Carmelite Bulletin

Carmel of Saint Teresa of Jesus
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Dear Friends,

At the end of our south-west lawn we have a beautiful Japanese Maple tree with orange—yes, orange—bark and bright green leaves in Spring. Now in fall/winter weather the leaves are mixed with bright orange-ish leaves and some yellow. It's a heart-lifter and a joy-giver for those who take the time to contemplate it.

In mid-October Abbot Justin Brown, OSB of St. Joseph's Abbey in Covington, Louisiana preached our annual retreat. The theme focused upon the journey of discipleship guided by the gospel. We partook of much strengthening and spiritual food. The insights into scripture passages were deep and thought-provoking. "Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Thanks to Abbot Justin, we experienced this gospel truth and pray we live it out more faithfully.

The sisters got to meet Lynne's brother Gary.

Sisters Mercia Mary, Magdalene and Anu Maria on the pier at Newport Beach, CA (Lynne was taking the picture)

Towards the end of October there was a Carmelite formation meeting of novices and their novice mistresses in Redlands, California. About 60 attended from all over the country and Canada. Three sisters went from our Carmel. They enjoyed it all very much. Lynne Purkey, a candidate for our community, lives in California and joined our sisters for a trip to the beach to wade in the Pacific Ocean. Our sisters also stayed with the nuns at the Alhambra Carmel for two days before returning home—a great blessing! They were thrilled to see the vast Grand Canyon from the plane and (after getting a sunburn on the beach) our God of surprises covered them with snowflakes while boarding their next plane in Denver! How great is our God!

He is so great that He protects us from all kinds of danger. We had a trespasser on our roof. A friendly young teenager named Daniel who just enjoyed being up there and exploring "what was on the other side." You've heard of Daniel "in the fiery furnace", now you've heard of Daniel "on the pleasant rooftop".

Sr. Maria Cruz went home to Panama to care for and to be with her beloved 99-year-old mother. Her mother died November 11th while Sister was there with her. Please pray for her soul and for Sr. Maria Cruz as she continues to help with arrangements. She will return after all is finished.

Oh! Oh! A weather forecast in early November predicted an early hard freeze of 29 degrees—strangely early for us! There was seen in the monastery sisters scurrying around to bring in all the potted plants large and small. Once every available inch of the greenhouse was filled, all the halls and window sills were filled with plants. Much more important are the people who have no place of warmth or shelter. May our Lord warm the hearts of many to come to their aid with shelter, blankets and covering.

We were just as surprised on November 14th, the feast of All Saints of Carmel, when heaven showered down snowflakes, so beautiful and silent. It is a rare gift in Arkansas and we were so happy! Visit our blog page on our website for pictures and videos of this and other occasions.

Speaking of "other occasions", the high point of our news is the Solemn Profession of Vows and Veiling of Sister Anu Maria of the Good Shepherd on November 25th—the Solemnity of Christ the King. The ceremony was absolutely beautiful. Sister's family came from the east coast, Texas, Canada and India to witness the special occasion. Thank you all for your prayers for her. She was and is a beautiful bride of Christ, her King and Good Shepherd!

Photo courtesy of Susan Holmes

May your Christmas and New Year be full of God's best blessings of peace and health.

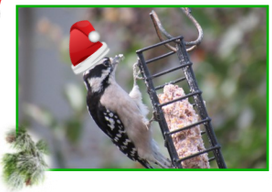
Prayerfully,
Your grateful Carmelite Nuns

"Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas!" from all our furry & feathered friends.

Paolo

Gracie

Mr. Hairy Woodpecker



(Blue Eyes would rather sell insurance than wear a silly Santa hat!)

Please join us for our Christmas Novena
December 17th - 25th

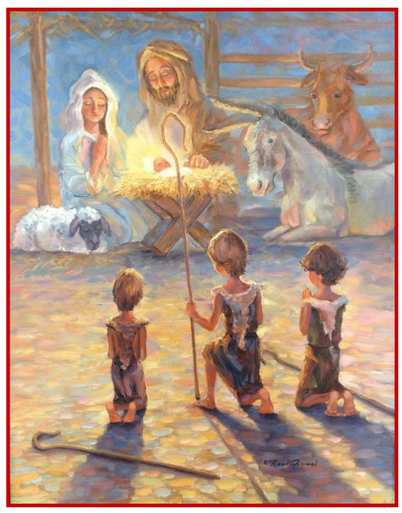
Christmas Mass Schedule:

Monday, December 24th, 7:30am and at Midnight
(Christmas Carols 11:40 pm)

Tuesday, December 25th, 8:30 am

Watchful Shepherds

The time was approaching. There was a sense of hope and expectancy in the air. Roman occupation dominated Palestine and the populace longed for liberation. Those versed in the scriptures were well aware of an expected Messiah. Of course the poor and outcasts of society unfamiliar with the prophecies carried in their hearts a general sense of longing and expectancy. Among these were shepherds, a motley group, and some considered untrustworthy individuals. However, they seemed somewhat versed in shepherding and were able to call their own individual sheep who would respond to a piped tune or familiar voice.



Israel again needed to be reminded of God's manner of dealing with his sons and daughters. Precisely, that he chooses whom he wills and his choices are not usually our choices. How many times previously, had he chosen the poor and unpopular through whom to manifest his glory, those considered the least among their kindred?

In order to secure a means of livelihood, shepherds were accustomed to watching and waiting. They had to lead their own particular herds out to pasture and keep a watch out for wolf and those sheep who wander aimlessly into brambles or unfamiliar territory. Watching and waiting was a prime duty of the shepherd. They were also familiar with the best hideouts in caves when storm or danger was lurking.

Unlikely as it might seem, God chose them to receive the announcement of his birth through a panorama of angels who appeared in the midnight sky. It was to them that the message was entrusted as St. Luke so graphically describes in his gospel. *(Luke 2: 8-14)*. How fittingly that the Church should choose this account to be read early around dawn on Christmas morning. Several gospel passages including parables spoken by Jesus condition the human heart in a watching and waiting attitude for we know not when the Lord is coming. The whole season of Advent brings this to the foreground. Watching and waiting requires an alertness and focus of attention whereby we grow accustomed with a little effort and determination to open our eyes and ears to hear the Good Shepherd's call, a little piped tune as soft as a gentle breeze sounding clear. The same gospel account continues to narrate that they lost no time deciding to go in haste to Bethlehem to see the newborn babe. How pleased they must have been to announce this spectacular happening to all they met. Watching and waiting is often rewarded in unforeseen ways.

Back: Sr. Mercia Mary, Sr. Andrea, Sr. Petra, Sr. Stephanie, Sr. Cecilia, Sr. Maria Cruz, Sr. Ann, Sr. Lucia
Front: Sr. Magdalene, Sr. Camilla, Sr. Mary Alice, Sr. Jean, Sr. Bernadette, Sr. Anu Maria
Photo: Courtesy of Brian Waitz

Our community wishes to thank all who in any way assisted and joined with us for the recent Solemn Profession of our Sister Anu Maria of the Good Shepherd. We are grateful that upon hearing the Shepherd's piped tune in Kerala, India, she left all and hastened to our Carmel.