

# Flos Carmeli

Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse  
Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

Summer 2023

Volume XXXIII No. 3

## From the President's Desk

By Maxine Latiolais, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Carmel,

July is an especially grace-filled month with many feast days for our Order. The highlight is certainly the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. We also celebrate other feasts and memorials such as St. Elijah, Prophet & Patron of Carmel; Mary, Mother of Divine Grace; St. Teresa of the Andes; and Sts. Louis and Zelie Martin, among others.

Well, summer is most definitely here! The new PC members are getting settled in. Visitations to communities have begun and the Provincial Council (PC) members are looking forward to visiting with our members across the Semi-Province!

The PC finally had a chance to meet many of the friars during their triennial Provincial Chapter meeting in Dallas the first week of June. We were prevented from that opportunity last triennium because of the Covid lockdowns. It was wonderful to be able to meet and visit many of the friars and to spend the day with them.

### Hold the Date for Provincial Workshops!

Provincial Workshops with Plenary Council meeting: May 17 & 18, 2024. According to the Provincial Statutes the PC is to host a Plenary Council every triennium. Attempts were made to secure a venue this year but there were none available during a weekend. Finally, after much searching, a venue has been secured in Wichita, Kansas. More details later. We realize that many communities have their meeting date on the third weekend of the month, so make plans now with your 2024 calendar to allow attendance at the Provincial Workshop/Plenary Council meeting.

Per our OCDS Statutes Section XXI.2: "Each community shall send two members: The President and an elected representative. If the President is unable to attend, another council member may be substituted. Each Study Group shall send one representative." An "elected representative" means someone chosen by the community specifically to represent them at the Plenary Council meeting, not necessarily a council member.

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## From the President's Desk

By *Maxine Latiolais, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council*

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The Plenary Council meeting is the time to bring issues to the attention of the entire province. It is also a wonderful opportunity to connect with other communities and discuss common concerns. Please make every effort to participate. Your community should pay the members' expenses (or at least part of them) from community funds that have been set aside for that purpose. We urge you not to waste any time in setting aside funds.

### **National Formation Task Force Team**

With much appreciation we offer our sincere gratitude to Jillison Parks who has stepped down from the Task Force Team after serving for many years working diligently to help get the new National Formation Program ready. The Team consists of two members from each Province. We also offer our thanks to Denise Graham who has graciously accepted the position on the Formation Task Force Team.

### **An updated Community Map.**

Please note that included in this edition of the Flos is an updated community map (See Page 5). We added to the map a new GID in Bismarck, North Dakota made up of several former TOC members. I made the trek up there to North Dakota to meet with the new members who are discerning a vocation in the OCDS. We welcome them to the OCDS Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Therese!

*Mary, Mother and Beauty of Carmel, intercede for us!*

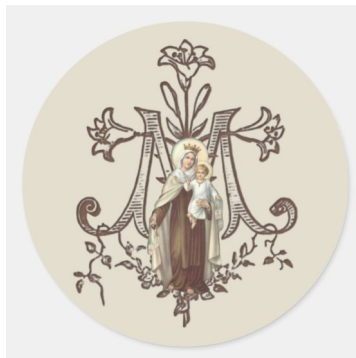
Yours in Carmel,

*Maxine Latiolais, OCDS*

**President, Provincial Council  
for the OCDS Oklahoma Semi-Province**

**Council Members:**

*Barbara Basgall, OCDS, Karen Burton, OCDS, Denise Graham, OCDS,  
and Lea Hawkins, OCDS*



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## Report from the Provincial Delegate— Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD

Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Carmel,

### On the Promise and Vows, Part II

The following is a continuation of the articles on the proper understanding of the Promise and Vows within the context of the community of the Secular Order. The first article was on the historical context of the Promise and Vows in our legislation.

This article will examine the current legislation concerning the Promise and Vows. As in the previous article the document “*The Promise & Vows in the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites*, Rome, 2016,” will be cited as: Promise and Vows.

## II. Current Legislation

### 2003 Constitutions

The 1987 Synod of Bishops had as their focus the vocation and mission of the laity. The result of the Synod was the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*; the 1994 Synod of Bishops had as their focus the role of consecrated life in the Church, which resulted in the Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* where “there is explicit mention of the laity who participate in the spirituality of religious institutions.” In the light of the apostolic exhortations and the International Congresses of the Discalced Secular Order in Rome (1996) and Mexico (2000), the Order felt it necessary to revise the 1997 *Rule of Life* to follow the magisterial directives which resulted in the 2003 Constitutions that were approved by the Congregation of the Institutions of Consecrated Life and Societies for Apostolic Life (CICLSAL).<sup>1</sup>

Under the present *Constitutions of the OCDS*, the Promise is addressed in Chapter 2, while the Vows are addressed in Chapter 7, article 39.

The Promise is a commitment to the local Community and the Order to strive for perfection of charity according to the Evangelical Counsels and the Beatitudes. The requirements to make the Definitive Promise is determined by Provincial Statutes. The requirement for the Vows is also determined by Provincial Statutes and requires the agreement of the local Council and the permission of the Provincial (or his Delegate).<sup>2</sup>

### The Spirituality of the Promise and Vows

The Second Vatican Council reminded us of important truths: We are all called to sanctity; we all share the same dignity conferred through the Sacrament of Baptism; we are all called to mission which is also conferred through baptism.



†

### Memorare

Remember,  
O most gracious Virgin Mary, that  
never was it known that anyone  
who fled to thy protection,  
implored thy help, or sought  
thine intercession was left  
unaided.

Inspired by this confidence,  
I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins,  
my mother; to thee do I come,  
before thee I stand, sinful and  
sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word  
Incarnate, despise not my  
petitions, but in thy mercy hear  
and answer me. Amen.

<sup>1</sup>Promise and Vows, 9-11

<sup>2</sup>Promise and Vows, 11

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## Report from the Provincial Delegate— Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD

Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

(Continued from page 3)

For the Secular Order members, this mission manifests itself in living out the charism of the Order “in the world.” “...their aim is to dedicate themselves to the apostolate and to seek Christian perfection under the direction of the same Institute, in accordance with its own Statutes.”<sup>3</sup>

“Following Jesus as members of the Secular Order is expressed by the Promise to strive for evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and through the beatitudes. By means of this promise the member’s baptismal commitment is strengthened for the service of God’s plan in the world. This promise is a pledge to pursue personal holiness, which necessarily carries with it a commitment to serving the Church in faithfulness to the Teresian Carmelite charism. The promise is taken before the members of the community, representing the whole Church and in the presence of the Delegate of the Superior of the Order.”

*Constitutions of the Secular Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa of Jesus, #11*

(Seen in paragraph above)

“...the central value of the Promise is the fidelity of God and his Covenant on the one hand and man’s conscience, liberty, deliberation, which in turn are conditions validating a promise on the other. This brings the person to loving openness to God and others.”<sup>4</sup>

We see that for a promise to be valid, and therefore a vow as well, the person’s “conscience, liberty, and deliberation” are essential.

“As a consequence, the Promise in the OCDS demands commitment and personal endeavor in order ‘to acquire the necessary training to know the reasons, the content and purpose of evangelical lifestyle they are undertaking.’”<sup>5</sup>

### The Vows

A promise is made to a person or an institution and is then an obligation due to the virtue of fidelity and an oblation of the person. A vow is a transformation of the Promise into an act of worship, and therefore an act of the virtue of religion under the cardinal virtue of Justice and falls under obedience to the First Commandment of the Decalogue. The “non-observance” of what is vowed is therefore a sin, a failure in observance of the First Commandment.

The four virtues of religion are: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance.

“For the Vow to be legitimate, *deliberation* is necessary...the exercise of freedom is united with the ability to know, reflect and to love; to understand all that is implied by the Vow.”<sup>6</sup>

“These Vows are strictly personal and do not create a separate category of membership.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Promise and Vows, 15

<sup>4</sup>Promise and Vows, 17

<sup>5</sup>Promise and Vows, 20

<sup>6</sup>Promise and Vows, 22

<sup>7</sup>Constitutions #39

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**Report from the Provincial Delegate—  
Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD**  
Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

*(Continued from page 4)*

The document then quotes the canonist Fr. Zubieta, that Vows taken “imply a greater commitment to faithfulness in evangelical life.” “The difference as we have explained, is in the quality of the bond.”<sup>8</sup> By quality of bond, Fr. Zubieta is referring to the fact that a promise is made to a person, a community, an institution, or the Church. In a Vow, one is making an oath to God.

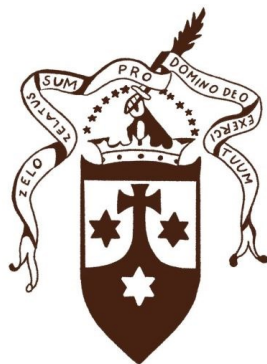
Chastity as a vow is an oath to live out this virtue in accord with one’s state in life; obedience is a submission of the will to the Superior of the Order, the Community Council, and to the Constitutions; poverty is lived out by a sober use of material goods.

In obedience, submission of the will, means that the person, in the Promise or Vows, is not just technically, or legally, or materially obedient, but that one is involved in not just accepting the will of the Superior, Council, or the Constitutions, but that one is actively willing what has been set forth.

“When all is said and done, Vows in the Secular Order demand a mature decision, freely taken on the part of the person who feels called to make them and in consultation with a spiritual director and the Council of the Community. It should not be taken for vainglory. Prudence (cf. Prov 20, 25), discernment and a firm decision are above all necessary in order to compel oneself to live in a continual quest for a possible good, which is better than the contrary. The authority of the Community, for their part, seek respect for the person, look for discernment in the light of faith, together with a serious awareness of the ability of the person to live and give witness through the Vows, questioning whether it will foster growth, whether there is a sound human basis, if the person is freely seeking, etc.”<sup>9</sup>

In Him,

Fr. Stephen Sánchez, OCD



<sup>8</sup>Promise and Vows, 24

<sup>9</sup>Promise and Vows, 25

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## **Report from the Provincial Council— State of the Province**

Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

### OCD FRIAR CHAPTER MEETING

*XXXII Provincial Chapter*

*And The State of the Province*

From May 30 to June 9, 2023, the OCD Friars of the Oklahoma Province conducted their XXXII Provincial Chapter Meetings at the Carmelite Center in Dallas, Texas. The Provincial Council Members were invited to give a report on the State of the Province. We shared a very full day with the friars, having open discussions during and after providing the State of the Province Report. A history of events from the past three years was presented, which included the various restrictions and shutdowns due to the Covid situation. As a result, many activities were either postponed or canceled, leaving much for the Provincial Council to do in the new triennium. Communities were challenged to expand their meeting practices using technology, which positively affected those who were previously unable to attend meetings in person due to illness or distance. PC Visitations were modified to virtual visitations, and interviews were conducted via ZOOM or telephone conference. A Mini-Congress was conducted in lieu of a traditional Congress, which was a great success. In part, results of the Bi-Lingual/Age Survey were presented, which indicate possible future directions for the province. In general, the Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse consists of 28 Canonical Communities, 5 Study Groups, and 2 Groups in Development. There are approximately 888 Members in 12 States as of June 7, 2023. There are 60 Aspirants, 84 in Formation I, 106 in Formation II, and 698 Definitively Professed, making up 79% membership of Definitively Professed and 21% in Formation. Since the last Triennium, we have gone from 860 members to 888 members, which constitutes a 3% increase, with 65% of our members over 66 years of age and 18.5% over 80.

The mission of the OCDS Provincial Council, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in one accord with our Friars, supports members of the Discalced Carmelite Seculars of the Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse in living our vocation of seeking union with God through commitment to daily mental prayer, growing in the spirit of the Evangelical Counsels and the Beatitudes, doing God's Will by good works, and by making known Christ's mercies that His name may be more praised and glorified. It is the mission of the Provincial Council to serve all members of the OCDS, individually and as communities, in order to strengthen and nourish the development of our Carmelite vocation so that all can "walk and be underway," doing all we can to live the Gospel and bring our spirituality into the world. We look forward to the future of our Province and pledge to do all we can to make all intentions in our Mission become a reality.



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## Report from the Provincial Council—

### New Councils. Just how are things going?

by Maxine Latiolais, PC President

Elections for the triennium are over and new local councils are now in place. The local council is the immediate authority of the community. How healthy is the dialogue within your local council? How healthy is your community? What happens when things are not running smoothly? What happens when things begin to fall apart? Disaster happens. Yes, it does happen! I have seen it occur over the last three and a half years with more than one community. Sometimes the entire council falls apart. Suppose a local council in a community or study group finds that the demands of administration are just too much. Do they seek assistance? Unfortunately, sometimes things are so serious that the PC needs to step in and provide help. We find that some of the pitfalls within councils are such things as: cliques within the council, a controlling member on the council, friction between members on the council, or a council member overly attached to their own opinion. If a local council in a community or study group finds that the demands of administration are just too much, do they have the capacity and maturity to recognize this and ask for help from their spiritual assistant or help from the PC? It takes a well-grounded and mature person to not only recognize the problem, but to humbly request help.

I strongly recommend that all new councils read the chapter entitled “How Ought the Council Function?” from Fr. Deeney’s book, *Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites*. It is a wonderful and helpful resource. The primary function of the local council is formation, but everything falls in line if the council functions properly. The local council needs to manage matters with compassion and fairness. Election to a position on the council is for the purpose of doing a service to the community.

Constitutions #24d states:

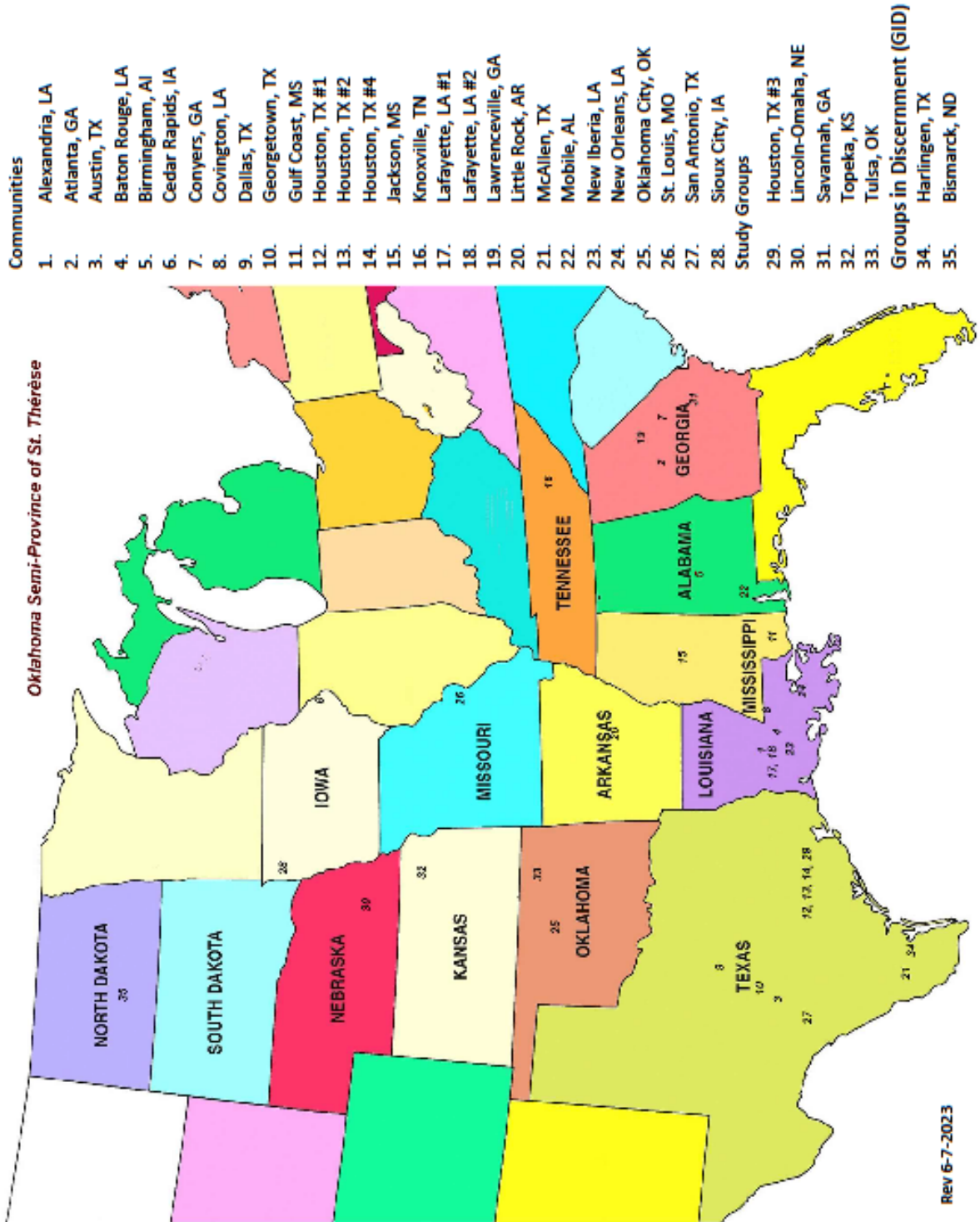
*The local authority of the Community fulfills its service in faith, love, and humility. It encourages a familial atmosphere as well as the human and spiritual growth of all the members. It promotes dialogue, personal sacrifice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It avoids all attachment to power and favoritism in the exercise of office.*

The dominance of one person in the community creates disharmony within the community. If a community or study group finds that one or two members are “doing everything,” then your community is already in trouble. Also, if the Local Council begins to hear of or see members walking away from the community, it is time for a reality check.

It is so important for local councils to develop leadership within the community with an understanding of the separate roles and responsibilities that come with leadership. Delegate! Balancing responsibilities within a community or study group is so important. On the local council, the Formation Director often has the more challenging role. In larger communities, an assistant is commonly assigned to support the Formation Director. The new National Formation Program should now make the role of the Formation Director easier. The president often relies on the secretary for assistance in getting things out to the community. In either role, the Formation Director and the President can have support from other members of the council or community. No doubt, both the President and the Formation Director need to have good organizational skills.

So often, when elections roll around, we hear that community members are hesitant to agree to be on the ballot for the local council. When we make our profession to the community and the Order, we are all responsible for the well-being of our communities. Sometimes that means when asked to serve, we need to step out and agree to be in leadership in order to serve our community.

**Report from the Provincial Council—  
State of the Province**  
Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse



Rev 6-7-2023



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## News from the Province — Triumph of the Cross Community, Georgetown, Texas

Submitted by Marianne Gonzales, OCDS

The Triumph of the Cross Community of Georgetown, Texas, welcomed Fr. Jerome Earley, OCD as Retreat Master from October 28-30, 2022, at the Cedarbrake Renewal Center. Father spoke on *The Face of God: Graces to see Our Lord and Healing*. Father said we should seek the face of God in every moment. We see God most in our suffering, which can be redemptive and filled with grace, as well as a means of union with Him. He said in the picture of St. Thérèse, where she is holding the pictures of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, that these are her Doctorate Degrees. Accepting our sufferings, as The Little Flower makes us more like the Child Jesus and the Holy Face.



Father Jerome Earley, OCD with the Georgetown Community members

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## News from the Province — Elijah the Prophet and St. Mary of Jesus Crucified Community, Alexandria, Louisiana

Submitted by Holly Wilson, OCDS

Members of the Alexandria OCDS Community of Elijah the Prophet and St. Mary of Jesus Crucified celebrated with Sharon Bourgoyne as she made her Definitive Promise to the order on May 13, 2023, at Marshall Renewal Center in Alexandria, Louisiana.



Sharon Bourgoyne, OCDS



Left to Right Front Row: Joan Travis, Holly Wilson, Sharon Bourgoyne, Mary Jo McCoy, Becky Healy, Jeanette La Rosa.

Left to Right Back Row: Fr. Louis Sklar, Debbie Didier, Deacon Bill Travis (President), Ken McDaniel.

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## Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

Are You a Fresnel Lens?

Submitted by Barbara Tinervia, OCDS



A Fresnel lens is a type of composite compact lens originally developed by French physicist Augustin-Jean Fresnel (1788–1827) for lighthouses.

It has been called "the invention that saved a million ships." – Wikipedia

“In the tender compassion of our God  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us  
to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.” – Canticle of Zechariah, Morning Prayer

“Now this is the message that we have heard from Him and proclaim to you: God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. – 1 John 1:5

What shall we make of our apostolic responsibility as contemplatives? Section 9b of the Constitution tells us that one fundamental element of the vocation of Teresian Secular Carmelites is “to seek ‘mysterious union with God’ by way of contemplation and apostolic activity, indissolubly joined together, for service to the Church.” Most of us are also familiar with Fr. Aloysius Deeney’s summation of our vocation, “I would describe a member of the Secular Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa of Jesus as a practicing member of the Catholic Church who, under the protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and inspired by Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross, *makes the commitment to the Order to seek the face of God for the sake of the Church and the world.* (Deeney, Aloysius. *Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites* (p. 9). ICS Publications. Kindle Edition, emphasis added.)

How do I do this for the sake of the Church and the world, for service to the Church? For me, knowledge of how lighthouses use Fresnel lenses is the image that comes to mind. A Fresnel lens greatly magnifies the light source in the lighthouse. “My soul doth magnify the Lord,” our Blessed Mother sings in the Magnificat, which we recite at Evening Prayer. A lens that is smeared, pitted, or cracked can’t properly magnify the light out into the darkness and storm to bring those out there into the way of peace. To function as a proper Fresnel lens, I must be willing to meet the Lord in the depths of my soul, to let Him reflect to me the truth of myself as I am right now and allow Him to

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## Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

Are You a Fresnel Lens?

Submitted by Barbara Tinervia, OCDS

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clean and repair me so that I am the me that He made me to be. Then I can act as a proper Fresnel lens, reflecting and magnifying His light into the world.

How often that brightness of His light is painful because I see the incongruity between myself now and the me He has made me to be! It can be difficult to withstand that discomfort and pain. And yet, He is waiting for me to see it, so that He can take my hand and lift me up from there. Because He wants me to be a Fresnel lens “for the sake of the Church and the world.” How? “So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

Sounds easy enough, right? It is the work of a lifetime and requires a daily commitment to living out this vocation.



Publisher: *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia.*

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## Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

“Carmel Teaches the Church How to Pray,” by Pope Benedict XVI

Taken from the Curia Carmelitani Scalzi by Lea Hawkins, OCDS

Let’s say you like a clean house, arguing that “environment builds morale” and “cleanliness is next to godliness.” This all sounds great. And if this indeed is the case, then we’ll see you putting some time and energy into cleaning the house. But if you aren’t putting any time and effort into cleaning the house, then you might say that it’s a high value all you want, but we will know better. It’s a simple equation — we put time and energy into the things we value and we neglect the things we don’t.

This is what makes Carmelite prayer distinctive. It’s not the prayer itself; in fact, there is no ‘method’ for Carmelite prayer. It is all about the time and energy that is actually put into prayer.

During the canonization of Saint Nuno Alvares (April, 2009) Pope Benedict said, “Carmel teaches the Church how to pray.” That’s what Carmel has always been about: prayer. And that’s what being a Carmelite – whether friar, nun, or Lay Carmelite – is all about: prayer. It’s not method; it’s emphasis.

That is the witness of the great Carmelite saints. When facing a “dark night of the spirit” or a “dark night of the soul,” Saint John of the Cross will tell you to keep praying. When daunted by the heavy lifting that true self-understanding entails, Saint Teresa of Avila will tell you to keep praying. When vexed by the everyday foibles of the people around you, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux will tell you to keep praying. Or even when facing the darkest caverns of the Nazi prison camps (or the equivalent in your life) Blessed Titus Brandsma will tell you to keep praying.

In no way should this be seen as—pardon the expression—merely putting cake frosting on manure. Rather, heavy-duty prayer (i.e., dark night prayer, deep self-knowledge prayer, or even concentration camp prayer) can show us that the manure is not manure at all and does not need any cake frosting. It is heavy-duty prayer that brings us to “put on the mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:5). It is heavy-duty prayer that brings “the peace that surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). It is heavy-duty prayer that brings us “to attain the very fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:19).

“Carmel teaches the Church how to pray.” Carmel can teach you how to pray – real prayer.



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## Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

### Lay Contemplatives in the Church

by Sam Anthony Morello, OCD

EXCERPTS from **Lay Contemplatives in the Church** – The Basic Identity of Secular Carmelites  
by Sam Anthony Morello, OCD, October 3, 1988

The Secular Order wants to make us real and holy in God through prayer. With that principle concern clear, our identity is clear.

True to character, our Carmelite School of Prayer lives an essentially Marian spirituality. We, the disciples of Jesus, keep our eyes on Mary of Nazareth, the first and perfect disciple of the Lord. She is our *sister* as well as mother and queen in the order of redemption. She worked and did her duty. She exercised heroic virtue. Her charity easily went out to kith and kin. Yieldingly she stood at the foot of the cross. She held the crucified. She beheld him glorified. She gave herself in service to the Church, his body yet on earth. But all of this because she ‘heard the word of God and kept it.’ And precisely in her contemplative stance of ‘listening to the word of God,’ and ‘pondering all these things in her heart’ do Carmelites easily identify with Mary. In love with the scriptures and attuned to the divine light, she was transformed by the new Adam into the new Eve as she uttered her ‘Yes’ to God. Carmel *hears* and *says* ‘yes’ with Mary, the contemplative mother of the living.

As a Teresian School of Prayer, we follow a specific tradition of spirituality within the Church. We pray in line with the doctrine of Sts. Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross, our Carmelite parents. And we allow our spiritual quest to be nuanced by the ever-developing and expanding experience of Carmelite saints and blessed like Thérèse of the Child Jesus and Elizabeth of the Trinity, Francis Palau y Quer, and Edith Stein. We pray quietly, effectively attentive to the divine presence within the self or as we are moved.

. . . Naturally, our prayer is backed up by the daily practice of virtue and evangelical self-denial. Perfection lies in charity and the virtues, not in contemplation. We pray to be virtuous. But that is the point we have been making all along. Carmel sees everything in relation to prayer because prayer is the principal focused means to Christian transformation.

Carmel is about prayer. The Secular Order is about prayer. And Lay Carmelites strive to be contemplatives in the world. Our identity is clear. If we know who we are, by the grace of God, we will act accordingly.

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# Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

## *The Flos Carmeli*

### *Flower of Carmel*

*Flos Carmeli* was used by the Carmelites as the sequence for the Feast of St. Simon Stock, and, since 1663, for the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. It also appears in an ancient metrical office of Carmel as an antiphon and responsory.

Its composition is ascribed to St. Simon Stock himself (ca 1165-1265)

**F**lower of Carmel,  
Tall vine blossom laden;  
Splendor of heaven,  
Childbearing yet maiden.  
None equals thee.

**M**other so tender,  
Who no man didst know,  
On Carmel's children  
Thy favors bestow.  
Star of the Sea.

**S**trong stem of Jesse,  
Who bore one bright flower,  
Be ever near us  
And guard us each hour,  
Who serve thee here.

**P**urest of lilies,  
That flowers among thorns,  
Bring help to the true heart  
That in weakness turns  
And trusts in thee.

**S**trongest of armor,  
We trust in thy might;  
Under thy mantle,  
Hard press'd in the fight,  
We call to thee.

**O**ur way uncertain,  
Surrounded by foes,  
Unfailing counsel  
You give to those  
Who turn to thee.

**O** gentle Mother  
Who in Carmel reigns,  
Share with your servants  
That gladness you gained  
And now enjoy.

**H**ail, Gate of Heaven,  
With glory now crowned,  
Bring us to safety  
Where thy Son is found,  
True joy to see.



**F**los Carmeli,  
Vitis florigera,  
Splendor Caeli,  
Virgo puerpera  
Singularis.

**M**ater mitis  
Sed viri nescia  
Carmelitis  
Esto propitia  
Stella maris

**R**adix Iesse  
Germinans flosculum  
Nos ad esse  
Tecum in saeculum  
Patiaris

**I**nter spinas  
Quae crescis lilium  
Serva puras  
Mentes fragilium  
Tutelarlis

**A**rmatura  
Fortis pugnantium  
Furunt bella  
Tende praesidium  
Scapularis

**P**er incerta  
Prudens consilium  
Per adversa  
Iuge solatium  
Largiaris

**M**ater dulcis  
Carmeli domina,  
Plebem tuam  
Reple Laetitia  
Qua bearis.

**P**aradisi  
Clavis et ianua,  
Fac nos duci  
Quo, Mater, gloria  
Coronaris. Amen.

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## Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

Celebrating 400 Years of St. Teresa of Ávila's Canonization

St. Teresa taught us that whether our life is short or long, we must determine to serve the Lord today.



François Gérard, "St. Teresa of Ávila" (detail), 1827 (photo: Public Domain)

[Jennifer Sokol Blogs](#) March 22, 2022

In 1568, Teresa of Ávila was well into her life as a Carmelite as she forged onward, continuing to suffer physical and spiritual trials while traveling the rugged roads of Spain to establish new monasteries in second-hand buildings, often in desperate need of repair. At the same time, she was enduring ongoing opposition from those threatened by her mission from the Lord to reform the Carmelite Order. Now, seated at the desk within the austere surroundings of her monastic cell, I imagine it was with a small smile that she lifted her well-worn quill, dipped in ink and, in obedience to her confessors, continued the writing of her autobiography and the account of her misdirected idea at

age 7 of sanctity. The concept was sown while reading books on the lives of the saints with her older brother, Rodrigo.

"When I considered the martyrdoms the saints suffered for God," she began, "it seemed to me that the price they paid for going to enjoy God was very cheap, and I greatly desired to die in the same way. I did not want this on account of the love I felt for God but to get to enjoy very quickly the wonderful things I read there were in heaven." Martyrdom's seemingly "sale price" deal toward swift enjoyment of heavenly bliss was so attractive to young Teresa, that she and Rodrigo soon devised a plan to run away from home to the land of the Moors, who at that time were murdering Christians, and to beg them, please, Teresa wrote, "to cut off our heads."

On March 12, the Church celebrated the 400th anniversary of the canonization of St. Teresa of Ávila by Pope Gregory XV in 1622. Although her attempted escape toward martyrdom was quickly thwarted, this childhood episode from Teresa's *Life* is key in demonstrating not only her great desires and courage, but also her immense determination from birth, a quality the Lord would purify and strengthen in preparation for her future task of guiding others along the sacred, though sometimes perilous paths of prayer. For Teresa, authentic prayer was not possible without determination, especially in the beginning stages.

She spoke from experience. "For more than 18 of the 28 years since I began prayer," she explained, referring to her first years in Carmel as she struggled to let go of vain pleasures, "I suffered this battle and conflict between friendship with God and friendship with the world." She preferred spending time seeking a favorable impression from her superiors and confessors, and spending time in worldly

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conversations with friends in the parlor. During the required two hours allotted to private prayer each day, she confessed:

“Very often, I was more anxious that the hour I had determined to remain there be over, and more anxious to listen for the striking of the clock than to attend to other good things. And I don't know what heavy penance could have come to mind that frequently I would not have gladly undertaken rather than to recollect myself in the practice of prayer.”

It was only in retrospect that Teresa realized the role that determination had played in helping her to persevere through the laborious years of prayer, which at last led to the turning point in her journey when, upon entering the oratory one day, her eyes fell upon a statue of Jesus scourged at the pillar and she dropped to her knees as tears of repentance began streaming down her face. Gazing at Jesus, as never before, she suddenly understood the suffering that he endured out of love for us and felt keenly her lack of gratitude to him in return. “I asked him to strengthen me once and for all,” she explained, “that I might not offend him” again.

Her prayer was answered as she rose to her feet, fortified in determination and, like the repetitive thundering of a deep, pedal-point motif in an organ fugue of Bach, repeated the same “motif” of determination through the example of her actions and in all of her writings for the rest of her life.

“Give with complete determination, for determination is what He desires,” she wrote, encouraging us, in spite of our weakness, to persevere in prayer with the Lord. “For His Majesty already knows our human misery and wretched nature better than we do ourselves, and He knows that these souls now desire to think of Him and love Him always.” She exhorted those tempted to abandon prayer in the early stages of the spiritual life to persevere with confidence. For Jesus, she explained from her own experience, is a friend to all that walk with humility and do not trust in self. In times of temptation, she punctuated the matter by exhorting us to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus with “determined determination,” the virtue of which is a solid foundation against the wiles and hatred of the devil who is powerless against those determined to carry the cross without consolation. As Jesus commanded of all true disciples, “Take up your cross and follow me”

(Luke 9:23).

How different Teresa's concept of sanctity was by the end of her life. If in childhood she desired martyrdom as an “express lane” into heaven, now, as the fruit of determination and after a lifetime of trials, work for the Carmelite Order, and persevering in prayer, she now enjoyed the “living waters” of union with God in her soul of which Jesus promised to the Samaritan woman at the well. She shared her wisdom with her Carmelite daughters and all of us, and wrote, “It is clear that you are a true religious or a true person of prayer and aim to enjoy the delights of God and suffer martyrdom. But don't you know that the life of one who desires to be one of God's close friends is a long martyrdom?”

Teresa taught us that whether our life is short or long, we must determine to serve the Lord today. Then, gradually, she promised, “without knowing how, you will find yourself at the summit.”

As she is forever. Happy Anniversary, St. Teresa!

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## *Parting Words*



### **Mary is our Mother**

“The title of Mary as our Mother is not merely symbolic. Mary is our Mother in the most real and lofty sense, a sense which surpasses that of earthly maternity. She begot our life of grace for us because she offered up her entire being, body and soul, as the Mother of God. That is why an intimate bond exists between Mary and ourselves. She loves us, she knows us, she exerts herself to bring each one of us into the closest possible relationship with the Lord ~ that which we are above all supposed to be.”  
(St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross)



*Flos Carmeli* provides information for the Secular members of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in the Oklahoma Semi-Province, which has jurisdiction over OCDS members living in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas.

Oklahoma Semi-Province members wishing to submit articles for publication in the *Flos Carmeli* or for subscription information, please contact Lea Hawkins, Provincial Council *Flos Carmeli* coordinator, at [flos.submit@gmail.com](mailto:flos.submit@gmail.com)

#### **The submission due dates for articles are:**

**Fall—January 1**

**Spring—April 1**

**Summer—July 1**

**Winter—October 1**

Any OCDS member submitting an article must include their name, community name and location in the article.

## Getting the *Flos Carmeli* to members

*Community presidents, please remember that the Province no longer mails out copies of the Flos Carmeli to communities. It is the community's responsibility to get a copy to each of your members, either via email or by print. This includes all isolate, aged, or infirm members. Thank you!*

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