



Carmelite News

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An Accord With All Creation

On Pentecost, our community inaugurated a year of prayer for the earth's healing, for humanity to reverse its course of careless ecological destruction. A renewed care for the earth Through a deepening contemplative awareness of all creation's intrinsic beauty. And so for the upcoming Feast of Our Lady Of Mount Carmel, she who is called Mother and Beauty of Carmel, by reflecting on the divine beauty God has infused in the universe. Special events (see calendar) also will be held to bring the earth's needs to consciousness and prayer.

Fragmented Beauty

There is a splendor of brightness poured over all that exists, says our Carmelite saint and sister Edith Stein. We know this splendor as *beauty*, that transcendental quality experienced in nature, in persons, in the works of our hands, and in precious moments when we draw close to God. The human soul can be overtaken in awe by the simple radiance of light and color, by the intricate design of a spider's web, by the inarticulable truth conveyed through an artist's brush, and by the complex order and exhilarating chaos of our living, evolving planet. Beauty, philosophers say, is that which fundamentally satisfies and pleases, because it imparts a deep sense of accord with all creation.

For such beauty to be present in our world, the source must be supreme beauty itself, the luminous beauty of God surpassing all we know. It is as if such supreme beauty, simple, strong and concentrated, were exploded forth at the moment of creation to be manifold and diverse among creatures and all that exists. The whole universe thus participates in divine beauty, reflecting this beauty more perfectly in its entirety than any one creature could ever do alone.

Profound sensitivity to the divine beauty dappling all of creation is central to our Carmelite tradition and charism. Mount Carmel, our place of origin, was known for such verdant beauty that the prophet Isaiah used it as a metaphor for the glory of eternity, of God's coming reign. Mary, whom we claim as archetype of Carmelite life, was taken as a symbol of beauty by our forebears as they named her Mother and Beauty of Carmel. The great Spanish mystic Saint John of the Cross poetically sang of beauty, of how all that exists has been elevated and clothed in it by God. *Come, beloved, let us behold ourselves in your beauty*, he wrote in his *Spiritual Canticle*. John thus insisted that all creation is being drawn forward to this radiant splendor, centuries before cosmologists began to theorize about the universe evolving towards greater and more diverse beauty. John is foreseeing the allurements of creation towards an ever deepening

unity in its diversity, to the interconnectedness that is essential for God's beauty to be manifest in full.

This communal evolution towards God's beauty will demand a transformation of human consciousness. With God's image spread throughout the cosmos, no part of creation can be ignored, neglected, debased or lost without God's beauty being fragmented and disfigured.

Today our earth bears the marks of beauty's fragmentation: the devastation of our ecosystem and environment wrought by humanity's domination, greed and selfishness. As global warming shows itself in famine, drought, floods, and extreme weather, concern for our earth has begun to eclipse and subsume every other prophetic issue we could name, even in terms of justice, for the consequences of ecological destruction are falling disproportionately and horrifically on the poorest in our world.

As we prepare to celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, it is with a sense of urgency that we confide our fragile and damaged earth to Mary's care and to the beauty of God that she symbolizes. We ask all to enter into deep prayer with us for the transformation of humanity in love, to restore the deep sense of accord with all creation that is beauty itself.

A Loving Gaze For the Gulf Region

A silent gaze: Such was the instinctive response of some little children trying to recover from the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, from the ruin of their world. They looked wordlessly upon pictures they had drawn – dark, angry swirls showing their fear, their loss and pain. They looked, silently present to their wounds, and in that silent presence, found healing.

In the action of these children lies a faint echo of the mystery of contemplation, a special posture of receptivity as one encounters the unknown and uncontrollable. As this receptivity deepens into contemplative prayer, we look at our darkness and

bear with our unknowing, but our “looking” becomes a loving gaze in which we surrender all that we see to the most unknowable mystery which is God. And therein we find the hope of healing and transformation.

On Thursday evenings this past Lent, people from the wider community gathered at our monastery for this very purpose: to bring to the loving gaze of communal contemplation the vast needs of our world, its darkness, pain, and sufferings. These evenings of guided contemplation are offered weekly in Lent by our community, each season with a special focus. This year we brought to prayer the tremendous sufferings of the people of the Gulf Region, in answer to a nationwide prayer initiative by Bishop Muench of Baton

🕒 Calendar 🕒

Friday, July 14, Climate Change Video 7 p.m.

Saturday, July 15 Guided Contemplative Prayer for the Earth, 7 p.m.

Sunday, July 16 Our Lady of Mt. Carmel
Lauds 8:15 am, Mass 9 am, Solemn Vespers 5 pm

Thursday, July 20 Elijah the Prophet

Wednesday, Aug 9 St. Edith Stein

Rouge. We embraced his initiative as founded in the same conviction that grounds our lives: that prayer is indispensable to the radical change in systems and structures needed to achieve justice for all peoples.

Each week we used the next Sunday’s gospel as the scriptural input, and we included a news article about the hurricane victims. A 25-minute period of silent prayer was the evening’s centerpiece, preceded and followed by participants’ reflections. We carried our prayer for the people of the Gulf Region into and through our Paschal Triduum; many of the Thursday evening participants, who wore special prayer bands as a reminder of the hurricane victims, spoke of their deep sense of constant prayer throughout this time.

Just as the Israelites in the desert were healed by looking upon the very serpent that had bitten them, and just as the young Katrina victims found solace in looking on depictions of the force that had washed away the world they knew, so we must look upon the darkness of our world and in the same gaze see Jesus who is lifted up. In this silent simultaneous regard of Jesus and the world’s pain, we bring them into oneness; we know the deepest solidarity with those who suffer; we offer all creation to redemption and healing.

Lights, camera, action! On May 21, a film crew from the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) came to tape our Sunday liturgy, as part of a documentary highlighting communities that have excelled in strategic planning. The crew worked with us Sunday and Monday to record interviews from our leadership on long-range financial, facility and project planning and our success in attracting newer members, who will also feature in the video. But on Sunday morning, the stars were the marvelous wider community that worships with us, our people. Their characteristically vibrant and full-voiced participation in song and ritual were an overwhelming witness to their love, and we were deeply touched and grateful.