

QUINN CONNERS, O.CARM

Reflection on I Kings 19:1-15

In our first reading, we heard the passage from the First Book of Kings that is fundamental to Carmel's identity, to its self-understanding: "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts..." (I Kings 19:14) That may have been the response of those first Carmelite women, 225 years ago, who landed in this new nation and whose bravery and vision we celebrate today, to a question similar to the one addressed to Elijah: "What are you doing here...?"

As women called to live a life of contemplative prayer in community, they had not experienced God in the great wind of theological study though that is a valued vocation in the Church. They had not experienced God in the earthquake of a very active life of apostolic service or ministry though that is an important ministry in the Church. They had not experienced God in the fire of married life and raising children though that is a foundational vocation in our Church today.

No! They discovered God in the unexpected sound of sheer silence that quieted the other desires in their lives and channeled them in the singular and jealous zeal for God. They heard, like Elijah, God's invitation to "...return on your way to the wilderness of...not of Damascus but of this newly formed United States of America..." (I Kings 19:15) as the first women religious of any community.



What fruit has been borne of their contemplative vocation and their search for God! They have lived their life of contemplative prayer in this community and this local Church of Baltimore for 225 years. They are a unique and special expression of this vitally important vocation in the Church. Whether in Port Tobacco, Aisquith Street, Biddle Street, or Dulaney Valley, they have been this 'broom tree' that offers the cake of listening, compassionate ears and hearts to the needs of so many. They have been this 'broom tree' that offers the water of prayer - Eucharistic, communal, and personal - that satisfies the thirst of so many people who come to them. They have offered this Carmelite life and spirituality, a valued charism in the life of the Church, from the very beginning of this nation, and they have done it with courage and creativity that has brought new life to the contemplative vocation.

As we gratefully celebrate their courage 225 years ago as well as their ongoing courage today to be faithful to that call, their invitation to us is to continue to seek the experience of God in our lives, whatever context our vocation has: religious life, married life, single life. Be open to the unexpected ways in which the revelation of God's Spirit will take place in our lives. And to celebrate with them this incredible gift of God from God. It is the best way to say "thank you" to them.

On
July 19th we
celebrated our
225th anniversary of
foundation and invited
three dear friends to
provide reflections. We
would like to share
their reflections with
you.

Our Carmelite sisters give witness to their love of God, one another, and our world in so many ways, including opening their home to us. But their particular expression of love that bears fruit for our world is prayer. Prayer is their primary service, their gift to our world. In the powerful words of the Second Vatican Council, they know that "the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ." By their lives of prayer and contemplation, they are sacraments to us - visible signs of the one thing necessary: to remain in God's love, the source and fountain of our love of neighbor.

During the Depression of the 1930s, when things were really hard in my mother's family, my grandmother would send mom to the Carmelite Monastery on Biddle Street. There, she would take a little slip of paper expressing a request for prayer for the current need. She would put it on a turnstile and pass it through a grate, never seeing the sister who would receive it on the other side. The grate is gone. But those needs, those petitions remain. And our sisters remain. And for this, we are profoundly grateful.



PATRICIA SMITH, RSM

Reflection on the Gospel of John 15:9-17

Each of us comes here to liturgy out of varied motivations: an active and welcoming congregation, lovely music, inspiring homilies, women's leadership, calls to social justice, whatever. But what underlies and permeates our worship is the witness, the lives of the women of Carmel whose 225th anniversary we joyfully celebrate. John's Gospel gets to the heart of their calling-and, ultimately, of our own.

The Last Supper is a farewell meal among friends. If you or I were going away for a long time - or if we knew we were going to die soon, what would we say to those we love? What would we want to "stick" with them? Jesus gives two not so simple commands: love as I have loved. And abide, remain in that love. If you stay, if you put your roots down in that love, then you will have joy. But the disciples' love for one another has a purpose beyond itself. Their love, like ours, is to bear fruit in the world - through their lives of holiness and service.

BRIAN McDERMOTT, SJ

Reflection on The Way of Perfection

It's been a long, long friendship. It didn't begin in the Maryland colony. It didn't even begin in Hoogstraet and English Antwerp. It reaches, of course, back to 16th century Spain.

But the last 225 years of companionship, of mutual support, and of friendship, are what we savor this morning. Carmelites and Jesuits in search of God, in love with Jesus, eager to serve God's people.

How many Jesuits of the Maryland Province - and beyond - have confided in their Carmelite sisters when they were going through hard times or dark nights? I imagine at times a Maryland Province Jesuit rehearsing with a Carmelite friend what he will later share with Fr. Provincial!

How many Carmelites have enjoyed sharing in the apostolic exploits of Jesuits, who see themselves as sent to various parts of the world in the hope of "helping souls."

Carmelite spirituality and Ignatian spirituality have dimensions that differ. This is only right, given our distinctive vocations. But one essential unifier between us we find in the call to notice, be present to, and surrender to, the living Jesus in prayer.

In this marvelous and very well known passage from the Way of Perfection, Teresa invites her sisters to become, more and more, friends and companions of the human, risen Jesus.

Ignatius of Loyola was blessed with the gift of being contemplative likewise in action: *contemplativus simul in actione*. In other words, he was gifted to experience profound union with Jesus (*contemplativus*) not only in formal prayer, but in all the activities and passivities of his life.

Teresa was immensely encouraged by the Jesuits Diego de Cetina, Juan de Pradenos (who were in their mid-twenties), and the more mature Francis Borgia, to stay always present to Jesus in her prayer. She might begin with an image of Jesus in her mind, or a crucifix in front of her. And then she might be led into image-less and concept-less union with her divine and human Friend. But she appreciated that always, in all her prayer, and in all her activities and sufferings, the presence of the risen Jesus never left her. Images and concepts might depart, but she was always engaged with the human and divine Jesus.



Ignatius' splendid contribution to the spiritual journey of Christians was to offer a map, a structure, for Christians to learn to grow in union with God through Jesus in the power of the Spirit. He offered precious foundations.

Teresa's signal contribution, along with her friend John of the Cross, was to offer a map of the journey beyond the foundations, to chart to some degree the waters that are ultimately unchartable, because they are the unfathomable waters of God's life.

This profound complementarity between Ignatian and Carmelite spiritualities provides essential elements of the spiritual journey. I would like simply to name two of them:

first, profound and constant appreciation of the full humanity of Jesus as the way to the deepest depths of God;

secondly, guidelines for discerning the spirits that lie underneath the various spiritual movements in our consciousness, whether those movements are authentic or deceptive spiritual consolation; spiritual desolation; or various forms of embodied prayer: locutions, visions, raptures; or the dark night of the senses and the dark night of the spirit.

Teresa and Ignatius agree on many things. In terms of our reading this morning, they agree that contemplativeness is central to our journey into God: contemplativeness here understood as being present to the Other in such a way that one is increasingly being affected by the Other on the Other's terms. Such an understanding of contemplativeness one finds in the Second, Third and Fourth Weeks of the Spiritual Exercises. And such an understanding of contemplativeness is revealed in the Sixth and Seventh Mansions of *The Interior Castle*.

This morning I have the wonderful honor of representing all the Jesuits who, over the years, have been friends and companions in the Lord with our sisters of the Baltimore Carmel. Your hunger for God, which alone makes sense of your lives, has been a rich inspiration—and challenge—to us Jesuits, who can be tempted to find our meaning in our work, or in the appreciation of those to whom we minister.

On behalf of my Jesuit brothers, I say "thank you" to you and to those who have gone before you. Thank you for your desire for God, your love for Jesus, your obedience to the promptings of the Spirit. Thank you for your groundedness, your down-to-earth humanity, which has been the salvation of more than a few Jesuits!

All of this has been pure blessing for us, your Jesuit brothers in the Lord.

We are grateful indeed!

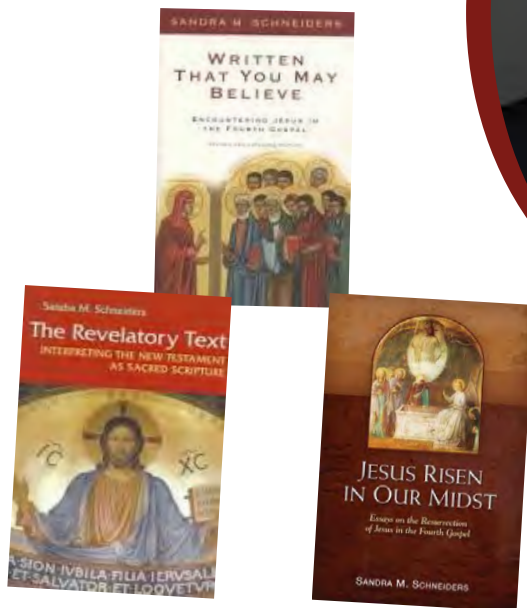


The Carmelite Sisters of Baltimore Present

Sandra Schneiders, IHM

The Jesus Mysticism Of Teresa of Avila and its Importance for Theology

Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM, is a member of the Sister Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and Professor Emerita of New Testament Studies and Christian Spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University. She specializes in New Testament literature, particularly Johannine literature and biblical hermeneutics, and Christian Spirituality, specifically biblical spirituality, feminism, religious life and the theory of spirituality.



Among her many published works are *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (1999), *Written That You May Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Paulist Press, 2003), and her latest book, *Jesus Risen in our Midst: Essays on the Resurrection of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Liturgical Press 2014). In her groundbreaking trilogy, Sr. Sandra offers a compelling interpretation of contemporary religious life and its future: *Finding the Treasure* (2000), *Selling All* (2001), *Buying the Field* (2013).

Carmelite News

A Heartfelt 'Thank You'

In October we close the year celebrating the Fifth Centenary of the birth of St. Teresa of Avila and the 225th Anniversary of our foundation. We want to thank you for your overwhelming participation in our liturgies and lectures and for your very generous contributions to our Centenary Fund. Your donations have supported our events and begun to build our Education Fund. We continue to trust in your gracious support of our contemplative life and hope you will continue to help us grow our Fund for the education of our younger members.

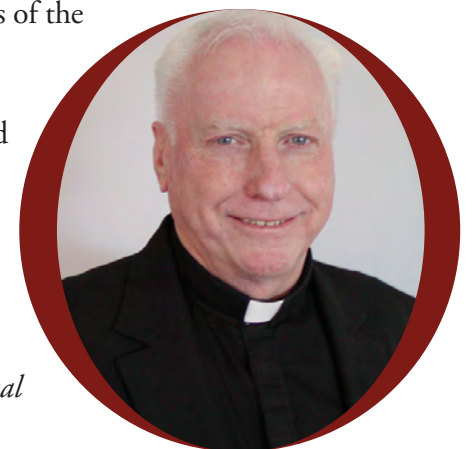


Closing Liturgy

Please join us on Sunday, October 18th at 9:00 a.m. as we close our year of celebration with a special Eucharist for the feast of St. Teresa of Avila. John Welch, O.Carm will be presider and homilist.

John Welch is a Carmelite priest and theologian. Until being elected a provincial of the Carmelites of the Ancient Observance in 2005, he was a member of the Carmelite Community at Whitefriars Hall in Washington and served on the faculty of The Washington Theological Union where he held the Chair of Carmelite Studies. At WTU he taught courses on Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross and Therese of Lisieux. He was a founding member of the Carmelite Forum (1982-2013) and the first president of the Carmelite Institute.

Fr. Welch's published works include *Spiritual Pilgrims: Carl Jung and Teresa of Avila* (1982), *When Gods Die: An Introduction to John of the Cross* (1990), *The Carmelite Way: An Ancient Path for Today's Pilgrim* (1996), and *Seasons of the Heart: The Spiritual Dynamics of the Carmelite Life* (1996).



Lecture October 17 at 2 p.m.
R.S.V.P by emailing us at:
Teresa500@baltimorecarmel.org

At the
Carmelite Monastery
1318 Dulaney Valley Road
Baltimore, MD 21286

