



OCDS Provincial Newsletter

California-Arizona Province of St. Joseph – December 2020
Sharing Our Spirituality

“Christ is the center of our lives and of Christian experience...” (OCDS Constitutions, No. 10)

A Day of Recollection

By Jim Dowd, OCDS, Provincial Councilor

During these unique and challenging times, our St. Joseph Guardian of the Redeemer OCDS Community in Montana, instead of cancelling their Day of Recollection, thought outside the box. When their attempts to find a friar, priest, sister or deacon who might offer spiritual presentations for their special day failed due to the pandemic, they reached out to the Provincial Council for assistance. One of their Council Members, who had been at the last Leadership Conference held at the El Carmelo Retreat House in California in 2018, recalled asking one of the presenters if she would be willing to give a similar presentation to their community. The Provincial Council Member, Margaret Shore (who lives in California), when asked, said yes, yet thought to herself, “Wow, that would be a long way to travel.”

Well, due to new tools and technologies that God has given us, an alternative means to come together was initiated and put into action. Traveling became a non-issue. The Council of the Community reached out to me, the Mountain Region Provincial Council Representative, to see if Margaret and I might be able to help with presentations during this Day of Recollection scheduled for the last Saturday in August. Talking to Margaret, we both enthusiastically agreed, and the details and agenda were quickly worked out for a Carmelite Google Meet Retreat.

The day began with Mass, which was streamed with Fr. Cody presiding, followed by Margaret giving a wonderful talk on Elizabeth of the Trinity, along with anecdotes of her life in Carmel. There was then time for silent reflection and a Q & A period. Then everyone was given a half-hour break to stretch and grab a bite for lunch, after which, I gave a presentation on Detachment and the Beatitudes. The Day of Recollection concluded with Evening Prayer.

Margaret and I truly enjoyed the experience of assisting with the Community, and we found that there are alternative ways that the Provincial Council Members can serve the Province and our OCDS Group/Community Members. We both wish to thank the St. Joseph Guardian of the Redeemer Community for their responses of gratitude and the opportunity for all of us, guided by the Holy Spirit, to find different ways to discover new paths to go deeper into Carmelite spirituality as we live out our Secular Carmelite vocations.

Praying and Staying Together

By Chung Nguyen, Aspirant, San Jose, CA

Since the initial shelter-in-place order from Santa Clara County, our San Jose Group has been able to use telephone online meeting technologies to get together every night for about an hour of prayer. About 35 – 40 of us pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet, the Rosary, Night Prayer, and listen to the Gospel. We know that prayer is the only thing that can keep us deeply in touch with God and with each other. It really inspires us to keep our faith and trust in God as Mother Mary and St. Joseph did. In this time of fear and uncertainty, we all turn to God for love, mercy and protection for us and the Covid-19 victims. Our little sacrifice of time is our effort to show God how much we need Him. We can't see each other, but hearing one another's voices strengthens us to “see through events and discover God everywhere.” (OCDS Constitutions, No. 18) We also maintain our group study and monthly meetings by phone conference to keep up with our activities. In addition, some of us are blessed to live near Mount St. Joseph Monastery, so we can attend the outdoor Mass with the friars and listen to their beautiful homilies, knowing that it's the Holy Spirit that binds us together in Christ. May our Mother Mary and St. Joseph protect us during this pandemic.

Humility, Detachment, Charity and Waiting on the Lord

By Patty Harrison, OCDS, Oakville, CA

What are you waiting upon the Lord for these days? Waiting has been referred to as one of our major schools for spiritual growth and maturity. Our Holy Mother Teresa was schooled in this as she first discerned what God was calling her to do in forming the Discalced Carmelites, and as she sought the will of God and waited upon Him for each one of her foundations. You could each fill in other blanks in her life that were personal, such as when she was ill, and so much else throughout her life.

St. Teresa of Jesus gave us the foundational tools of humility, detachment, and charity that keep our feet grounded and able to walk through whatever circumstance we meet in our own lives today or at any time. As seculars, we have already made the major choice to seek and pursue the will of God, no matter what it may cost us. We have heard the call to intercede for the whole church: our priests, all of Carmel, our own families – of whom we have primary responsibility – our parish, our local community and areas of ministry, etc.

As we all know, this can be quite a challenge. Right off, we experience our own powerlessness and the need to seek the Holy Spirit to mature in the above mentioned virtues, and to equip us as to how to pray, and to give us the ability to wait upon the Lord, even when we see nothing happening. But the truth of the matter is that we are told through the writings of St. Paul what God is calling us to learn to do throughout our lives in any circumstance we may encounter:

My people will walk by faith and not by sight... 2Cor5:7.

Wow... no small directive! What we do know right off is that if God has asked us to do something, then He does know how to equip us and enable us, and He will – as we seek Him. We can realize the big picture when we take an honest look at the early apostles and every saint thereafter down to our own Holy Mother Teresa and all the Carmelite Saints, Blesseds, and Venerables.

Rom. 5:3-5... And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulation, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance, and perseverance, proven character, and proven character, hope; and this hope does not disappoint us, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

How do we learn to live like this and become matured in this way of life? How do we develop this kind of trust and patience and endurance? It can only begin by taking one step at a time. St. Paul refers to us as runners seeking the goal and crown (1 Cor.9:24-27). This can be a bit of a relief because we know something about runners. They train themselves with a coach, keeping the goal in mind. Our Coach is Christ, and as Carmelites – St. Elijah, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross and more. We only get to the finish line and receive the crown by taking the steps that lay before us – each one in its own time:

Confident of this that He who has begun a good work in you, will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus... Phil1:6.

As for me, there is a little tool that helps me with the “run” when I am dealing with a circumstance in which I do not know what to do, and yes, I would prefer to end it quickly! It has helped me to ask the Lord what He wants me to be learning right now. I stand in the present moment, and I focus on that task only. With this approach, I have discovered amazingly that the circumstance begins to move forward, and I am out of it, it would seem, quicker.

The Bible, with a good concordance, is a great resource that we can always turn to for God’s wisdom, as St. Therese modeled for us. I have recently focused on the instruction Jesus gave the apostles before He ascended into heaven (Acts chapter 1). They seemingly felt lost and unsure of what to do next. They returned to Jerusalem and the upper room as told, waited for the Holy Spirit, and devoted themselves to prayer, together with the Mother of Jesus.

At this time of such uncertainties and threats to safety on many levels, may the Holy Spirit fall afresh upon us and guide us through it under the protective covering of the intercession of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, St. Joseph, St. Elijah, Our Foundress Holy Mother Teresa, St. John of the Cross, and all the Carmelite saints. Amen!

Retreat Experience

By Galen Gillotte, OCDS, Covina, CA

Our Community usually attends its annual retreat at the beautiful El Carmelo Retreat Center in August, but this year due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we were unable to do so. I share this poem, written during a past retreat, to remind us of how holy ground can inspire us to think of heavenly things. During this time, let us ask the Holy Spirit to make our homes holy ground and to lead us into a retreat of His own devising.

I fell into Your silence
like a stone.
You fed me bread in the
wilderness of my desire.
Ours was the solitude in the
watches of the night
and You spoke with me there. . .

Your silence rings inside of me;
it fills me and I shatter
on its sweetness.

St. Teresa's Bookmark

Calligraphy by Julie Kerber, OCDS, Modesto, CA



Santo Niño de Carmelo

By Emma Rojo, OCDS, Long Beach, CA

Santo Niño de Carmelo,
Son of Mary, Blessed, our Queen,
Take us to Thy Holy Mountain,
Where Thy Breath does pass unseen.

Santo Niño de Carmelo,
Held within Thy Mother's arms,
Drop to us Thy Holy Mantle,
Shield us with Thy Sacred Heart.

Santo Niño de Carmelo,
Light Thy Fire in us we pray,
That to Thee we will surrender,
All our spirit night and day.

Santo Niño de Carmelo,
With Thy Mother guard us dear,
As we climb the steps to Heaven,
To our scapular adhere:

All our longing and our laughter,
All our sorrow and our pain,
That within Thy Sacred Silence,
Detached from all we may remain.

Santo Niño de Carmelo,
Son of Mary, Blessed, our Queen,
Take us to Thy Holy Mountain,
At our death we'll pass, unseen.

Prayer

By Michele Maitland, OCDS, Portland, OR

Softer than the brush of a butterfly's wing
more hushed than the stillness of silence

A touch of God
a taste of eternity

Swells the heart and transports it
to a City unknown