



Carmelite News

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To Say 'Yes' Forever

On November 20, 2005, the Feast of Christ the King, Leah Hargis and Judy Long professed their solemn vows in the presence of the wonderful large community that gathers for liturgy with us each Sunday, with family and with many other friends. To share this day with you, we have enclosed a bookmark of the two Sisters' prayer cards – Sr. Leah's design at top, and Sr. Judy's below. Their reflections about their own prayer cards follow.

Sister Leah

For the ten-day retreat that preceded profession, I entered our hermitage taking only scripture, the works of St. John of the Cross, a piece of fabric and a basket of threads. It was during this time of solitude and silence that I crafted the art used for my prayer card. I began the rhythm of prayer and focused on reading St. John's *Living Flame of Love*. While slowly pondering St. John's words I was captured by the passion of the desire to respond to that constant, gentle (for the most part) and loving invitation truly to dwell in God's presence. The image of a garment came to mind – a cloak – not drab or dry but full of color and texture. This cloak is the garment of experience which is worn by the one receiving the invitation. She wears it over her shoulders, sometimes a parade of pride, sometimes a drooping encumbrance. The variety of colors, pastel and vibrant, cheerful and mournful speak of her experiences of joy and sadness, of peacefulness and rage. The textures are the warp and woof of human life, interconnected, as all of life is. All this, yes, all this, she sheds as she sees the mountain and hears the voice. She has seen this soaring mountain and heard the alluring voice before - indeed, all her life, but this time is different, this time her "yes" is real and forever.

The garment has been tossed aside and she is nowhere in sight. She has followed the path leading to the foothills and has, perhaps, tarried in the field flowers but she knows her goal and she does not look back either to regret or seek solace. She continues her journey, confident and unafraid.

As the mantle of one of our foundresses (1790) was placed on my shoulders for the prostration and Litany of Saints during the profession, I was overwhelmed

with the sense that this had absolutely nothing to do with me. It isn't my achievement or my particular privilege. It is an invitation to each of us to walk with Christ, to listen and respond, to say "yes," forever.

Sister Judy

*I will love you, I will be constant.
Faithful friend, faithful spouse and faithful lover,
I will sigh for you alone!
In one so dear, so tender,
My joy and my delight,
My peace I will find.*

The quote I chose for my profession card is from the lyrics to W.A. Mozart's aria *L'amerò, sarò costante* from *Il Rè Pastore*. These words speak of a promise of love. It is a promise I have found and hope to explore more deeply in Carmel.

I love being a Carmelite! In the simplicity and ordinariness of our life we touch a bit of the depth of God. As I go about my life here I can hold the world in my heart. I can carry people's cares and burdens within me as well as their happiness and joys. Edith Stein states that the contemplative can be everywhere in prayer. I can be the nurse, the comforter and the listener. I can hold those with AIDS and the children unloved, unwanted. I can be in solidarity with the poor and the parents who struggle to care for their families. I can be alongside the missionaries in situations I will never see. I can hold in my heart the joy of someone near or far. Joining myself to God in prayer and drawing these with me is one of the mysteries of our life. I like to think of Carmelites as "Nuns Without Borders."

A faithful friend, faithful spouse and faithful lover is what I want to be for God. I want to be as constant in my daily life as Thérèse of Lisieux was, finding there in daily life, as she did, the depth of my spirituality. Faithfulness and constancy is what God asks. Love is the technique by which I hope to live this out. In the end, to have a mad love for God is a gift I hope I am given; a mad love for God, for God's people and for all creation.

Final Vows

by Joan Peddicord*

*What did I hear, what did I see,
O, Christ the King, in witness that day?
What did my heart hold anew as
Tear-filled moments spilled into our lives?*

*We watched in wonder;
We pondered in joy
Ever ancient, ever new this Desire
To be Yours, to contemplate your
Love in ministry to the world.*

*Did Teresa and Thérèse smile?
Did Edith drape those mantles of
Historic Love over their shoulders as
We called on Your Company to
Bless and protect their hearts' desires?*

*What is the Cosmic Mystery,
What is this Revelation's constant Light,
O, Christ or called Another?
Ever so human, ever so divine,
And always for your People.*

*In quiet passion, with burning fire,
Desire's Voice speaks again.
Countless ways and over centuries long
Understood and known, this love,
this Carmelite love.*

*Past in lives and stories told,
Present in vows made new today and
Future in love to come
to be your God-Heart In our World
All made One.*

*One, no Kingdom's boundaries
One, the God of All
One, who hears each spirit's cry
In cosmic Language yet unknown.*

*Will you come to me, O Christ?
Will you be my King?
I hold your Cross to see your Crown.
The simple love story told anew
Each time you come again.*

*For all people, for all time,
Christ, may your kingdom come.*

**Joan Peddicord is part of the
wider community of friends who
worship with us each Sunday. She was
moved to write this poem after
witnessing the solemn profession liturgy..*

To Cross This Wondrous Boundary

Profession Address by
Sr. Constance FitzGerald, ocd

Leah and Judy, you have traveled a long path to learn what it means to be a Carmelite in the Church and world – the universe – of today in a community that has pledged itself to bring the Carmelite life and tradition rich and vibrant, new and contemporary, into the 21st century. Most of us have labored a lifetime to prepare a place for you, to be able to hand on to you a living interpretation of our tradition fitting the present epoch in history. As you stand at this decisive moment and give yourselves to God, to us, and to God's people, as you insist you are ready to assume responsibility for this life, to bear the burden of being a Carmelite, contemplative woman in the world today, the readings given to us for this feast of Christ the King – the *shepherd* King – actually capture the whole meaning of Carmelite life and provide strong direction to my words to you.

We are given, first of all, a promise and a goal. God shepherds us, goes ahead of us, lures us unfailingly, even through spiritual homelessness and darkness, toward restful waters and refreshment, toward intimacy and communion. From its ancient hermit origins, through its parenting by our great mystics, Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, Carmel has proclaimed that there is, indeed, a time for journeying but there is also a time for rest, a time to be at home. Carmel has witnessed and must witness to this desire of God for us, this movement towards being at home, rest, communion, in the intimacy of God's overflowing love and goodness.

The shepherd is infinitely tender and loving, totally absorbed in the care of the sheep, but also demanding, "feeding us with justice" the text says, with the expectation that those who are shepherded will be just, that is, tender and loving with others, equally immersed in and given over to their well-being. But we should never forget – Leah and Judy, you must always remember from your experience during these formative years – that as the first reading indicates, God does not allure us because we are powerful, strong, self-sufficient and whole; rather God shepherds us who are limited, weak, broken, often tired in spirit – toward the experience of our utter poverty, yes, but more importantly, towards new life, for when we recognize our total need we become at last open to the fullness of God's love in Christ. When I look back over the past seven years and reflect upon your process of growth with its struggles, purifications, disappointments, fears, challenges and also its joys, insights and transformations, I know you understand what I am saying. And it is not enough for you or any of us just to accept our limitations, perhaps to wallow in them. It is not just an encounter with your poverty, but believing in, fully embracing and bringing to fruition the wonderful potential and giftedness that is uniquely yours – not someone else's – that will fit you now to be a faithful yet fragile shepherd yourselves – no longer looking only to be shepherded but ready to pour out your life in shepherding others.

Today's challenging Gospel demands nothing less. How right it is that the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the stranger, the prisoner, insert themselves into this profession rite of these contemplative women. The beautiful intimacy, the "resting in God" that one experiences in being "the shepherded" leads not only to "restful waters" and a "restored soul." It also leads inescapably to the Other, to sisters and brothers who are in need of help. Contemplative life today is authentic only if and when it situates itself in a world of suffering, not just in a detached or distanced way, not the poor "out there", but in a very personal way, in the most intimate solidarity. "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was homeless and you took me in..." Jesus' words call for a personal and episodic involvement, the attentive and individualized involvement of a shepherd.

So how can Judy and Leah and our contemplative community face this Gospel – at first blush a call to active ministry – without pain and alarm? Ironically, I believe today’s passage is perfect for this moment, fitting precisely and presciently here, so as to bring to earth and practical application all that our contemplation comprehends and what our lives are about. There is more than one kind of food, more than one hunger. The home that each person seeks is not just one made of wood or bricks and mortar. As contemplatives, we are committed to see the human person in her wholeness, and to thrust into relief the reality and centrality of Spirit in a world attuned to the tangible and concrete. And so we feed the soul, and help others to find and build a spiritual home within themselves. And yet, it is not just or even mainly in these ways that we prompt the life of the Spirit to grow and blossom forth. It is rather by becoming so profoundly united to Christ, through contemplation, that we are made likewise united with all God’s people and with all creation, in the deepest, most authentic solidarity and mutuality – hungering with them, hurting with them, standing with them, knowing that they are us, and we are them. It is from this place – really, a place of new consciousness – that John of the Cross, in an enamored ecstasy of love, can sing, as in our second reading: “Mine are the heavens, mine the earth...and all things are mine.” This is not the “mine” of possession but of integral belonging: mine to cherish, mine to shepherd, mine to tend, steward and love. Only from such a posture can we draw humanity to the amplitude, intensity and degree of being – of spirit – that is the plenitude of life. This is, to borrow a phrase from the philosopher Martin Heidegger, to live as a “shepherd of being.” He says:

*Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being. Man loses nothing in this ‘less,’ rather, he gains in that he attains to the truth of Being. He gains the essential poverty of the shepherd, whose dignity consists in being called by Being itself in the preservation of Being’s truth.**

I believe the truth toward which we are “called by Being itself” is the hope of transformation of all creation in Christ, and it is the core of our Carmelite spirituality. This transformation is not something effected in the mind, or through the will; we cannot do it for ourselves. We must so grow in the deepest prayer that God takes over our lives. I believe that in this epoch, in the utter silence of contemplation, God is working faithfully on our selfhood in a way we cannot even feel or touch. A new self is being created, often in suffering, and certainly in darkness – a self fit for this time; the kind of self that can live on the new earth, in the new universe that we can see coming into view before us today. To cross this wondrous boundary toward spirit – toward mutuality and interconnectedness – humanity needs a breakthrough, which I believe will happen when enough people dedicate themselves to the task, both allowing themselves to be dispossessed of everything that is false within them and opening themselves to the unimaginable possibilities of God. This is the commitment that Judy and Leah are making as contemplative women.

Teilhard de Chardin’s *Hymn of the Universe* is beautifully evocative of what I am saying. He writes:

Lord Jesus, when it was given to me to see where the dazzling trail of particular beauties and partial harmonies was leading, I recognized that it was all coming to center on a single point, a single person: yourself... What is to be brought about is more than a simple union: it is a transformation, in the course of which the only thing our human activity can do is, humbly, to make ourselves ready, and to accept. Seeing the mystic immobile, crucified or rapt in prayer, some may perhaps think that [her] activity is in abeyance or has left the earth: they are mistaken. Nothing in the world is more intensely alive and active than purity and prayer, which hang like an unmoving light between the universe and God. Through their serene transparency flow the waves of creative power.

Waves of creative power flowing through the serene transparency of prayer: I am reminded of Edith Stein’s early philosophical work. She believed, as do I, that the community of creation has a spirit and a “current” of consciousness that can be transformed by what we send in or along that current. In the end, it is love for God and the energy for goodness, especially in a violent world, sent along the current, that makes all the difference. This is the generativity of contemplatives, a propagation of spirit not just “by means of the works they produce in common” – for instance, nourishing souls, offering spiritual guidance and prayer – but “by virtue of the atmosphere which radiates from them on their environment.” This is truth for everyone: It is not just what we do, but how we are, how we live, that opens humanity to the new and unimaginable future from which God draws us forward. Ultimately this is a faith perspective that brooks no other explanation. We “shepherd Being” by being love.

To this task, community is essential, since love exists only in relationship. Perhaps this is where the iconic image of the lone shepherd breaks down. It is elemental and indispensable that today, Leah and Judy, you not only profess your vows as individuals but as part of this community, and that your commitment to God is expressed also as a commitment to us and to God’s people. Our call toward spirit is a call to communal life, and it is through the unbroken chain of our heritage and tradition that our work and ministry “annuls the limitations of time and space,” provides “food” for the souls not just of contemporary generations but of succeeding ones (Edith Stein). Ours is a long tradition of women finding voice, contributing to the cosmic momentum toward loving interconnectedness and mutuality. We are like trees in an ancient forest, so beautifully described by Susan Griffin (in *Weaving the Visions*):

* Quote not modified for inclusive language to preserve its original cadence.

The way we stand, you can see we have grown up this way together, out of the same soil, with the same rains, leaning in the same way toward the sun. See how we lean together in the same direction. How the dead limbs of one of us rest in the branches of another. How those branches have grown around the limbs. How the two are inseparable. And if you look you can see the different ways we have taken this place into us. Magnolia, loblolly bay, sweet gum, Southern bayberry, Pacific bayberry; wherever we grow there are many of us; Monterey pine, sugar pine, white-bark pine, four-leaf pine, single-leaf pine, bristle-cone pine, Western red pine, Jeffrey pine. And we are various and amazing in our variety, and our differences multiply, so that edge after edge of the endlessness of possibility is exposed. You know we have grown this way for years. And to no purpose you can understand. Yet the knowing is in us, how we have grown this way, why these years were not heedless, why we are shaped the way we are, how we are both infinitesimal and great and how we are infinitely without any purpose you can see, in the way we stand, each alone yet none of us separable, none of us beautiful when separate but all exquisite as we stand, each moment heeded in this cycle, no detail unlovely.

Today we rejoice at our augmented beauty, at the new and lovely details which from this day forward shall permanently and forever mark the forest of Carmel in which we stand.

Back to the Buckets

Four energetic and vivacious young women joined us over the Presidents' Day weekend for our fourth annual *Come and See* experience. Prayer, work, and study shaped the contour of their time with us. Laughter and enthusiasm colored that contour with joy.

We explored together different meditation techniques like Jesus prayer, lectio divina, and guided imagery. They also learned about St. Teresa's water metaphor for prayer. Teresa writes that prayer starts out as hard work like carrying water in buckets by hand to your garden and can evolve to the point where God gives you prayer easily as when God waters the garden for you by sending rain. When they evaluated our time together, they wrote: "This experience will have lasting effects on my spirituality and how I orient my life." "I've caught something of the Spirit of Carmel and whatever decisions I make, this has been a weekend of encouragement, support, understanding, and re-commitment." And one said on leaving, "I guess it's back to the buckets!"

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A Chapter of the Secular Order of Carmel meets each month at our monastery. On October 16th, 2005, Epifania A. Ceniza made her Profession of Vows, and Carol Barlow and Katie Turyna were admitted to formation. Please contact Debbie Ventre, 410-686-2132 or James Peleska, 410-452-5334 for information about the Secular Order.

| Calendar | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|----------|
| Contemplative Prayer | March 30 & April 6 | | 7:00 pm |
| Lenten Sunday | April 2 | | 5:00 pm |
| Vespers & Homily | | | |
| Palm Sunday | April 9 | Eucharist | 9:00 am |
| | | Vespers | 5:00 pm |
| Holy Thursday | April 13 | Tenebrae | 8:00 am |
| | | Eucharist | 5:30 pm |
| Good Friday | April 14 | Tenebrae | 8:00 am |
| | | Liturgy | 3:00 pm |
| Holy Saturday | April 15 | Tenebrae | 8:00 am |
| Kevin Gillespie, SJ | | Vespers | 4:30 pm |
| | | Easter Vigil | 9:00 pm |
| Easter Sunday | April 16 | Eucharist | 11:00 am |
| Jim Stormes, SJ | | Vespers | 4:30 pm |
| Ascension Sunday | May 28 | Eucharist | 9:00 am |
| Pentecost Sunday | June 4 | Eucharist | 9:00 am |
| Our Lady of Mt Carmel | July 16 | Sunday | 9:00 am |
| | | Eucharist | |