

GENTLE BREEZES

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OF CARMEL



SEMI-PROVINCE OF ST. THÉRÈSE OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FRIARS

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Brothers & Sisters,

At the the end of the first year of the new triennium we reflect on the last, in which, with God's help, we began a very intense process of discernment and planning for the future of our Semi-Province. I write this letter with a grateful heart to God the Holy Trinity, to my Carmelite Brothers and Sisters, and to each one of you. For your support in so many different ways, I thank you.

God is generous in calling us to his service and in giving us the tools and means we need in order to fulfill his calling. Be sure that He will also give you what you most need in your life. As followers of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life for us, we try to give our life for the service of you all, beginning with our spiritual life. In all times of prayer we keep present your needs and intentions.

Much has happened over the past months. Our Pastoral Visitation from our General House took place at the end of 2022. That December we received Fr. Christophe, our definator. In preparing for the visitation and in receiving our visitor, we were able to review our Carmelite life as well as our apostolate. At the start of 2023 we received feedback from Father General, Fr. Christophe, and the General Definitory. Their report helped us evaluate and prioritize the things we need to keep working on as we build the present and future of our Semi-Province. The Pastoral Visitation helped us to keep focus on the most important aspects of the Carmelite Vocation.

In June 2023 we were honored to welcome our superior general, Fr. Miguel Márquez Calle, OCD, and definator Fr. Martin Martinez, OCD, who joined us for the first week of the 32nd Provincial Chapter. We are grateful for the guidance he offered regarding plans for the future of the province.

Over the last decade we have prayed and worked diligently to discern God's will for our Semi-Province of St. Thérèse. The call of our Order to return to the essentials of our charism and the zeal of our origins has led us to difficult decisions because of the fewer Friars available for ministry and community life. Now we prepare for the impending departure of the Discalced Carmelite Friars from Little Flower Parish in Oklahoma City.

In leaving Little Flower we are answering the call to strengthen our life as religious by living out more intensely the communal and contemplative aspects of our Carmelite Vocation. As we transition the care of Little Flower into the hands of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, we are thankful to God for calling us to serve our brothers and sisters in Oklahoma for nearly 100 years.

I ask all of you for your continued prayers and support. Your gifts help us in so many ways to continue living our charism. Not only in taking care of day-to-day expenses, but in covering the cost of the different consultative companies and people we need to involve to make decisions for our future.

I am very thankful to all of you who, though you may be facing financial difficulties due to the economy or as lingering consequences of the pandemic, still send donations to our different communities as well as to our provincial central office.

May our generous God reward your love and kindness to us.

May our Lady of Mount Carmel, our mother, protect and intercede for you all.



Fr. Luis Castañeda, OCD



GENTLE BREEZES OF CARMEL

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On the Cover:

The Resurrection,
ca. 1715
Sebastiano Ricci

St. Thérèse and the Sacred Heart of the Risen Christ

Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD

*You know, I don't see the Sacred Heart
like everybody else!*

These words of St. Thérèse about her understanding of the Sacred Heart of Jesus are reflected in a poem, *To the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, that she wrote for her sister Marie, known in Carmel as Sr. Marie of the Sacred Heart. While the popular spirituality of her time emphasized the image of the Heart of Jesus pierced with a lance, for St. Thérèse, the Sacred Heart of Jesus reflected much more. Her devotion to the Sacred Heart was her response to the undying love of the Incarnate, crucified, and risen Jesus, her beloved spouse, whom she encountered every day in the Eucharist.

St. Thérèse begins her poem to the Sacred Heart with the image of St. Mary Magdalene seeking the body of Jesus at the tomb on Easter morning. Even the appearance of angels could not console Jesus' disciple, since her heart's one desire was to find her Lord. But, as the Little Flower proclaims, *Mary Magdalene could not vanquish Him in love!* The risen Jesus appears, calls her by name, and superabundantly fills Mary Magdalene's heart with peace and happiness.

The saint of Lisieux then puts herself in the place of Mary Magdalene, seeking her Lord. She declares *Bright nature, if I do not see God,/ You are nothing to me but a vast tomb.* Without the presence of the risen Jesus, St. Thérèse is saying, this world is empty, devoid of true life or meaning.

She goes on to declare:

*I need a heart burning with tenderness,
Who will be my support forever,
Who loves everything in me, even my weakness...
And who never leaves me day or night.
I could find no creature
Who could always love me and never die.
I must have a God who takes on my nature
And becomes my brother and is able to suffer!*

*You heard me, only Friend whom I love.
To ravish my heart, you became man.
You shed your blood, what a supreme mystery!...
And you still live for me on the Altar.
If I cannot see the brilliance of your Face
Or hear your sweet voice,
O my God, I can live by your grace,
I can rest on your Sacred Heart!*



The Communion of Saint Teresa, Juan Martin Cabezalero (ca. 1670)

At the time she wrote this poem in 1895, St. Thérèse had lost both of her parents to death. Not even her sainted parents, Louis and Zélie Martin, could love her and never die. Only God the Son himself, Incarnate in Jesus Christ, could fulfill this foundational longing of her heart. In taking on our human nature, he became our brother, knowing suffering as we do and dying for our sake. Jesus showed himself to be supreme in love. In his resurrection, Jesus is shown as the One who lives forever, never leaving us day or night, loving us always, having conquered the finality of death.

It is the *risen* Christ whom St. Thérèse recognizes in the Eucharist. He lives for her on the Altar, to sustain her always by his grace and mercy. This

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Fr. Miguel Márquez Calle, OCD, and Fr. Martin Martinez, OCD, with the Friars of the Semi-Province at the opening of the 32nd Chapter.

Is God calling you to be a Discalced Carmelite Friar?

Learn more at:
carmelitefriarsocd.org/vocations
vocations@carmelitefriarsocd.com



Everything is a grace because everything is God's gift.

St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus

Without your prayers and Financial support, we would be unable to live our vocation as faithfully as we can. Your donations allow us to live that important aspect of our vocation which is the pastoral care of the people of God.

The Discalced Carmelites' charism is wonderfully contemplative, prophetic, communal, and apostolic. We invite you to participate in this charism and help nurture this way of life with a grace-filled gift to the Semi-Province of St. Thérèse.

Your gift will directly support the sacred spaces where the Friars reside and the apostolic endeavors that bring all of us closer in friendship to God.

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St. Thérèse and the Sacred Heart of the Risen Christ

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infinite, undying love is what animates his Sacred Heart.

The Little Flower goes on to declare: *It's in your ever-infinite goodness/That I want to lose myself, O Heart of Jesus! And also: I hide myself in your Sacred Heart, Jesus./ I do not fear, my virtue is You!...* Her response to the undying love of the Risen One is to run to him, to abandon herself to him with utter confidence in his goodness and mercy. Thérèse is not intimidated or discouraged by her own "littleness," but trusts the loving Jesus to be himself her virtue, her everything.

In the final stanza of this poem, St. Thérèse muses:

*To be able to gaze on your glory,
 I know we have to pass through fire.
 So I, for my purgatory,
 Choose your burning love, O heart of my God!*

For our little saint, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is ablaze with charity. The Letter to the Hebrews declares that *Our God is a consuming fire*, but Thérèse knows that this fire is one of merciful love, which consumes without destroying. Thus, she is able to confidently cast herself into this burning furnace of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, trusting that rather than being destroyed, she will be purified, *And then, flying away to Heaven, [her] Homeland,/Enter straight away into your Heart.*

St. Thérèse is one who longed to find Jesus as St. Mary Magdalene did. In faith and sacrament, she did encounter the personal love of the Crucified and Risen Jesus for her, a love that would never leave her and never die. This undying merciful love of God for her finds its expression in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, who comes to us in the Eucharist. May we all discover ourselves to be *vanquished in love* by Jesus, who died and rose for us and for our salvation. As St. Thérèse witnesses to us, he loves everything in us, even our weakness and he never leaves us, day or night. May the Little Flower help us to abandon ourselves as she did to this sanctifying love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.