Carmelite Bulletin

Carmel of Saint Teresa of Jesus
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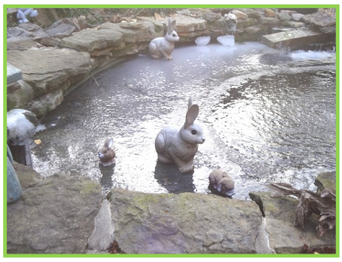
Dear Friends,

At 7:15 a.m. on January 12th there was not a cloud in sight but the whole eastern sky was a brilliant, flaming, gorgeous red—breath taking! From what we now know it was a sure sign of severe weather ahead. And so it came. The temps dropped very low—14 and 12 degrees. Our little water fall at the top of the fish pond and the water around it were frozen. There were long icicles on the green house. All a rather rare sight for us. We were blessed that a faithful friend of ours picked up our priest to come say mass for us all during the bad weather. God bless them for their kindness. Our little cold spell was a tiny part of the country's frigidly cold winter this year. We prayed for the people who suffered from it most.



A generous benefactor gave us several large evergreen trees from his property this Christmas which gave us much joy as we trimmed them and made the monastery a Christmas wonderland for the coming of Christ. Our midnight mass and Christmas season were full of blessings. On the feast of the Epiphany we happily drew the Infant Jesus for our patron for the new year of 2018. May He help us all to be more heavenly-childlike ("for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these").

Sister Lucia's brother Allen, who lives in Idaho, came for his annual visit. It is always a very fine visit, enlightening and interesting to hear his experiences and stories, especially about his hiking trips and meetings with wild animals in the mountains.

Another visitor whom we have known "forever"—since arriving here in 1950, as a matter of fact—was Grace Wrape, who now lives in Kansas. It was a great joy! We rarely get to see her now. Several of our sisters are still here who began this Little Rock foundation from its beginning. There were many old memories to share with Grace.

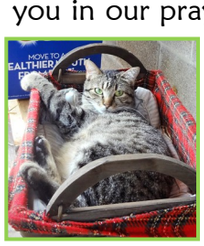
Our hanging bird feeders have given us much pleasure and the birds themselves have even more delight than us (maybe) when they discover their delicious food supply. So far there is only one location the squirrel has not found. By the time you receive this we hope that is still true!

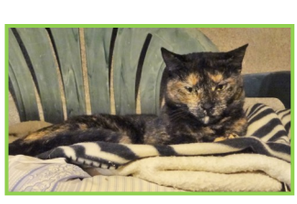
The diocesan vocation retreat team met here to work out a plan for this year's annual retreat for young women discerning a religious vocation. The retreat will be held on February 24th and 25th at St. John's Center here in Little Rock. May our Lord grant a big increase in vocations this year and bless our efforts in this much needed gift to the Church! Thank you for your prayers.

Here is an item that contributes to our praise to the Creator of the Universe, to God's wonderful works. On January 31st there came together as a great show in the sky a Super Moon: a blue moon and a red eclipse of the moon. This hasn't occurred in 152 years.

We almost made it through the season safely, and were grateful for our sisters' health over the winter flu season. Then it finally hit. Only half the community was present at morning mass for several days, since we tried faithfully to isolate the sick sisters to their cells. In a family of 14 it takes awhile for a bug to run its course before it is over, but we realize how blessed we are to have the means to care for each other, when many people do not, and how they suffer from it. May our prayers bring them comfort and healing.

All our animals are doing well. Paolo and Gracie are pretty brave in the cold outdoor weather. They romp and run and lie in the sun! Gracie barks loudly at any "stranger" who comes along, while Paolo barks loudly in the night to the dark woods where critters lurk. Our great watch dogs! We are grateful for them, really. Some of our summer friends are hibernating. A super large frog and baby frog have been sleeping in a small pond in our preau (courtyard), which was amazing to see (see strange picture at left). And the groundhog in Pennsylvania predicted forty more days of winter. Brrrrrr!





We thank all of you for your great goodness and generosity to us and we keep you in our prayers always. Happy Feast of our great St Joseph on March 19th. May you have a happy, holy and fruitful Lent and a glorious Feast of the Resurrection at Easter!

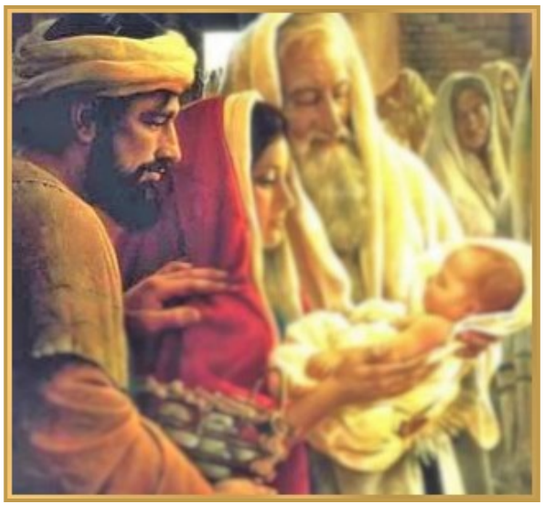
Please join us in our Novena to Saint Joseph
March 11th–19th

Would that I could persuade all men to be devoted to St. Joseph for I know by long experience what blessings he can obtain for us from God . . . . it is now very many years since I began asking him for something on his feast, and I have always received it.

St. Teresa

Joseph, Most Faithful

In the gospel of St. Luke, chapter 2:22-38, a remarkable portrayal of biblical faithfulness emerges for reflection, admiration and imitation. This centers chiefly around the "faithful four," namely, Mary, Joseph, Simeon and Anna. In the side lines are present the "come and go" of the general visiting and praying populace also present with a certain sense of faithfulness although permeated with various motivations and expectations of the promised Messiah.



Faithfulness to the Mosaic Law as an expression of one's wholehearted recognition of the Lord as giver and sustainer of life was asked of every Israelite. The covenant sealed them in a reciprocal bond of both belonging to and depending on the Lord. One requirement was a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem to offer to the Lord and to redeem the first-born son and the mother's purification forty days after giving birth.

In the sketchy portrayal of this particular temple scene, St. Luke artfully underscores three times their presence there as the fulfillment of the law. Both Mary and Joseph come to the temple perceived as the parents of Jesus, his unique conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary undisclosed. They simply appear as a faithful couple fulfilling their obligations. Their choice of two turtle doves is indicative of their belonging to the poorer class.

The other two witnesses appearing on the scene are the aged pair Simeon and Anna, who both exercised themselves in an ongoing and exemplary life of daily faithfulness. Simeon, an open faithful listener to the Holy Spirit has been interiorly prompted to come just at this very time. In praise and gratitude for having his longed for wish fulfilled to see the Messiah, he lets fall from his lips a memorable canticle of exultant praise and joy. Anna is prompted to speak of the child to all around.

This would be the first of many trips to the temple during the hidden years of the Holy Family at Nazareth. It would necessarily fall to Joseph as provider and supposed father to be in charge and see to provisions for each journey, means of travel, etc. St. Joseph who speaks not a recorded word, has left us a marvelous example of fidelity to whatever is the ordinary, humdrum duties and obligations of daily life in which each of us partake in our own covenantal relationship with the Lord.

Statue in Nuns' courtyard
Photo by Brian Waites