

And I will live for the Lord (Psalm 22:31)

As part of our 5-year post solemn profession program, the community gifted me with a 30-day retreat, which was a beautiful prelude to the Season of Creation we are celebrating now (September 1 – October 4).

I arrived at Eastern Point Retreat House in Gloucester, Massachusetts on June 26, 2022, eager, excited, and a “wee bit” anxious about how the next 35-days would unfold. As I unpacked my suitcase, I discovered a beautiful Book of Blessings the community had carefully packed between my clothes unbeknown to me. Each page was filled with beautiful words and photos from each of the sisters in which they offered their encouragement, prayerful wishes, and much love. I returned to this book often throughout the retreat, as it filled me with love, strength, and consolation.

Eastern Point is a *thin* place of infinite beauty, a vast ocean of God’s grace and mercy. It is here where I would gather with 21 other exercitants and 6 incredibly gifted spiritual directors to make the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. Interestingly, Saint Teresa of Avila made a form of the *Spiritual Exercises* in which she embraced the humanity of Christ anew; this opened her to a deeper relationality with Jesus in the Trinity, which she recounts in the latter part of the 6th and 7th dwelling places. Mindful of Teresa’s experience, I was eager to set out on this pilgrim road. In what follows, I have chosen to share glimpses of what these days held for me.



On one of my first evenings at Eastern Point, I went for an evening stroll and saw the most stunning rainbow over Niles Pond. It was for me a sign of God’s covenant (Genesis 9:12-16) with every living creature.

In the opening days of the retreat, Ignatius counseled us to ask for the grace *to know Jesus more intimately, to love him more intensely, and so to follow him more closely* – day by day. And *to desire and to choose what better helps us live the love for which God made us.*

Journal Entry – Day 1

The glory of God is the human person fully alive. – St. Irenaeus

I am entering these 30-days full of love and hope. I arrived a bit like Elijah – worn out, weary and longing for my God. I hope this will be a time of integration, of seeing how all the fragments of my life fit together. I desire to live from my deepest center, from the place where I am grafted onto Christ. I want to be absorbed by and immersed in God and to grow ever closer to Jesus. In and through my divination I hope to embody more fully my humanity – graced and broken open in love for the world. I

desire to grow in wholeness and to become Love at the heart of the universe; to allow my life to flow into the fullness of Jesus’s life, which pervades the entire cosmos.

I sense the radiating and palpable presence of the Sacred Heart drawing me into the particularity of the Risen Jesus and the all-pervading Cosmic Christ. It is the Spirit who capacitates me to open my heart to the fullness of Christ’s presence, my graced and wounded humanity, and the suffering of the world.

The themes that are most present to me as I begin this pilgrim journey are love, beauty, and wholeness. And I pray for the grace of interior freedom and wisdom and the courage to follow God into whatever landscapes God invites me. I know that Love has brought me here, Love will carry me, and Love will lead me home again. May I be faithful to this journey of Love. In hope of peace and the transformation of the world, I embrace your Sacred Heart and entrust my life to You. – June 28, 2022



My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the secret recesses of the cliff, let me see your face, let me hear your voice, for your voice is sweet and your face is lovely. Song of Songs 2:14

Eastern Point is on the beautiful rocky coast of Cape Ann. Throughout the retreat, I relished climbing onto the rocks – hearing the rush of the water, smelling the scent of the sea, feeling the breeze on my skin and the warmth of the sun radiating off the rocks – absolutely thrilling! It was here that I rejoiced in the majesty and grandeur of God, lamented the suffering of the world, cried with God as Jesus died on the cross, and experienced touches of Resurrection.

I awoke early each morning and delighted in watching night give way to dawn, hearing the first birdsong, and seeing the sun quiver over the horizon and rise in majesty. The colors of each sunrise were distinctive – God’s color palette is an artist’s dream. I often prayed Teilhard’s *Mass on the World*, offering to God the labors and sufferings of each day.

I took many long walks to admire the beauty and vastness of Creation. A strong theme of my retreat was experiencing God in and through the *Book of Creation*. The landscape really nourished my

soul. I was especially fond of the wildflowers and hydrangeas. These walks were often a time of unfolding surprise, a surprise John O’Donohue captured well in his poem *Fluent*:

*I would love to live
Like a river flows,
Carried by the surprise
Of its own unfolding.*



Out of God’s tender mercy, a new dawn.
– Benedictus

During the retreat Jesus’s life and my life were woven together as I prayed intimately with passages of Scripture. Another surprise of the retreat was the way in which the women of the Bible and the maternal images of God companioned me. I so enjoyed getting to know Mary, Elizabeth, Anna, Mary of Magdala, Martha, the Samaritan woman, Ruth, and the woman from the Song of Songs. I was especially moved by the ways in which God labors for us in love.

The final passage I prayed, the Ascension narrative from the Gospel of Luke (24:50-53), echoed the desire of my heart as I returned to the monastery with great joy where I can be continually in the temple praising God.

Over the time of the retreat, I traversed many landscapes and grew in intimacy with Jesus. It was a time of slowing down, of deep listening and of contemplative seeing. I am ever grateful to my community and all those who made it possible for me to be away, and to my director, Sister Nancy Sheridan, SASV, whose presence and expertise was a gift I will cherish always.

To quote a fellow retreatant, I feel I’m returning *less perfect, but more whole*. I look forward to re-reading Teresa’s works in light of my experience and contributing to the work Connie and Brian McDermott, SJ, did in 2015 to bring together Teresian and Ignatian Spiritualities.



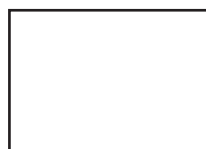
*Nancy and Celia on the
Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel*



Leadership Conference of Religious Women (LCWR) Assembly 2022: Mystical Wisdom: Following Spirit's Beckoning, August 9-12

The main speakers, theologians Sister Constance FitzGerald, OCD, and Dr. M. Shawn Copeland, launched the exploration of mystical wisdom for these challenging times in a set of two conversations. They set their observations within the context of major world shifts and movements taking place: the failures of globalization, the mass migration of peoples, the increase of violence, the pandemic, and the findings of the James Webb telescope that give us a cosmic vision of unimaginable magnitude. Much of their conversation focused on the relationship between the loss of place being experienced worldwide and within the lives of women religious and the transformation of consciousness underway.

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Lectio Divina

One of the themes that emerged from our Synodality Listening Sessions was a strong desire for our church to be more welcoming and inclusive, with a particular concern for the LGBTQ+ community. We have been encouraged by the growth of new programs within our Archdiocese and want to offer our continued support to the LGBTQ+ community, their families, friends, and allies. You are welcome here! And we hope you will join us for Lectio on Saturday, October 8, 2022, at 2 pm ET. Fr. Bryan Massingale will be presenting the commentary on the Gospel for Sunday and Fr. Joe Muth, a longtime leader and advocate for LGBTQ+ outreach, will update us on this important ministry within our Archdiocese.



October 8
Commentary by Fr. Bryan Massingale

October 29
Commentary by Craig Morrison, O.Carm.

November 5
Commentary by Pat Parachini, SNJM

Lectio is on Zoom at 2 p.m. ET
Register on our website

BALTIMORE CARMEL News

Fall 2022



Discover the Fire of God's Love

Prayer / Transformation / Love

Join us as we celebrate the Solemnity of Our Holy Mother, St. Teresa of Avila during Mass on Sunday, October 15, at 9 a.m. ET. You are welcome to join us in-person or online (the link is on our website.)

Fr. Nepi Willemsen, O.Carm. will preside

