



We realize the pandemic is not over in our country, nor in the world. We continue to have sick people, unvaccinated people, dying people, and concerns about variants. Still, we are beginning to open-up, and as we do, we ask ourselves what the learnings of this epic time really are? What meanings can we discover in the pain, the fear, the anxiety, the loss, the sadness, the separations? What significances in the creativity, the generosity, the self-giving, pod-living, the virtual connectedness and community?

We had what so many people did not have. While others were isolated in very limiting surroundings, we were privileged to be together in a spacious, beautiful setting. As a contemplative community, we had one another as companions in our everyday living. And we had you, our faithful friends, whose constant support and presence in our lives did not fail us.

Yet we were immersed in all the darkness of the world: emergency rooms full of people dying of COVID, six hundred thousand deaths in the U.S. alone, immigrants struggling at our borders, children in detention camps, preys to COVID, separated from their parents, false claims of a stolen election, our Capital stormed by rioters, democracy shaken and threatened, the murder of George Floyd, Black Lives Matter, white supremacy, white privilege and racism, spiraling gun violence. We have been deeply shaken, profoundly affected in our prayer, our liturgies, our relationships. Questions arise:

What need we forfeit for the sake of humanity's transformation, what embrace? Are we called with renewed urgency to live into a new stage of consciousness, to embrace a radically new paradigm for living together in this cosmos where everyone, everything is related, connected, "entangled"?

While the pandemic was raging, new ways of relating did arise, accenting, perhaps, the larger paradigm shift underway. Concerned for the vibrant community that gathers around us for liturgy, prayer, direction and friendship, our contemplative hearts compelled us to reach out with all the creativity, vitality and resilience our community was capable of. The expansion of our virtual contemplative life has been amazing, even to us. Our entire community has embraced this ministry and Sisters Celia and Mary have managed the necessary technology with incredible competency and artistry. The Saturday afternoon *Lectio Divina* gathering has grown into a life-giving, expansive community that includes participants from the length and breadth of our country and far beyond. Scholars in scripture and systematic theology have been generous with their reflections on the Sunday readings and we can't even begin to describe what the small group sharing on the Word of God has meant for everyone. What a far-reaching and bonded community we have become, weaving strong currents of spiritual energy around our earth by the power of our communal reflection and prayer, the trust of our sharing, the depth and fidelity of our growing communion.

While we have opened-up for in-person Sunday and weekday liturgy, we continue to stream our Sunday Mass

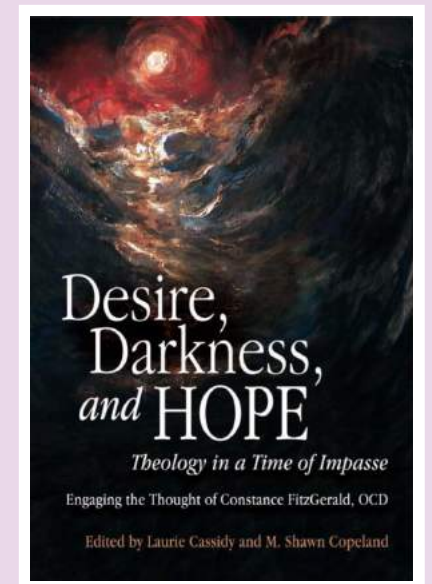


to include all those friends and family who have become part of our virtual community. It is, however, worthy of note that in the absence of a priest during the past year, the sisters have grown accustomed to presiding at Communion Services, a different model that provides a hospitable place for the shared homilies we have learned to cherish.

Every Saturday morning, throughout the year, our vocation team has gathered virtually with women considering a call to Carmelite life in our community. They read and discuss themes in Carmelite spirituality, prayer and contemplative life. One participant spent a three-month live-in with us, a young woman is with us now in view of entering, and several more women are coming for summer visits. In addition, our lives were greatly enriched by the presence of Sr. Rosemary Kemsley, an Anglican sister from England, whose visit was prolonged to six months because of COVID travel restrictions. And we have welcomed into our community Sr. Hilary Case, whose Carmel recently closed. Last, but not least, we accompanied our dear Sisters Mary Eileen (101) and Anita (98) in their recent move with the SSND Sisters to their new, beautiful, long-term care wing at Stella Maris.

The sisters have participated virtually in numerous activities/meetings of our Carmelite Association (CCA) and Sr. Monika has served gallantly on its leadership team – her release from office long overdue, again because of COVID restrictions. In what amounted to a task of many months, Sr. Celia transferred all donor names, donations, and relevant information to a completely new Database that coordinates seamlessly with our bookkeeping software: checking, banking, etc. And our own in-house medical team continued to guide us safely through the anxieties of COVID-19 and the complexities of State, CDC and Archdiocesan directives. Meanwhile, like everyone else, we kept our household going with the tasks of daily living: cooking (food delivery), gardening, cleaning, necessary maintenance....

We have realized, especially during this time, many of the practical values and graces of living as a stable community. We live together, not without cost, in great love and bondedness. All of us are responsible for the generativity of the community, and our lived tradition, deep in our souls, has given us strength. This is important for the future of religious life. At this time, it may actually point to the paradigm shift of epic proportions that is underway.



In May, we were delighted to receive from Liturgical Press first copies of *Desire, Darkness and Hope, Theology in a Time of Impasse*, a volume engaging the thought of Sr. Constance. This book contains some of Connie's major articles along with theological reflections on her work by ten theologians, including Sr. Colette who contributed the biographical sketch. What is important to us in this publication is the intersection of contemporary interpretations of Carmelite Spirituality with issues important in theology and the lives of people today. We are grateful to Laurie Cassidy and M. Shawn Copeland for their tireless labor in bringing this work to publication.



### Do You Receive Our Emails?

With our virtual presence we have developed an e-newsletter which informs of upcoming events. Would you like to receive our newsletter? If so, please go to our website ([www.baltimorecarmel.org](http://www.baltimorecarmel.org)) and click on "News," then fill out the relevant information. We won't clutter your inbox, and you can unsubscribe at any time.

### Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

We celebrate the solemnity of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel on Friday, July 16. We will also celebrate on Sunday, July 18 at our 9 a.m. Mass - both streamed and live. Fr. Kevin DePrinzio, OSA will be presiding. We hope you can join us.

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# BALTIMORE CARMEL News

*Summer 2021*



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