



Carmelite News

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Mary Fleig To Make First Profession

Mary Rose Fleig will make her first profession of vows on October 1st, the Feast of Thérèse of Lisieux. That you might share our joy as she commits to continue her life in Carmel, we asked Mary for her reflections on the last three years.

"I have always been a God seeker," Mary explained as she gazed contentedly out her window at a gorgeous rose-speckled sky, twilight over the rolling grounds of Baltimore Carmel. Before she entered the monastery, she would steal time away from her job as an insurance lawyer at a large Columbia, MD company to attend daily Mass. She happily used her vacation time for retreats. But she had "no idea" that there might be a community of nuns with which her life and spirit would so resonate. She never thought she could combine her desire for a primary focus on prayer and God with her vibrantly energetic personality and an open embrace of life, the world, and all people. Now, being a contemplative with the Baltimore community is "who I am," she joyfully proclaims.

As she has delved more deeply into knowledge of God and self, Mary has witnessed an unexpected blossoming of her creative spirit, nourished particularly by her outdoor work. Very early most mornings, she can be found pruning, weeding, sowing, raking, or otherwise tending the earth, an essential and important job in the community yet one she considers more pleasure than toil. "I love getting my hands dirty, nurturing the ground," she says. But creativity has also emerged in ways more surprising to her, for instance in new-found talents for art and embroidery, even in the task of designing liturgy programs depicting deep spiritual concepts in symbolic imagery. Mary sees the freedom for creativity as "intrinsic" to the contemplative life of the Baltimore community.

Even while Mary revels in the beauty of our grounds, she says there is a "more" to the beauty here. She speaks eloquently of the "spirit of place" that permeates the monastery, a charged current of love or "aura" emanating from women devoting their lives to prayer, and from the legacy of all our deceased sisters who form a 216-year unbroken chain of contemplative

presence. It is an aura that our large Sunday congregation touches and deeply values, Mary

believes. "I love being part of that," she says, "part of this community of educated, concerned, interested and loving women."

Once she could not imagine anything she would want to do for the rest of her life. Now she is embarking upon what she calls "the biggest commitment of my life, the most serious," and "that's exciting!" But she will miss the person "who taught me about a loving God." Her mother Rose Fleig died from cancer just after Mary entered Carmel. "I only wish she could be here," Mary says poignantly.

To young people today who are engaged in the "God seeking" that has characterized her own life, Mary wants to say that we are here, offering a unique opportunity to live a religious life that is both contemporary and steeped in authentic Carmelite charism. Perhaps with Mary Rose of the Grace of God you might pursue your quest in Carmel.

Come and See!

Single women 18-35 are warmly invited to spend a weekend with us, living, praying and working, to try out life in Carmel: President's Day Weekend, February 16-19, 2007; other dates may also be available.

If interested please call or e-mail:
info@baltimorecarmel.org

Praying for the Earth with Teresa of Avila

This year we will celebrate the Feast of Teresa of Avila with special emphasis on her teaching about prayer using water and garden imagery, continuing our year of prayer for earth's healing. On Saturday, October 14 at 7:30 p.m. we are holding a contemplative vigil service, including a showing in the chapel of Sr. Constance FitzGerald's presentation, *The Woman, The Water, The Way*, as well as silent prayer and shared reflection. On Sunday, we will have Mass at 9 a.m. joyfully celebrating the feast day of this great founder/reformer of our Order, and giving

particular attention to prayer for the earth. This is one of our most important feasts of the year and so we especially invite everyone to come share it with us.

A Pilgrimage of Beauty

On Saturday, July 15, the vigil of the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, at a service of prayer for earth's healing, a special pilgrimage walk was made in our chapel by nearly 100 people. The path led around five pilgrimage sites where the evening's prayer took place. Through one of our sister's reflections, we invite you to share in this experience now by making an imaginary walk along the pilgrimage of earth's beauty.

I follow a path with stone markers, lined with candlelight, walking without any words in a silence supported by gentle music and nature sounds. In my hand is a small rock that seems to center me. Soon enough I come to a simple sandstone plaque marking the first pilgrimage site – one that is ah, so familiar: the John of the Cross site, *into the thicket*. Tall grasses, a simple waterfall, sand and rocks, all so close, so immediate, and the sound of the water invite me to rest awhile. I open myself to the awakening of God, and then move again, slowly, along the path.

Now I begin to notice small figures on a table and, glancing up, catch the first view of faces, faces of a wonderful variety of creatures, human and animal – somehow the sanctity of each face shining out from a two dimensional picture into a special presence in the space. I have reached the second pilgrimage site, Creatures of the Earth.

After “embracing” each face in silence I begin again, following the path as it winds back to the meditation chapel which, for the evening, has been transformed into the Cosmos. What strikes me here is the light shining from the views of the planets, stars and galaxies and the vivid array of color. How magnificent, how beyond my grasp this all is, how truly beyond my ability to comprehend.

A little overwhelmed, I continue the journey to the sanctuary of the main chapel where some of the world's great archetypal natural wonders come into view: a desert at sunset, snow covered mountain, vast canyons, gigantic trees, moss covered stones, powerful waterfalls. I spend time here with these beautiful views, Vistas of the Earth, meditating on what these precious creations mean to me now and what they have meant in our collective lives – in our collective memories.

At last I arrive at the center of the sanctuary where, for the evening, a beautiful icon of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is displayed with special reverence. Here, we each bring our simple vigil lights to offer prayer for the renewal of the earth.

Having finished my pilgrimage, I remember the journey from the “microcosm” of the ordinary and close, grasses and rocks; to the “faces” of all creatures and the sanctity of each; to the immensity of galaxies billions of light years away; to those vistas we hold in our hearts as our soul's landscapes; and finally, to a simple mother and a simple child gazing at one another – face to face. In all of these the face of God is reflected; we merely must open our eyes to see.

☪ Calendar ☪

Sunday, October 1, St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Lauds 8:15 am, Mass 9 am, Solemn Vespers 5 pm

Saturday, October 14, Vigil of St. Teresa of Avila

7:30 pm Contemplative Vigil Service

Sunday, October 15, Feast of St. Teresa of Avila

Lauds 8:15 am, Mass 9 am, Solemn Vespers 5 pm

Thursday, November 23, Thanksgiving Day

Mass 9:00 am