



# Carmel Clarion



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Ice and snow, bless the Lord



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OCDS Main Office  
2131 Lincoln Road, NE  
Washington, DC 20002-1101

Phone: 202-269-3792

Email: [ocdsmainoffice@gmail.com](mailto:ocdsmainoffice@gmail.com)

**Editor:** Mary E. Rodriguez-Harrington, O.C.D.S.  
[clarioneditor2015@gmail.com](mailto:clarioneditor2015@gmail.com)

### Provincial

**Delegate:** Fr. Salvatore Scieurba, O.C.D.

### Regional

**Assistants:** Fr. Donald Brick, O.C.D.  
Fr. Paul Fohlin, O.C.D.  
Br. Robert Sentman, O.C.D.

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# From the Provincial Delegate

## *Teresa and the Samaritan Woman*

St. Teresa herself tells us that the gospel passage concerning Jesus and the woman at the well was dear to her. She wrote, "Oh, how many times do I recall the living water that the Lord told the Samaritan woman about! And so I am very fond of that gospel passage... I always carried with me a painting of this episode of the Lord at the well, with the words inscribed, 'Give me this water' (L, 30, 19)." We might wonder what the attraction was. After all, the lives of St. Teresa and the woman couldn't have been more different. The Samaritan woman had five unhealthy relationships with different men; Teresa was a virgin and a nun.

Both, however, suffered discrimination at the hands of men. Both found their dignity and worth in their relationship with Jesus Christ. Both came to know the mercy of God. The Samaritan woman was an outcast with a complicated past; no rabbi would deal with her. Jesus, on the other hand, engages her in conversation, accepts her, befriends her and even offers her the gift of living water. He sees that she is tired of her past and thirsty for the gift of faith, for the grace of God. He tells her everything she ever did. Recognizing that

he is the merciful messiah she goes forth and witnesses, drawing others to him.

Teresa acknowledges that she has resisted God's grace on many occasions, that at one point she even gave up prayer. She knows that she has often been distracted and not always given the Lord her full attention. She has at times been halfhearted in her devotion. Before a statue of the wounded Christ, she rediscovers God's love and mercy; she surrenders and recommits herself to Jesus. From now on her life is different. She will henceforth proclaim the mercies of the Lord on her behalf. In prayer she will come to see how the Lord knows, accepts, and loves her. In prayer her relationship with the Lord will deepen. The apostolic dimension of her life will now unfold.

Both the woman of Samaria and Teresa of Jesus, our Holy Mother, experienced the mercy of God in the person of Christ. That same mercy is ours as well. No matter where we have been or how far we may have strayed, no matter how distracted or negligent we may have become, the mercy of God is ours in the heart of Christ. We need only turn to him.

Fr. Salvatore, O.C.D.

# Notes from a Conversation...

## The Hope For Secular Carmelites

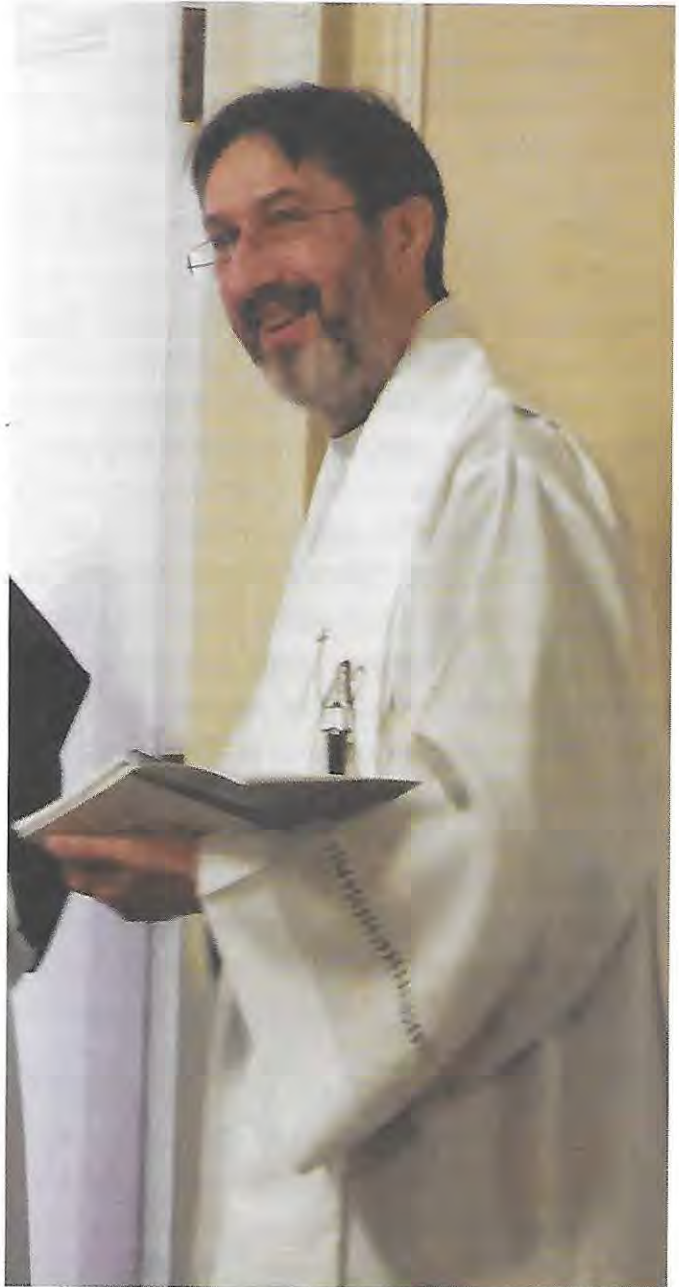
Last autumn I had the opportunity to have a meaningful conversation with Fr. Alzinir Debastiani, O.C.D., General Delegate to the OCDS. His work takes him to countries where he meets Seculars from vastly different cultural communities. I asked him what would be one of the most important hopes he would have for the Seculars? The question opened up to an earnest response. This is the summary:

**B**e true Secular Carmelites in the way that the Church hopes of you today. Evangelize the world through the Holy Spirit by creating in your workplace, in politics, in the economy, in culture, in families, in education, and in universities, a genuine human kindness. Especially, be a true prophetic presence in the midst of the world. It is very easy to be Seculars in our community meetings, but the challenge *is* outside of our meetings, because it is difficult to be authentic in a worldly environment.

Without words, be witnesses of goodness. Without judging, nor condemning, be a witness of the presence of God. Be willing to speak up and defend your faith and beliefs. To do this, you must have a good formation within your own communities. We have the capacity to witness regardless of our education and life circumstances.

In our communities one must be a source of strength, share one's ideals and experiences, and be supportive of one another.

St. Teresa of Jesus would tell us today that it is important to learn to be true friends of God in



# Top Ten Takeaways

## Laudato Si'

**P**ope Francis' revolutionary new encyclical calls for a "broad cultural revolution" to confront the environmental crisis. "Laudato Si" is also quite lengthy. Can it be summarized? In other words, what are the main messages, or "takeaways" of this encyclical?

### 1) **The spiritual perspective is now part of the discussion on the environment.**

The greatest contribution of "Laudato Si" to the environmental dialogue is, to my mind, its systematic overview of the crisis from a religious point of view. Until now, the environmental dialogue has been framed mainly with political, scientific and economic language. With this new encyclical, the language of faith enters the discussion—clearly, decisively and systematically. This does not mean that Pope Francis is imposing his beliefs on those concerned about the environment. "I am well aware," he says, that not all are believers (No. 62). Nonetheless, the encyclical firmly grounds the discussion in a spiritual perspective and invites others to listen to a religious point of view, particularly its understanding of creation as a holy and precious gift from God to be revered by all men and women. But the pope also hopes to offer "ample motivation" to Christians and other believers "to care for nature" (No. 64). This does also not mean that other popes (and other parts of the church) have not spoken about the crisis—Francis highlights the teachings of his predecessors, particularly St. John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. But in its systematic spiritual approach, this is a groundbreaking document that expands the conversation by inviting believers into the dialogue and providing fresh insights for those already involved.

### 2) **The poor are disproportionately affected by climate change.**

The disproportionate effect of environmental change on the poor and on the developing world is highlighted in almost every section of the encyclical. Indeed, near the beginning of "Laudato Si," the pope states that focus on the poor is one of the central themes of the encyclical, and he provides many baneful examples





of the effects of climate change, whose “worse impacts” are felt by those living in the developing countries. This is not simply the result of the power of the rich to make decisions that do not take the poor into account, but because the poor themselves have fewer financial resources that enable them to adapt to climate change. Additionally, the natural resources of those poorer countries “fuel” the development of the richer countries “at the cost of their own present and future” (No. 52). Throughout the encyclical, the pope appeals to the Gospels, to Catholic social teaching and to the statements of recent popes to critique the exclusion of anyone from benefits of the goods of creation. Overall, in decisions regarding the environment and the use of the earth’s common resources, he repeatedly calls for an appreciation of the “immense dignity of the poor” (No. 158).

### 3) **Less is more.**

Pope Francis takes aim at what he calls the “technocratic” mindset, in which technology is seen as the “principal key” to human existence (No. 110). He critiques an unthinking reliance on market forces, in which every technological, scientific or industrial advancement is embraced before considering how it will affect the environment and “without concern for its potential negative impact on human beings” (No. 109). This is not the view of a Luddite—in fact, Francis goes out of his way to praise technological advances—but of a believer who resists the idea that every increase in technology is good for the earth and for humanity. “Laudato Si” also diagnoses a society of “extreme consumerism” in which people are unable to resist what the market places before them, the earth is despoiled, and billions are left impoverished (No. 203). That is why it is the time, he says, to accept “decreased growth in some part of the world, in order to provide recourse for other places to experience healthy growth” (No. 193). In contrast with the consumerist mindset, Christian spirituality offers a growth marked by “moderation and the capacity to be happy with little” (No. 222). It is a matter of nothing less than a redefinition of our notion of progress.

#### 4) Catholic social teaching now includes teaching on the environment.

Against those who argue that a papal encyclical on the environment has no real authority, Pope Francis explicitly states that “Laudato Si” “is now added to the body of the Church’s social teaching” (No. 15). By the way, an encyclical is a type of teaching that enjoys the highest level of authority in the church, second only to the Gospels and church councils like Vatican II. As such, it continues the kind of reflection on modern-day problems that began with Leo XIII’s “Rerum Novarum,” on capital and labor, in 1891. Pope Francis uses some of the traditional foundations of Catholic social teaching, particularly the idea of the “common good,” to frame his discussion. In keeping with the practices of Catholic social teaching, the pope combines the riches of the church’s theology with the findings of experts in a variety of fields, to reflect on modern-day problems. To that end, he explicitly links St. John XXIII’s “Pacem in Terris,” which addressed the crisis of nuclear war, with “Laudato Si,” which addresses this newer crisis.

#### 5) Discussions about ecology can be grounded in the Bible and church tradition.

Wisely, Pope Francis begins the encyclical not with a reflection on Scripture and tradition (the two pillars of Catholic teaching), which might tempt nonbelievers to set aside the letter, but with an overview of the crisis—including issues of water, biodiversity and so on. Only in Chapter Two does he turn towards “The Gospel of Creation,” in which he leads readers, step by step, through the call to care for creation that extends as far back as the Book of Genesis, when humankind was called to “till and keep” the earth. But we have done, to summarize his approach, too much tilling and not enough keeping. In a masterful overview, Pope Francis traces the theme of love for creation through both the Old and New Testaments. He reminds us, for example, that God, in Jesus Christ, became not only human, but part of the natural world. Moreover, Jesus himself appreciated the natural world, as is evident in the Gospel passages in which he praises creation. The insights of the saints are also recalled, most especially St. Francis of Assisi, the spiritual lodestar of the document. In addition to helping nonbelievers understand the Scripture and the church’s traditions, he explicitly tries to inspire believers to care for nature and the environment.

#### 6) Everything is connected—including the economy.

One of the greatest contributions of “Laudato Si” is that it offers what theologians call a “systematic” approach to an issue. First, he links all of us to creation: “We are part of nature, included in it, and thus in constant interaction with it” (No. 139). But our decisions, particularly about production and consumption, have an inevitable effect on the environment. Pope Francis links a “magical conception of the market,” which privileges profit over the impact on the poor, with the abuse of the environment (No. 190). Needless to say, a heedless pursuit of money that sets



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Pope Francis I



aside the interests of the marginalized and leads to the ruination of the planet are connected. Early on, he points to St. Francis of Assisi, who shows how "inseparable the bond is between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace" (No. 10). Far from offering a naïve condemnation of capitalism, Pope Francis provides an intelligent critique of the limits of the market, especially where it fails to provide for the poor. "Profit," he says, "cannot be the sole criterion" of our decisions (No. 187).

#### **7) Scientific research on the environment is to be praised and used.**

Pope Francis does not try to "prove" anything about climate change in this document. He frankly admits that the church does not "presume to settle scientific questions" (No. 188). And while he clearly states that there are disputes over current science, his encyclical accepts the "best scientific research available today" and builds on it, rather than entering into a specialist's debate (No. 15). Speaking of the great forests of the Amazon and Congo, and of glaciers and aquifers, for example, he simply says, "We know how important these are for the earth..." (No. 38: my italics.) As the other great Catholic social encyclicals analyzed such questions as capitalism, unions and fair wages, "Laudato Si" draws upon both church teaching and contemporary findings from other fields—particularly science, in this case—to help modern-day people reflect on these questions.

#### **8) Widespread indifference and selfishness worsen environmental problems.**

Pope Francis reserves his strongest criticism for the wealthy who ignore the problem of climate change, and especially its effect on the poor. "Many of those who possess more resources seem mostly to be concerned with masking the problems or concealing their symptoms..." (No. 26). Why, he asks, are so many of the wealthy turning away from the poor? Not only because "some view themselves as more worthy than others," but because frequently decisions makers are "far removed from the poor," physically, with no real contact to their brothers and sisters (No. 90, 49). Selfishness also leads to the evaporation of the notion of the common good. This affects not simply those in the developing world, but also in the inner cities of our more developed countries, where he calls for what might be termed an "urban ecology." In the world of "Laudato Si" there is no room for selfishness or indifference. One cannot care for the rest of nature "if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings" (No. 91).

#### **9) Global dialogue and solidarity are needed.**

Perhaps more than any encyclical, Pope Francis draws from the experiences of people around the world, using the insights of bishops' conferences from Brazil, New Zealand, Southern Africa, Bolivia, Portugal, Germany, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, the Philippines, Australia and the United States, among other places. (In this way, he also embodies the Catholic principle of subsidiarity,



which, in part, looks to local experience and local solutions.) Moreover, the “new dialogue” and “honest debate” he calls for is not simply one within the Catholic Church (No. 14, 16). Patriarch Bartholomew, the leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church, enters into the encyclical, as does a Sufi poet. In fact, the pope calls into dialogue and debate “all people” about our “common home” (No. 62, 155). A global dialogue is also needed because there are “no uniform recipes.” What works in one region may not in another (No. 180). The encyclical’s worldwide scope (as opposed to a more Eurocentric cast) makes it an easier invitation for a worldwide community.

#### **10) A change of heart is required.**

At heart, this document, addressed to “every person on the planet” is a call for a new way of looking at things, a “bold cultural revolution” (No. 3, 114). We face an urgent crisis, when, thanks to our actions, the earth has begun to look more and more like, in Francis’ vivid language, “an immense pile of filth” (No. 21). Still, the document is hopeful, reminding us that because God is with us, we can strive both individually and corporately to change course. We can awaken our hearts and move towards an “ecological conversion” in which we see the intimate connection between God and all beings, and more readily listen to the “cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (No. 49).

To use religious language,

#### **WHAT THE POPE IS CALLING FOR IS CONVERSION.**

James Martin, S.J.  
Editor at Large of America

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**“Christians in their turn ‘realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith.’”**

**- Pope John Paul II**



our prayers and in our daily lives. Teresa invites us to trust in God who will never abandon us. This certitude about our faith leads us and fills us with trust in God, who is in the most profound place of our being.

From the understanding and the truth that God is at the center of our being, we can live in a loving friendship with God in any place we find ourselves. Because of our friendship, we allow others to participate in that same loving friendship with God.

St. John of the Cross tells us that we must remember that in our journey there will always be difficulties and crosses to bear. However, if we seek to grow through everything that we experience—lived in faith, hope, and love—it will move us to a greater trust in God without any limits to follow in the footsteps of Jesus—in the way he invites us to share in the hope of the resurrection. Our growth and inner transformation through Jesus, is a light to the world so in need of Jesus' presence.

St. John also invites us, and shares with us, through his writings and his life, to discover the presence of the transfigured God in our lives, in nature, and in history. Above all, John knows that by virtue of God's presence within our souls, everything can be transformed into joy and poetry—as our own example to others of God's presence within us. We have the capacity to transform each life event into a sign of God's living presence, because we are empowered by grace.

Jesus taught his disciples about the wheat and the weeds that grow together: They are mixed

# Be a witness of the presence of God.

together, but in the end they are separated so that all that is good can be triumphant. This parable confirms St. John's belief.

Blessed Teresa Augustine stated that love would always be triumphant as it happened with the Martyrs of Compiègne, who are an example and witness to the world. Her statement parallels Jesus' teaching and life—because, as St. John of the Cross wrote, in the night you will be examined in love. We have to prepare ourselves—like an athlete trains and practices for a competition—because our lives must be ready to be examined in love.

St. Thérèse calls us to value the small things in life. *Laudato Si'*, is a great way to follow the example of her doctrine of small gestures with a lot of love. We do not change the world, but change the small things around us. Like Thérèse's example, we can care and act on ecological concerns, which will cultivate good habits and good effects among all peoples, thus bringing out good human attitudes.

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

We simply do not exhaust the conversations about prayer. For decades, people have shared their thoughts and experiences after spending time in silent prayer together. They have read books written by well known contemporary spiritual authors, who sought the masters and doctors of the church, to make their books legitimate and more meaningful. Books like these have helped people develop solid prayer practices. Their desire to grow spiritually has taught them to adhere to their prayer practice. Most importantly, they know the beneficial effects prayer has in their lives, and that many decisions made after prayer have given them great *peace*. In hindsight, they recognize that *peace* was the completion, in a sense, of seeking God's help to finalize a decision or to be free from something keeping them bound.

Over twenty years ago, one woman who was struggling in her marriage, and who made critical comments about others, knew that she needed to persevere with her new found prayer life. Ten years later, she seemed so much more peaceful and commented that she realized that things around her had not changed. The problems were still there but she viewed them differently. In fact, she noted that *she* had changed and was not concerned about wanting to change the circumstances around her. She certainly was not the discontent person I first met. Through the course of the years, she became very generous in helping and giving sincere attention to those in need without making any fanfare whatsoever of her service.

A man who consistently has prayed for over 35 years remains the same gentle and quiet person who speaks only occasionally, but when he does, speaks profound and insightful thoughts that add a spark to the conversation. While life for him *seems* routine, he too is confronted with problems and challenges that upset him. His temperament helps him keep the lid on matters and let them settle down on their own. He does not let matters get the best of him. Rarely have I ever heard him raise his voice. He just remains faithful to prayer.

Another woman followed the Buddhist tradition and benefitted from the practice. She worked diligently, lived honorably and morally until an unexpected event in her life precipitated many changes. Among them was the decision to return to her Catholic roots. After participating in Bible studies and praying contemplatively, she has commented that she is *so happy* to have returned to her roots because, Jesus makes everything *real* to her.

Her experiences became meaningful when she understood that Jesus, as a human, lived through events that could help her make sense of her life story. In spite of her family problems and many challenges, she certainly walks faithfully next to Jesus. After persevering, she was led to a place where everything made sense.

How blessed these people are to have found prayer that illuminates their path and invites them to take another step in their lives. In *all* situations, the next best thing they can do is to take a step in faith and detachment, and hope for God's continued presence as they look ahead remembering God's words of encouragement and consolation.

However, the stories of the obstacles they had to battle and overcome remain hidden. Not one of these individuals has a perfect life. No one ever knows what the person right next to us deals and struggles with in their personal life. We can never know the depth of their suffering or the pain they carry at different times. It is hidden from us, but in a place where God's mercy has contained them, so that gently the healing process can take place.

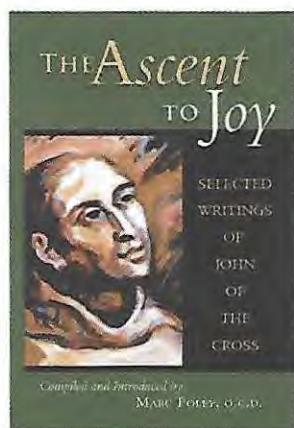
Praying together fosters an environment of respect and support. What is clear is that one must *sit with the pain* and *sit through the pain*, sometimes for years, until one day, without necessarily knowing the exact time, it is lifted. God's silent work is powerfully manifested in these people who will continue to meet, hoping for each other's prayers and petitions, as their relationships with Jesus continue to deepen.

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

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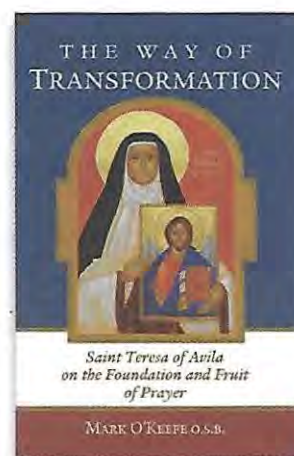
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**Fr. Marc Foley, O.C.D.**, is a popular spiritual director and retreat master. He is award-winning author of nine books on Saints John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, and Thérèse of Lisieux. Currently he serves as publisher of ICS Publications and as director of formation at the Carmelite House of Studies in Washington, DC.

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**Fr. Mark O'Keefe, O.S.B.**, is a monk and priest of Saint Meinrad Archabbey in Indiana. A moral theologian, Fr. O'Keefe is the author of nine books, teaches at St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, and is chaplain to the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Terre Haute, Indiana. He regularly pursues specialized Carmelite studies in Avila, Spain.

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