh), Daniel Chowning (Washington), Francisco Javier Mena (Caribbean), and Mariano Agruda III (Philippines).

During their first meetings from June 9-14, the new definitors spent time getting to know each other and in an atmosphere of calm dialogue and sincere sharing were encouraged to undertake with determination the work of the sexennium.

Through the information they shared, they became conscious of the rich, diverse, and changing reality of the Order at the present time. They noticed the need to dedicate special attention to regions where the Carmelite presence is growing more, as in southern Asia and Africa, without forgetting to accompany those in which we sense more strongly the numerical decrease and lack of vocations, especially in the western world.

The great diversity of geographical, cultural, and social origins that presently make up the Order



Daniel Chowning, O.C.D.

constitutes an undeniable richness that they feel called to welcome and encourage without losing unity. The definitors consider it a challenge to live fraternally in plurality, valuing the contributions of each one as a contribution to the good of all.

In order to organize their service, they had dialogues about the responsibilities of the Definitory, the collective as well as the individual ones. Each one of the definitors will look after a particular geographical area according to the following distribution:

- Saverio Cannistrà: the provinces of the definitors, and the Middle East.
- Agustí Borrell: Italy, Spain, and Portugal.
- Łukasz Kansy: Central Europe, Eastern Europe.
- George Tambala: Africa, Madagascar, Indian Ocean
- Johannes Gorantla: India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh.
- Daniel Chowning: England, Ireland, Holland, Malta, United States, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, and Quebec.
- Francisco Javier Mena: Latin America and Caribbean.
- Mariano Agruda III: East Asia, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, and Australia.

Each definitor is entrusted with a concrete area of work: Agustí (Vicar General, centers of culture and communication), Łukasz (coordination of the curia and of the community), George (missions), Johannes (formation), Daniel (the Discalced Carmelite nuns), Javier (Finances), and Mariano (Secular Carmelites).

At the same time they initiated a dialogue concerning the distribution of duties of the General House: secretaries, delegates, etc. One of the objectives that they proposed is to follow a good level of efficiency, coordination, and fraternity among all those who form the extended community of the General House. Of course, one of the main themes of the meeting those days was the recently celebrated General Chapter in Avila that indicated the priorities for the new sexennium. The joy of having experienced not only the Chapter, but a true pilgrimage to the Teresian places (in the words of Fr. General), we see reinforced by the positive assessment that we made of the Chapter gathering that was a genuine experience of fraternal sharing, open dialogue, and seeking the common good.

The General Chapter invited us "to continue our path of renewal" (It Is Time To Walk) (TC 14), and to "ask ourselves about the quality of our service to God and to others in fidelity to the Teresian charism." (TC 17) As a concrete instrument to achieve this, the Chapter approved "that the Order undertake a rereading of the Constitutions in view of a possible modification of them, and as a renewal of our life." (TC 28) Therefore, and in accordance with the received request of the Chapter itself, the Definitory has named an international commission "asked to accompany the reading and to prepare a synthesis and necessary documents" (TC 33) for the rereading-revision of our Constitutions. It will be made up by the following friars: Agustí Borrell (Vicar General, president of the commission), Aloysius Deeney (Oklahoma), Alzinir Debastiani (Brasil Southeast), Daniel Chowning (General Definitor), Emilio Martínez (Iberia), Gabriel Castro (Iberia), Giuseppe Pozzobon (Venice), Gregorio Firszt (Cracow), Joe Tauro (Karnataka Goa), and Wiesław Kiwior (Cracow). The commission will meet in Rome this coming September 13 to the 20th. The Chapter petition to reread the Constitutions is directed to the friars; however, we hope and welcome with pleasure the accompaniment and prayer of the religious and laity in this process we have begun. It

is intended to contribute to the renewal of the entire Teresian Carmelite family.

During the days of their first meetings, the General Definitory also dealt with other themes like finances, missions, concrete situations of the provinces and of religious, etc. Their next meetings are scheduled from September 7-13 in order to continue dialoguing and making decisions for the good of the Order.

As the final phase of the V Centenary is coming to a conclusion, they encourage all those who make up the family of the Teresian Carmel to continue to live intensely and with joy this jubilee celebration that places us before the experience and teaching of Teresa of Jesus, so that her memory will strengthen us to journey towards the goal with "a great and very determined determination until we reach it." (*Way of Perfection*, 21.2).

This information is taken from the Sexennium 2015-2021, Letter No. 1, from Rome, June 14, 2015.

What is the Definitory?

(The articles are from the Discalced Carmelites Constitutions and Norms, Dublin 1988).

179. The Definitory is made up of the Superior General and at least four Definitors. Outside the time of the General Chapter it constitutes the highest authority in the Order, according to these Constitutions and the Norms.

180. The Definitors shall assist the Superior General in his office and perform other duties assigned to them by him or by the Definitory. All must strive to work together in harmony for the good of the Order.

182. The Definitors remain in office for six years. At the end of this term only one of them may be re-elected by ordinary election for the following sexennium; for re-election of the others a two-thirds majority is required. And if the Superior General happens to be re-elected, or one of the Definitors is elected General, none of the Definitors can be re-elected unless he gets a two-thirds majority. No Definitor can be re-elected for a third consecutive term of office.



Teresa's Journey to Wholeness

and Divine Transformation

My presentation has three parts. First, I will reflect on the value of reading the spiritual classics and letting them affect our lives. Second, I hope to make more personal for you, the life and spirituality of Teresa of Avila, with a special focus on Teresa as someone historically rooted. She became a saint and a mystic, and experienced wholeness and divine transformation right within the context of her everyday life. And third, I hope to show how Teresa's life and her struggle toward wholeness might be a source of hope and inspiration for us even though we live in a world vastly different from hers.

We might ask the question: Why read the writings of the mystics? More specifically, what might Teresa of Avila, a woman of the 16th century, have to say to us who live in an age radically different from hers? Teresa is a mystic; a woman whose writings have become classics in the field of religious literature. Writings become classics because they are found to contain a fullness of meaning beyond the horizon of the author. Religious classics take us to the heart of ourselves where the awesome mystery of the Holy touches our lives inviting us to divine transformation. The mystics hold before us the loving presence of God to human life and to our lives in particular. Religious classics lure us into their own excess of meaning and they invite us to interpret this meaning for our lives today.

Let me try to describe the dynamic which takes place when we begin to read Teresa's works. Behind the text is the world of Teresa—Old Castile

of the 16th century. Teresa was inevitably shaped by the culture and the historical reality of her times, and her writings reflect the attitudes, values, and unique cosmology of her day.

We too come to the text out of our world very different from hers. We bring to our reading of Teresa our own questions, our values and perhaps our very cynicism regarding God. But if we truly engage ourselves in a religious classic, they in turn engage us. They reveal us to ourselves as taken up by, embraced, engulfed in a divine presence at once both intimate and awesome, gracious and frightening, loving and accusing, near and distant, the divine Other who dwells within our very being and yet who surrounds us as the air we breathe. We find ourselves both threatened and affirmed, challenged and encouraged, by what we read. From our own world view and life experience, at times we also challenge the values and world view represented by the text. When we really get engrossed in this process, it becomes like the back and forth of a conversation. We enter into dialogue with the text and in the process we encounter the texts surplus of meaning. It is as if the horizon of our lives, the life of Teresa, and the text itself, with its rich symbolic content, intersect. In this process, the text itself reveals its deep inner meaning for us today.

Religious classics are books that need to be read and reread. Superficial reading will not do. They are not in the genre of instant communication; they invite reflective reading and rereading for their

message to ever more deeply penetrate our lives. If I have one hope in coming here it is that through my exposition of Teresa's journey to wholeness and divine transformation, you will be lured to her writings as a resource for you own journey toward inner transformation.

I begin my topic with the realization that *wholeness* is an ambiguous concept. It contains a variety of meanings. Psychologically it might mean *having it all together*, not being controlled by unconscious drives and motivations; being able to demonstrate appropriate behavior.

WHOLENESS

My own understanding of wholeness comes not only from the study of psychology, but also from the study of the mystics like Teresa and John of the Cross. From Teresa's writings, wholeness can be seen as three dimensional. First, it is incarnational, historically grounded, and therefore situated within the human experience which is one of ambivalence. Each one of us has a unique history, and in the process of daily living, we experience both fullness and emptiness, consolation and desolation, light and darkness, and this ambivalence more or less is with us until the end of our lives. Second, wholeness is always realized within the shadow of the cross. Human finitude, which means limitations, as well as sin in its many forms continually comes up against authentic humanity fully present in Jesus who paradigms our own potential for growth. Christ and His gospel mandate are our mirror for mature living. The third dimension of wholeness therefore, is transcendence, the transformation of our humanity into full presence to God as father, mother, creator, and beloved—and to Christ as God's unrestricted and glorious presence in our midst—and therefore, in Christ, to full presence to our world and to one another in peace, equality, love, and compassion. Such is the model of wholeness which Teresa's life demonstrates.

TERESA

When we turn to Teresa and her writings, we soon discover the movement toward wholeness and divine transformation at work in her. Human wholeness is incarnational. It takes place right within the context and historical reality of ones own life. The times in which Teresa lived as well as her unique life setting, provided the context for her inner transformation. Jesus Christ is God's affirmation of the human and of all that constitutes the human condition. God works in and through each person's human life situation, not in abstraction.

Teresa therefore, was both formed and deformed by the culture in which she lived. Time constraints cause me to focus on just three of the major issues integral to Teresa's human/spiritual development as one who lived in 16th century Spain where *honor*, concern for one's public reputation, was an obsession. First, Teresa was a woman. Second, she had Jewish blood through her grandfather, and third, she was given to prayer. In her society, this meant she had three strikes against her and thus her honor was continually at stake. Consequently, she was constantly on the watch for her reputation, for what others might think.

In his introduction to *The Way of Perfection*, Kieran Kavanaugh evidences the shocking extent to which anti-feminism had reached in Teresa's day. He writes, quoting Francisco de Osuna, a contemporary of Teresa:

Since you see your wife going about visiting many churches, practicing many devotions, and pretending to be a saint lock the door; and if that isn't sufficient, break her leg if she is young, for she can go to heaven lame from her own house without going around in search of these suspect forms of holiness. It is enough for a woman to hear a sermon and then put it into practice. If she desires more, let a book be read to her while she spins, seated at her husbands' side.

Following Aristotele's reasoning, women were considered inferior and guided by passion. It is not difficult to imagine the destructive power these societal projections had on Teresa, and on her self-image. As a woman, she did not feel capable of much.

What did it mean to be a Christian Jew in Teresa's world? If one had Jewish ancestry, one belonged to the group of *impure blood* and therefore without honor. Jews, converted by force or political necessity, were numerous and often wealthy, but marginalized, socially isolated, and excluded by the terrible *statutes of blood*, from the majority of religious orders, from the military, from higher education, from holding public offices. They were continually exposed to suspicion and denunciation if they returned to Jewish practices. Although her uncle procured forged titles of nobility, which legally put Teresa in the class of *pure blood* and therefore with social acceptance, deep in her psyche was the feeling of being an outcast, a second class citizen. It is hard for us to grasp how something like honor could acquire an almost exclusive social importance, but Teresa suffered in all its severity the tragedy of such a value system.

Like her contemporaries, she was obsessed with honor. A linguistic study of Teresa's extensive writings would yield the conclusion that the cumulative burden of this experience of being Jewish and therefore without honor became one of the constant structural elements of her spirituality and of her life undertakings. As we shall see further on, Christ will teach Teresa the true meaning of honor and she will found monasteries for women where all are to be friends of one another without class distinction.

So Teresa was a woman, she was of impure blood, and she was given to prayer in an era suspicious of interior prayer and wary of false mysticism—especially in women. It was assumed that women

above all ran the danger of foolish sentimentalism and delusion. Teresa's interior journey took place in this atmosphere of mistrust both of women and of prayer. Only in the light of these realities can we understand Teresa's need for assurance by



her confessors that her mystical experiences were authentic, and her anguish when they doubted her. Her experience of personal encounter with God left Teresa always on the verge of being branded a

heretic, and historically we know that her writings were scrutinized several times by the Inquisition. In the light of all of this, imagine her daring in founding monasteries of women exclusively given to contemplative prayer.

The deformations of the culture deeply affected Teresa's life. As a woman, Teresa did not feel capable of much. "I realized," she writes, "that I was a woman and wretched and incapable of doing any of the useful things I desired in the service of the Lord" (*Way* 1, 2). "Just being a woman is enough to make one's wings fall off." So the first phase of her spiritual journey to wholeness was the journey toward self possession. Teresa needed to find the inner treasure of her being, as integral to her search for God.

The second dimension of wholeness is the cross. The cross, as we have seen, happens when our humanity as finite, ambiguous, and historically grounded, comes up against authentic humanity revealed in Jesus Christ. Teresa had no self-understanding outside of her relationship with Christ. Everything Teresa says about herself and about life must be heard as bouncing off from her relationship with Jesus, her Beloved, her Friend, and also her most severe critic.

Like all of us Teresa struggled to realize self possession. The self possessed person lives out of her own values, she knows what she wants from life, and makes choices in that direction. In our younger years we tend to be unsure about ourselves and about life, but as we mature, we grow in self confidence and in the ability to make decisions. For Teresa, the presence of Christ added challenge to the process. Her values had to hold up against human authenticity as revealed by Jesus in the gospels. We have already considered the cultural influences which both formed and deformed Teresa in her efforts toward self possession, like mistrust of herself, and over concern about honor.

In spite of her sincerity, unconsciously, Teresa absorbed what was unchristian in her social milieu. A classic example of Christ challenging her to more authentic gospel living happened while she was at her monastery in Toledo. A *Judeoconverso*, a converted Jew, who was a wealthy benefactor of the community, requested a burial place in the monastery. People were in an uproar at the thought of this privilege being granted to someone not of 'pure blood.' Only the nobility were considered worthy of such an honor. Teresa was wavering when Christ intervened. She exposes herself in one of her spiritual Testimonies.

Our Lord desired to give me light on this matter, and thus he told me how little this affair of lineage and status would matter before the judgment seat of God. You will grow very foolish, my daughter, (Jesus admonishes Teresa) if you look at the world's laws. Fix your eyes on me, poor and despised by the world. Will the great ones be great before me? Or are you to be esteemed for lineage or for virtue? (*Spiritual Testimonies* 5, also see *Foundations* ch. 15-16.)

Christ was like a mirror in the depth of Teresa's soul, or like a very clear diamond which reflected her true self with its strengths and limitations. In chapter 40 of *The Book of Her Life* she writes:

It was a frightening experience for me to see in so short a time so many things joined together in this diamond, and it is most saddening each time I recall, to see appearing in that pure brilliance things as ugly as were my sins. It happens that whenever I recall this, I fail to know how I can bear it; as a result I am then left with such shame that I don't know where to hide. (*Life* 40, 10).

In the presence of Christ Teresa discovers the shadow side of the self. She becomes acutely aware not only of the darkness of sin, but also of the deformations wrought by the culture and

exemplified in her hesitation to allow someone not of the nobility to be buried in the monastery. Listen to what Teresa says about her own struggles and experience of inner darkness as she describes it in Chapters 30-31 of her *Life*. In Ch. 30, 12 continuing her account of her spiritual desolation, she writes:

Faith is then deadened and put to sleep as are all the other virtues-although not lost. The soul truly believes what the Church holds, but this is pronounced vocally; it seems that on the other hand it is afflicted and made numb so that it seemingly knows God almost as it does something it hears far in the distance. Love becomes so lukewarm that if it hears someone speaking about God it listens as though the truth about Him were something it believes to be what it is because the Church does, but there is no memory of what it has experienced within itself. Going to prayer or remaining in solitude means nothing else but more anguish, for the torment it feels within itself, without knowing why, is unbearable.

And she continues,

To carry on a conversation with anyone is worse, for the devil gives a spirit of anger so displeasing that it seems as if I want to eat everyone up, without being able to help it; or it would seem to me an accomplishment if one could control one's temper; or the Lord does so by keeping in His hands the soul that is in such a condition lest it say or do anything against its neighbors that might hurt them and offend God.

In her Journey to wholeness, Teresa's efforts toward self possession come up against finitude, darkness, and sin. What is she to do? Teresa takes the leap of faith and surrenders herself to Christ who is working so powerfully within her. Self possession in the presence of Christ, gives way to self-surrender.

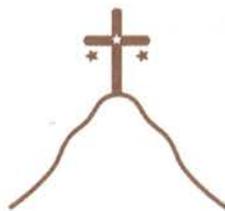
Besides this experience of her sinfulness, Teresa's relationship with Christ contains such a variety of

phenomenon, visions, locutions, and revelations, that it leaves us wondering. The cosmology of the day, with its active belief in the world of the supernatural, sensitized Teresa to these supernatural manifestations of Christ. They can be interpreted as expressions of God's ever present desire to communicate with us. God's self revelation in the scriptures is continued in the life of each one of us. With our secular, technological consciousness, God finds other means of manifesting the divine presence different from the extraordinary phenomena of Teresa's time. Here I might ask, how do you experience God in your life today?

What happened as a result of Teresa's intimate relationship with Christ? She discovered that He loved her even when she could not love herself. Within the frustrations of societal pressures and all that mitigated against human self-realization, in the midst of all that left her feeling alienated and worthless, Teresa experienced the Lord as a friend who accepted her. Christ did not despise her because she was a woman, instead, he offered her enduring friendship and a relationship of mutuality. He was her Lord and King, but He was also her beloved and companion. Christ reassured Teresa about the authenticity of her prayer and helped her to see the sham of what the world deemed honor.

In an age where disregard for even a minute rule of etiquette was considered a serious affront, the spontaneity of her relationship with Christ opened Teresa to good natured censure of the nobility with their obsession for honor. Christ also encouraged, even commanded Teresa to found a community of women dedicated to prayer where simplicity of life, disregard for social status, and commitment to prayer, imaged a spiritual protest against the deformations of the culture. I am always both awed and encouraged to realize that at the climax of Teresa's spiritual development, within the grace of spiritual marriage, Teresa's own obsession

Continued on page 15



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Since 2006 Carmel Clarion Communications has distributed live recordings about Carmelite Spirituality by the most prominent speakers of the Discalced Carmelite Order and other friends of Carmel. Drawing from the writings and teachings of the Carmelite Saints – Teresa of Jesus (Avila), John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, etc. All of our speakers shed light on the inward journey towards union with God.

In addition to live conferences, Carmel Clarion Communications offers The Carmelite Digital Library, which is the full digital text of all the works by St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. Once installed on your computer, it provides the Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD and Otilio Rodríguez, OCD translation cross-referenced to the Douay Rheims Bible, the Peers translation, and the Spanish Edition. All text is searchable either within one of the Saints' writings, or across both. (See the back of this brochure for more details).

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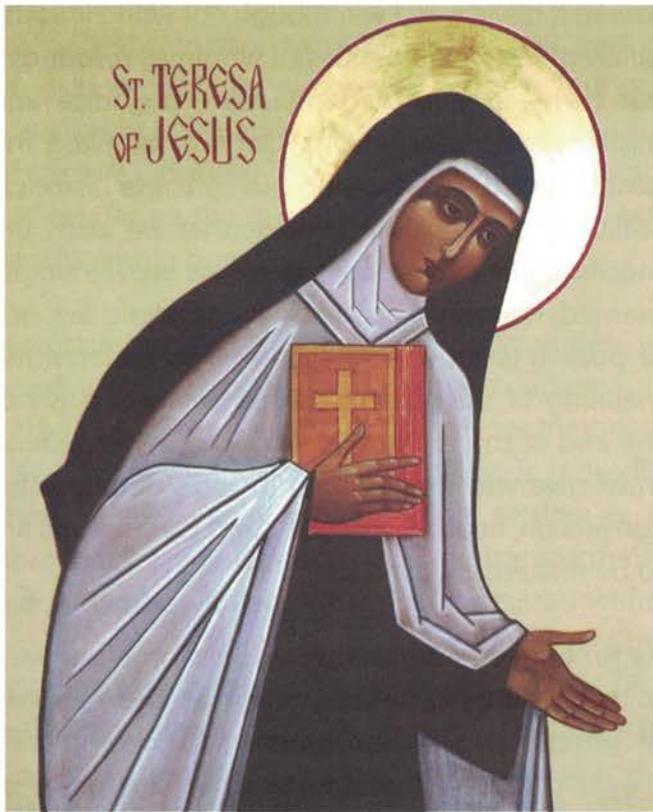
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with honor is not gone, but instead is completely transformed. As recorded in her *Spiritual Testimonies*, #31 Christ says to Teresa, "From now on, not only will you look after my honor as being the honor of your Creator, King and God, but you will look after it as my bride. My honor is yours and yours is mine."

Furthermore through her intimate experiences of God, Teresa was so affirmed as a person, that her view of herself as a woman also changed and she began to see women from the perspective of God. Her writings stand, therefore, as a clear and forceful defense of women. So forceful in fact that her censors intervened and Teresa found it necessary to delete most of what was first written about women in her *Way of Perfection*. Listen to this:

Is it not enough, Lord, that the world has intimidated us... so that we may not do anything worthwhile for you in public or dare speak some truths that we lament over in secret, without you also failing to hear so just a petition? I do

not believe, Lord, that this could be true of Your goodness and justice, for You are a Just Judge and not like those of the world. Since the world's judges are sons of Adam and all of them men, there is no virtue in women that they do not hold suspect. Yes, indeed, the day will come my King, when everyone will be known for what he is. I do not speak for myself, because the world already knows my wickedness—and I have rejoiced that this wickedness is known publicly—but because I see that these are times in which it would be wrong to undervalue virtuous and strong souls, even though they are women. (Ch. 3,7. See also Ch. 22, 2).

Teresa became unswerving in her struggle for the recognition of women's rights to interior prayer and herself became a teacher and guide toward the deeper regions of mystical experience. In a society suspicious of interiority, Teresa held fast to the primacy of the inner search for God. She realized the only danger lay in the neglect of interiority, which she defended with determination and at times with a hint of sarcasm. (*Way*, Ch. 21, 8.) She also discovered interior prayer as a way of responding to the ills of Church and society and therefore offered the women in her monasteries an opportunity for significant service in the church of her day. For Teresa, prayer itself became an apostolate, a genuine ministry. She writes in the *Way of Perfection*, I, 4-5.

Still, my heart breaks to see how many souls are lost. Though I can't grieve so much over the evil already done—that is irreparable—I would not want to see more of them lost each day. Oh my Sisters in Christ, help me beg these things of the Lord. This is why He has gathered you together here. This is your vocation. These must be the business matters you're engaged in. These must be the things you desire, the things you weep about; these must be the objects of your petitions—not, my Sisters, the business matters of the world.

Teresa helps us to realize that time given to prayer is not only strengthening for service, but prayer itself is an apostolic moment. As we are energized in prayer by God's Spirit, and one with Him, we enter more deeply into the reality of universal oneness of all persons. Our unity in Christ and in the human Family is real—and it is on the level of interiority that we most affect the lives of other people. In surrendering herself to Christ, Teresa gained a wholeness beyond the limitations of human finitude. Such self surrender enabled a gradual transformation of herself as a woman, as one without honor, and as pray-er. Thus the third dimension of wholeness, transcendence in full presence to God and to the world is realized in Teresa. In the seventh dwelling place of the Interior Castle, she admonishes her daughters,

—and let us desire and be occupied in prayer not for the sake of our enjoyment but so as to have this strength to serve. Believe me, Martha and Mary must join together in order to show hospitality to the Lord and have Him always present and not host Him badly by failing to give Him something to eat. How would Mary, always seated at His feet, provide Him with food if her sister did not help her? His food is that in every way possible we draw souls that they may be saved and praise Him always. (*IC, V11:4,12*)

The powerful energies of Teresa's life continue to reach us today and effect change in our lives. The framework on which she built her renewed Carmels emerged from her recognition of the value of the person over money and ancestry, and on the right of women to deep interior prayer. In the end, Teresa's life and work, her reformed monasteries, proved a corrective to the social and religious prejudices that afflicted her times.

What about us? Our history too, is the place of our experience of God. What is timeless about Teresa's mysticism and spiritual legacy is just how historically

rooted it really was. Even though our world is vastly different from hers, echoes of her times resound in our own—echoes of domination, prejudice and mistrust of spiritual values. Our way of living the gospel has to emerge from our concrete historical reality. It is within this context that we learn the meaning of self surrender. Whether we are single, married, man, woman, black, white, cleric, lay, rich or poor, it is within this context that we learn the meaning of self surrender. Self possession is not the end of the journey to wholeness—something must give way deep within if God's demands for conversion, healing, solidarity, and communion are to be realized.

As Americans, we are educated to forge our way, to create our own space even at the expense of others. The surrender that is contemplative prayer comes with difficulty. The experience of limit and darkness that will not yield to hard work, rational analysis and well planned programs, throws us off center and we struggle to right the balance as if it were within our human potential. The deformations of Teresa's age and culture led her inward. She discovered that prayer is like the tending of a garden. Teresa hoed, weeded, and laboriously hauled water out of the well through her efforts to meditate and practice vocal prayer. But as she grew in familiarity with Christ, it seemed the garden of her soul was watered with less effort like the windlass which drew water into ditches furrowed through the garden, as we see today along the Nile Valley.

Sometimes the presence of Christ was like an overflowing river. But again, at times the scorching sun dried and seared her soul and she was left to feel all the sin and inadequacies of her being as she so vividly described for us earlier on. But finally, as Teresa grew in surrender to the Beloved even in her darkness and pain, the rains fell and her entire being became inundated with the divine presence. Her whole life was consequently

transformed. The garden of her being now gave life and sustenance to others. (You will find her exposition of prayer symbolized in these four ways of watering a garden in chapters 11 to 22 in *The Book of Her Life*.) Through the intensity of her surrender to God, Teresa the mystic, draws us into these same depths within ourselves.

Mysticism will always be the great surrender—the opening of one's powerlessness, one's darkness, and all the limitations of one's environment to the creative love, freedom, and inspiration of Gods indwelling Spirit. Right within our own life setting is the potential for wholeness and divine transformation. But authentic wholeness cannot be realized without prayer, without a growing relationship with Christ. Without such a relationship, the ambiguities of life will drain energy and leave us feeling powerless. Only if we embrace the cross, that is, let our lives, with the values we hold, and the relationships we cherish, be confronted and challenged by Christ and his gospel, will transformation happen. The life of the mystic is one of ongoing conversion as the presence of Christ continually mirrors what is incompatible with authentic humanity.

The marvel of it is, union with God through prayer, did not alienate Teresa from others, instead she grew in compassionate love and solidarity so that the troubles of her day, with its religious wars and persecutions became integral to her own spiritual journey. She became a graced presence to her world and the divine energies of God flowed through her.



Our entire universe is an energy field and the aura of energy which emanates from each one of us paradigms our spiritual potential. The energies of God's life within you and within me, connects us with one another. To diminish another through injustice, oppression, or violence, however indirect and subtle, diminishes the entire human family. We are the

world. As we have seen in the life of Teresa, the mystic is the one who most powerfully changes the established order of things. The life of Ghandi, also a mystic, is a powerful contemporary example.

Mysticism—presence of God—is not a luxury, but is integral to human wholeness, and upon it, I suggest, rests the future of humankind. Only if we know experientially, through our union with God, that we are also united to each other, with every living person—no matter where— will we survive together on our planet earth. Rightly has the great theologian, Karl Rahner, said; "The Christian of the future will be a mystic, or he/she will cease to be anything at all." The writings of Teresa open us to the deeper dimensions of gospel living and demonstrate human wholeness and divine transformation. May such depths realized in her, also be realized in us.



Vilma Seelaus, O.C.D.+

Entered the community of Carmelite nuns in Newport, Rhode Island in 1946 and lived "loving God" and "living Jesus," until her death in January of 2012 in the same community that relocated to Barrington, Rhode Island in 1957.

Grace in Carmelite Icons

It has been a great grace for the church of the West in these recent years to rediscover the world of icons, especially for those who are seriously devoted to the life of contemplative prayer. Icons have little appeal for the senses, for they speak the language of pure faith and doctrine in the restrained use of line and color. They are written under the laws of obedience, not as a creative outlet, and they withhold their mysterious secrets from the casual observer. But for those who live on the level of faith and obedience in their own prayer life, icons can open up as windows into heaven.

When I first came to this Carmel of Terre Haute in 1981, I had not as yet been introduced to icons on any serious level. I grew in my appreciation of them as my own prayer life began to expand beyond initial sensible fervor into the desert life of pure faith, hope and love. They began to feed my soul on this deeper level. The tranquil, mysterious gaze of the icon held me in the embrace of faith-filled silence as God worked secretly in my soul.

At the same time, I was given the grace of venturing on a more applied level into this world of sacred painting. It is a perfect art form for the serious monastic, for its dynamics are based on obedience, faith and spirituality. The only use for one's talent and creativity is to place them at the service of the holy image, which is prayerfully taking shape according to church doctrine and time-honored rules of composition and execution. Even the materials one uses are ancient. Egg tempera paint and gold leaf on natural chalk gesso go back much further than oil paint or acrylic, and are made to last for centuries.

Due to time constraints and the demands of other community responsibilities, I have not written many

icons. But each one has been a quiet adventure in prayer, faith and obedience as well as a growth in learning the technique of icon painting. I have had wonderful teachers and mentors along the way. And the icons have been a modest means of remuneration for the monastery and a way to support the life of prayer in many hearts.

Finally, I believe that the re-entry of icons into the Roman Catholic Church is a harbinger of the unity God desires to bring about between Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholics, a Church once again breathing with both of its lungs. Every humble and respectful appropriation of this art, which has been carefully guarded as the treasure of the Eastern Church for millennia, can build another bridge of understanding and appreciation between us. And those who pray with icons, both in the East and in the West, are sinking spiritual roots into a common soil of doctrine and tradition that pre-dates the unfortunate separation between us. This deep silent communion of faith and prayer will help to bear the precious fruit of unity under the tranquil gaze of God's unfathomable mercy.

May the life of contemplation flourish with the help of holy icons, and may humble praying artists of both East and West furnish the Interior Castles of many hearts with these windows into heaven!

Sr. Mary Grace Melcher, O.C.D.



To see Sister Mary Grace's icons, go to the Terre Haute monastery web site: www.heartsawake.org
Click on "Gift Shop" and then on "Religious Icons"

Celebrating St. Teresa of Avila

On Saturday, March 28th, the Community of St. Teresa of the Andes from Danvers, MA hosted a V Centenary birthday party for Holy Mother in the Food Court of the Northshore Shopping Mall ! The oldest "Mall Chapel" in the country is located here, dedicated to St. Therese of Lisieux in 1959. Our members first attended the noon Mass together and set up a table outside the Chapel entrance with a large poster of St. Teresa, balloons and a birthday cake. We also offered the public free copies of the excellent ICS brochure on St. Teresa's "Prayer of Recollection." We then carried Holy Mother upstairs and "sat" her at the place of honor at the head of a table, along with the birthday cake. We then joyfully and robustly sang "Happy Birthday" to her and invited the public to enjoy some birthday cake. Two teenage girls came up to us and asked whose birthday it was; this gave us the opportunity to explain the celebration, give them a brochure and invite them to visit the nearby Carmelite monastery of nuns! They laughed and said our party was "pretty cool" for someone who was 500 years old!



On March 28 the St. Joseph Chapter celebrated the Centenary of St. Teresa's birth with the 4 other Chapters in the Philadelphia area. The day's event began with Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Rosary, Mass and a catered luncheon at St. David Church in Willow Grove, PA. Several foods were served which were reminiscent of those served by the Spanish people; i.e., rice, bread. A number

of St. Teresa-related items were brought by members and put on display for all members to view. A special cake commemorating St. Teresa's anniversary was served. The day was most memorable for all.

The Uniontown PA, Community of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, held "An Evening With St. Teresa of Jesus" on Thursday, August 6 at the St. John the Evangelist Church Parish Center. There were 32 people in attendance, representing a wide number of parishes throughout the Greensburg diocese, and even some of the Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia diocese.

Our evening consisted of Evening Prayer, followed by a presentation by our formation director, Laurie Coldren, and remarks by our spiritual assistant, Rev. Fr. David Nazimek, pastor of St. Regis Parish in Trafford, Pa. A brief history of our our community was offered by our past President and founding member, Patricia Joseph, and then all the members of the Community introduced themselves. Opening and closing remarks were given by our current President, Molli Vassar. We concluded the evening with light refreshments. Each member brought an item about St. Teresa to display.



Our lady of Mount Carmel's Order of Carmelites Discalced Seculars hold meetings St Ann's Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, beginning with Mass, Liturgy of Hours and Lectio Divina. As an added blessing and inspiration to prayer, in the Church, there is, among the 'Statues of Saints', a beautiful statue of St Teresa of Jesus. There are also plans to have painted on the wall behind the altar, a mural of Saints to include St Teresa of Jesus .

On March 28, 2015, the Philadelphia-area Discalced Carmelite Seculars gathered together at St. David's Church in Willow Grove, PA to celebrate the Fifth Centenary of Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus' birth for the Annual Quin-Chapter Meeting. Hosted by the Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapter, Carmelites from Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Philadelphia, St. Teresa of Jesus in Philadelphia, St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross in Philadelphia, and St. Joseph in Havertown Chapters (as well as a few from other Chapters!) met for the prayerful recitation of the Rosary and worship in a beautifully-celebrated and sung Holy Mass. Following the Mass, all were invited to share a social and luncheon featuring tapas and Spanish food in honor of St. Teresa. Every

birthday party must have cake, so a delicious homage was prepared and enjoyed in the loving gaze of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and amidst great conversation between friends old and new. A smartly curated display of artifacts from Carmelite pilgrimages to Avila as well as books and information about the Holy Mother were available for leisurely perusal and discussion. Each person was given a keepsake, a bookmark featuring a prayer and relic of St. Teresa as a memento of the joyous occasion. The special effort which went into the planning of the Liturgy and gathering was magnified by the exuberance and love shared by all in attendance.

The OCDS Community of the Holy Innocents in Rockford, Illinois, planned a trip to meet and visit with some of St. Teresa's current sisters—the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Des Plaines, Illinois. Six community members were privileged to visit with Mother Anne and two other sisters for an hour on May 23, chatting about community life, gardening and the sisters' dogs, the building of the monastery and its newest addition of an elevator, and even about one Holy Innocents community member's llamas—to keep coyotes away! We think we almost had the nuns convinced to consider getting a llama of their own!



Our community in Pittsburgh, PA had everyone share their favorite story or sayings of St. Teresa of Jesus then we celebrated with cake .

Our monthly meetings are held at the historic Mt. Carmel St. Joseph's Monastery, at the Carmel of Port Tobacco, MD.

On October 17th, we said a Rosary for Priests using the Luminous Mysteries, lead by Deacon Ammon Ripple in front of this small shrine dedicated to honor St. Teresa by the nuns.





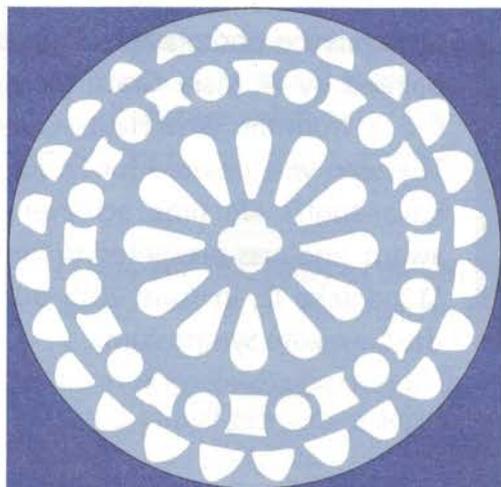
On Saturday, October 3, 2015, we held our Birthday Celebration for St Teresa. So many of our members were involved. Each one brought a spiritual "birthday gift" and placed it in a basket on the "gift table". Many members brought in articles that would remind us of Holy Mother's words and her life as Foundress. Our local Discalced Carmelite monastery even loaned us a First Class Relic of St Teresa of Jesus, held within the little cross pictured. We are so blessed to be called to the family of Carmel. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary OCDS Community.

In commemoration and celebration of the Centenary of St. Teresa, the Community of St. John of the Cross, Lexington, Michigan, gathered together for their annual Community Spiritual Retreat. The three day retreat focused upon the theme, "Walking in the Footsteps of St. Teresa of Jesus". Two members were inducted with Scapulars, two members made Temporary Promises, and two members made the Definitive Promise. The Community apostolate prays for Priests. Members also engage in other ministries as Catechists, Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, Communion Service Leader, visiting the sick, Evangelization, emotional and spiritual support



of Extended Members and support of foreign missionaries. Most recently, members pulled together to minister and assist a homeless family that approached during a Carmelite Community monthly meeting. All members wish to express gratitude to Spiritual Director, Rev. William Spencer, and the local cloistered Monastery of St. Therese for their perpetual prayers. Finally, in honor of the Centenary of St. Teresa, a list of prayer requests was sent on a pilgrimage to Spain conducted by Fr. Brian Cokonougher.

Members of Carmel of the Holy Spirit located in Fort Lauderdale, Florida prayed a nine-day novena honoring St. Teresa of Avila as a prelude to our Celebration. On October 10th, we began the day with a Mass and Liturgy of the Hours dedicated to our special saint and foundress. Afterward we moved to the parish hall which was adorned with various mementos of St. Teresa. A beautiful banner commemorating the 5th Centenary of her birthday had been presented to us and stood in a prominent place in the hall. Visitors were welcomed—family, friends, and future candidates had been invited and many joined us. A plentiful luncheon of good food was enjoyed by everyone. All in all, it was a joyful occasion, one which our own St. Teresa would have approved considering one of her most famous lines: "May God protect me from gloomy saints."



On September 19, 2015, a program in celebration of the V Centenary of the Birth of St. Teresa of Jesus, *Living the Teresian Spirituality in Our World Today*, was celebrated at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.

It was a day of inspirational speakers, confession, and Mass. The hope was that participants would "Come see how our unique spirituality will teach you to know God personally and forever!"

The OCDS Community of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus in Annandale, VA, worked tirelessly to honor St. Teresa through a formal program. Many participants were from other Discalced Secular Carmelite Communities from the metropolitan area.

In this year of celebration, we cannot forget one woman, Carmelite nun, Sr. Vilma Seelaus, who inspired many people for a great variety of reasons. She was a contemplative who lived simplicity in every way, and in that simplicity of hers, there was room for an intellectual sophistication and spiritual depth that allowed her to be a great sister in community, to become a great teacher and author, to be a friend to so many, and to be a great mentor because, in all these different circumstances, she always exuded a *sincere lovely quality of simplicity*. Her curiosity and interests lead her to uncover so many facets of the Carmelite jewels in each of our Saints and Blessed brothers and sisters, and she gave those to us through her writings, her teachings, and her friendship. Sr. Vilma has been gone almost four years now, but her conversations, her good sense of humor, and sensibility are well remembered.



I am grateful to the Sisters of the Barrington Carmel, and specifically thank Sr. Marian Steffens, O.C.D., who selected this paper *Teresa's Journey to Wholeness and Divine Transformation*. It is most appropriate to publish it in the Carmel Clarion this year because the study of St. Teresa was an area of expertise of Sr. Vilma's, who spent over 25 years learning and teaching Teresa. May you find it inspiring and relevant because, it continues to speak to us today.



The cover of the 2015 Summer Clarion is the photograph of the icon painted by Sr. Mary Grace Melcher, O.C.D., from the Terre Haute Carmel. The icon was painted for Fr. Kieran Kavanaugh's life time achievement award, and was presented to him in Mundelein, IL, in June 2015 during the Carmelite Symposium.

The full-length icon of St. Teresa in the article by Sr. Vilma is the work of Sr. Mary Grace and her teacher. The second icon in the same article, also of St. Teresa, is Sr. Mary Grace's work.



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The members of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites are faithful members of the Church, called to live in allegiance to Christ through a friendship with the one we know loves us and in service to the Church.

Under the protection of our Lady of Mount Carmel, in the biblical tradition of the prophet Elijah and inspired by the teachings of St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross, they seek to deepen their Christian commitment received in baptism.

