



# Carmelite News

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## Sharing the Spirit of Carmel

“Contemplative life belongs to the fullness of the Church’s presence.” Following this understanding of Vatican II, we strive to unveil the prayer tradition of Carmel for the people. Our Lenten prayer and the upcoming Holy Week liturgies (see calendar) are particularly designed to share our contemplative spirit with the large congregation that gathers here; everyone is warmly invited to attend. For our newsletter readers, we are initiating a series of short articles on Carmelite spirituality, informed by: (1) our history and tradition; (2) the experience of God in prayer; and (3) Carmel’s engagement with contemporary life and changing culture. We begin with an overview of some predominant Carmelite themes.

**A prophetic witness to the existing order.** The desert hermits of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century were a model for the first Carmelites, lay hermits who gathered around the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century on Mount Carmel (near the modern city of Haifa, Israel). Desert and mountain allowed the hermits to be free from distractions, disentangled from the complexities of the “world”, and able to dedicate themselves single-mindedly to God. But withdrawal to desert and mountain was a “means” and not the end or goal. The hermits were not abandoning the “world” to its own devices; rather, they sought to give a prophetic witness to the existing order (both societal and ecclesial). Through lives detached from possession of goods, honor, prestige, comforts and personal advancement, the hermits called society to different values – equality, dignity, mutuality, and justice. Through lives grounded in prayer, silence and solitude, they spoke of a radical and complete dedication to God.

**Intimacy with God through prayer.** The goal of Carmelite life, according to one of our oldest documents, is two-fold: to achieve purity of heart through one’s own efforts and virtuous works, and to “taste somewhat...even in this life...the intensity of the divine presence and the sweetness of the glory of heaven.” This second goal is a statement of Carmelite contemplation, and a witness to the deep desire and possibility for intimacy with God in the heart of each human person. Saint Teresa of Avila in her 16<sup>th</sup> century reform of the Carmelite order highlighted this goal. Although living in an era and ecclesial culture deeply hostile to the individual pursuit of relationship with God, Teresa managed to establish her monasteries as places of interior prayer. She freed her nuns (and others) to

articulate their religious experience and to seek ever deeper relationship with God.

**Community and solidarity.** The early desert hermits quickly organized into communities, as did the hermits on Mount Carmel. This was not just for practical reasons but to forego reliance on a radical individualism, to see salvation as obtained from *within* rather than *outside* of community. Thus there are both eremitical (hermit-oriented) and cenobitical (community-oriented) dimensions to our history. Edith Stein, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish philosopher who became a Carmelite and died at Auschwitz, speaks of an interconnectedness – a communion – that extends to all creation. We are called to nourish and uplift this communion, caring for the earth, standing in solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and those who suffer, and offering our prayer for all people.

**Contemplation, transformation.** All the Carmelite saints, and most especially John of the Cross, explored and announced the profound relationship between the experience of human limitation and transformation. John described and explained darkness in prayer as part of a contemplative process of handing the self over to God to be transformed in love. His teachings are a hallmark of Carmelite spirituality and one of the great gifts of our order to the world: to find meaning in darkness, and to discover contemplation as the way to self-transcendence. Contemporary interpreters of John speak of this darkness not only in terms of personal spiritual experience but also in society at large and on communal and global levels. John’s teachings and our Carmelite heritage can help the world to find within its darkness a path to transforming love.

In the next issue: Elijah and Mary as prophetic/archetypal figures

## West Wing Financial Update

We are delighted to report that we have raised all but approximately \$60,000 of the funding needed to pay for the recent renovation of our monastery’s West Wing. These results are far better than we could have imagined or hoped for when our project began. Our newsletter readers made very significant contributions to the renovation fund, and at the same time continued to support our ordinary expenses. We are deeply grateful to all who helped with financial gifts, with prayer, and in so many other ways.

As present we are financing both the \$60,000 shortfall and another \$100,000 in pledged contributions that will not be received for several more years. We must continue working to raise the shortfall, since we cannot shift any more funds from our regular budget for this purpose. Escalating utility rates have significantly increased our monthly expenses, and we must also allocate funds, if at all possible, to repave the parking lots and long access road to the monastery. The road suffered significant damage from accommodating large construction vehicles and trucks during the course of the renovation, and it has not been repaved in more than 20 years. The road now presents difficult access issues for fire and rescue equipment. We will need all our regular support to handle these expenses and our daily

living costs. This year we also face a particular financial challenge since payment is due on the interest-free loan that is financing the \$160,000 in combined shortfall and uncollected donations. Thus, without additional help, we will need to substitute commercial financing, which will add an interest charge to our expenses.

We ask for your continued patience and loving support while we complete this final stage of West Wing fundraising. Thank you for all you have done to make our monastery ready for the present and future: to make it safe for our current community, to improve conditions for our elderly sisters and help us to care for them, and to sustain the new members – our promising next generation of Carmelites – throughout their lives.

The **Mary Queen of Carmel** chapter of the Secular Order of Carmel meets each month at our monastery. Three members, Anne Bullinger, Celeste McDonnell and Barbara Sardella, were recently admitted to formation and Rose McNally made her first Promises. The group has been growing quickly— seven new people are now attending. God continues to draw individuals interested in a deeper spiritual life to our Secular Order and Carmelite spirituality. Please contact Debbie Ventre, 410-686-2132 or James Peleska, 410-452-5334 for further information.

We held our third annual **Come and See** monastic weekend over the Presidents' Day holiday. Out of a possible score of 30, participant Gillian gave it a 29. When asked about the most helpful part of the weekend, she said, "Speaking with the sisters; the presentations (all of them); the tours; the meditations." She went on to write, "I had to see whether the attraction I felt was real or simply a romantic notion." And that is the purpose of the weekend: discernment. The last two women to enter our community are 'graduates' of the Come and See experience.

### 🕊️ Calendar 🕊️

<b>Contemplative Prayer</b>	March 10		7:00 pm
<b>Lenten Sunday</b>	March 13		5:00 pm
<b>Vespers &amp; Homily</b>			
<b>Palm Sunday</b>	March 20	Eucharist	9:00 am
		Vespers	5:00 pm
<b>Holy Thursday</b>	March 24	Tenebrae	8:00 am
		Eucharist	5:30 pm
<b>Good Friday</b>	March 25	Tenebrae	8:00 am
		Liturgy	3:00 pm
<b>Holy Saturday</b>	March 26	Tenebrae	8:00 am
John Welch, O Carm		Vespers	4:30 pm
		Easter Vigil	9:00 pm
<b>Easter Sunday</b>	March 27	Eucharist	11:00 am
Kevin Gillespie, SJ		Vespers	4:30 pm
<b>Ascension Sunday</b>	May 8	Eucharist	9:00 am
<b>Pentecost Sunday</b>	May 15	Eucharist	9:00 am
<b>Our Lady of Mt Carmel</b>	July 17	<b>special</b>	9:00 am
		Sunday celebration	