

As we struggle with a whole range of emotions in response to the recent PA grand jury investigation identifying shocking sexual abuse and cover-up in the Church, we asked our dear friend and renowned scripture scholar, John Donahue, SJ to contribute to this newsletter by writing a piece about the role of lament.



Blessed are Those Who Mourn

Our liturgies at Carmel are celebrations of thanksgiving to God and are filled with joy which sustains us as we try to live the good news of the presence of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. But at times the shadows of sorrow or grief can darken our lives. Such were the horrible revelations of the unspeakable acts of sexual abuse and the culture of deception and neglect of victims recounted in the report of the Pennsylvania attorney general. We ask how could this happen and why did the bishops create a culture of deceit. And we feel where is God in all of this.

“Why” and “how” echo through the psalms, the Psalms, the prayer book of the people of Israel: “Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? (Ps 10:1); Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? (Ps 44:24) and How long will you hide your face from me? (Pss 13:2; 89:6); O Lord, how long shall the wicked exult? (Ps 94:3). Echoing throughout the psalms these laments make the shrill insistence that 1) things are not right in the present arrangement; 2) things need not stay this way and can be changed; 3) the speaker will not accept them in this way, for the present arrangement is intolerable; and 4) it is God’s obligation to change. They allow people to voice unabashedly the horrors and sufferings in life and to enter into the absence of God, poignantly phrased by Gerard Manley Hopkins in one of his “terrible sonnets” when our prayers seem to be, “cries like dead letters sent/ To dearest him who lives alas! Away.”

Laments can sustain our personal prayer. As an expression of crippling pain in the face of an almost unspeakable reality, lament also asks but does not answer a philosophical and theological question: how can this be?” Prayers of lamentation to a God who seems deaf to suffering is akin to the experience of “the dark night of the soul,” as described by the Carmelite Theologian Sr. Constance FitzGerald, OCD. “John of the Cross,” she

notes, “is at pains to show how our images of God are progressively and of necessity changed and shattered by life experience. The very experience of dark night does, in fact, critique our present images of God.” Only when we face an impasse, she notes, can we stand before a “God (who) makes demands for conversion, healing, justice, love, compassion, solidarity, and communion. Here the face of God appears, a God who dies in human beings and rises in human freedom and dignity.”(*Impasse and Dark Night*)

Also “Liturgies of lament deserve a prominent place in the liturgical life of believing Christian communities. Unless public worship prays the lament psalms most believers will have little or no contact with their potent language as well as their capacities to house sorrow and teach resistance, and they can assist us in coping with present despair or future grief.” Where shall we find these liturgies? (See, Kathleen O’Connor, *Lamentations and the Tears of the World*, 145–47)

John R. Donahue, SJ.

Archives Work Continues

This summer we have been doing intensive work in our archives. First of all, we have contracted with LYRASIS to migrate the catalogue of approximately 14,000 documents from a very old DOS computer program to a new program called *ArchivesSpace*. These documents span the years 1674-1961 and are the records of the pre-history of our community in the Low Countries and Maryland and our actual history here in Maryland beginning in 1790 when our community was founded in Port Tobacco in Southern Maryland. Our records are notable for a number of reasons. 1) We are the first community of religious women in the thirteen original states. Our records are the documented history of a community of women that has been in continuous existence for 228 years. 2) The early sisters belonged to the families who had settled Maryland in the 17th century. Our records contain information about family histories and their legal, financial and business affairs. 3) The community played a part in the beginnings of the Catholic Church in the U.S. Their correspondence with Archbishop John Carroll, the first bishops of our country and the early founders of religious communities are noteworthy. 4) Of special significance is the relationship between the Carmelites and the Jesuits both in the Low Countries and in Maryland and the documents that issue from this centuries-long association.

In the early 1980s when archival computer programs were in an early stage of development, we bought into a program developed at Georgetown University. Because of our long collaboration and friendship with the



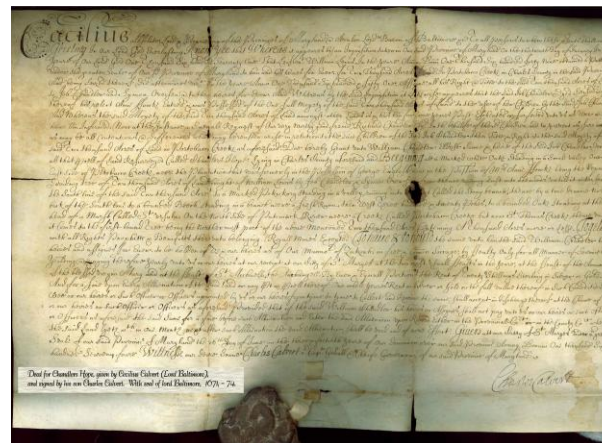
Ciborium and Chalice that were used on the trip to Maryland from the Lowlands in 1790

ed process. Moreover, they also shared with LYRASIS the documentation from their own migration. Our migration will be completed sometime this fall and the public will be able to search the Finding Aid for this part of our Repository on our website. This entire process, including the hosting of our Archives by LYRASIS, has cost the community \$7,425. If anyone feels drawn to donate to this project, we would warmly welcome your support.

Secondly, we are also concentrating on the accessioning (arranging and cataloging) of the community’s records from 1961 to the present with particular concern for the years following Vatican II and the process of our renewal and our community’s part in the renewal of Carmelite and contemplative life in this country. This summer we have had two wonderful volunteers and longtime friends helping us. Sue Houchins, a professor in African and Women’s Studies at Bates College in Maine, was with us as a volunteer for two months this summer. She brought a scholar’s mind and precision to the arrangement of volumes of correspondence. Maryellen McHenry, whose thirty-year career with NSA was followed by a second career in elder services (putting her MA in Gerontology to good use), is donating her time and labor once a week to the arrangement of the records from our Bicentennial (1990). She brings the keen eye of an intelligence analyst to the work!

Sisters Lupe and Celia are giving some of their time to arranging records and communications from Carmels (nuns and friars) here in the U.S. and abroad. Sister Colette is involved in a major way – at present with documents related to the Carmelite Association to which the community has belonged since the association’s founding in 1970. Sister Connie is overseeing the entire project and is arranging and sorting documents in various Record Groups day after day. The next step will be inputting record (document) information into *ArchivesSpace*. A long, never-ending process!

For more about our history and to see more artifacts and documents, please go to the history section of our website: <https://www.baltimorecarmel.org/history-of-our-community/>



The land grant for Chandlers Hope with the seal of Cecilius Calvert, Lord Baltimore. Chandlers Hope was the first home of the community in 1790.

The effects of climate change and earth degradation are being experienced to a greater and greater degree throughout the world. Although we have not suffered from fires or serious floods, we have had a great many storms in our area, storms that have produced a combination of strong winds and large amounts of rain in a brief amount of time. As a result, we've had considerable tree damage on our grounds, much of it occurring on dead or dying trees. Unfortunately this has resulted in fallen limbs creating power outages to neighboring properties. We've also had some trees completely uproot due to the combination of saturated grounds and high winds.

Part of the problem is related to Ash trees which have, over the last several years, been killed by an exotic non-native pest called the Emerald Ash Borer. According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Ash trees are one of the most common landscaping trees used in the U.S. and are common in Maryland forests. The Ash Borer is expected to kill approximately 99% of Ash trees in our state.

We have a large number of Ash trees in the woods surrounding our monastery. As a result of both the storms and the dead trees, we've contracted to have 16 dead trees removed from our woods, most of them Ash trees which would affect power lines if they were to fall. In future phases of this project we will identify and remove dead or dying Ash trees on other areas of our property, such as along our road, and in keeping with good stewardship we would like to plant new trees to replace the ones we've had to remove. As you might imagine, this project comes at considerable expense. We would greatly appreciate your help in financing this project. Even the smallest contribution would be welcome!

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Our Stormy Summer

BALTIMORE CARMEL News

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www.Baltimorecarmel.org

Prayer / Transformation / Love

Please Join us for our Eucharistic Celebrations:

Therese of Lisieux, Sunday, September 30 at 9 a.m.

Teresa of Avila, Sunday, October 14 at 9 a.m.

We would love to have you with us as we celebrate these important Carmelite Saints and Doctors of the Church.