Carmelite Bulletin

Carmel of Saint Teresa of Jesus
7201 West 32nd St. Little Rock, AR 72204-4716
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Dear Friends,

Showers and dews, bless the Lord; Winds, all bless the Lord. Fire and heat, bless the Lord; Frost and cold, bless the Lord… and so sings Daniel in his great cosmic song of praise to God (Daniel Chap. 3), a hymn we chant often in the liturgy. After such a hot summer, we welcomed autumn's arrival. Already the leaves were changing a few weeks before.

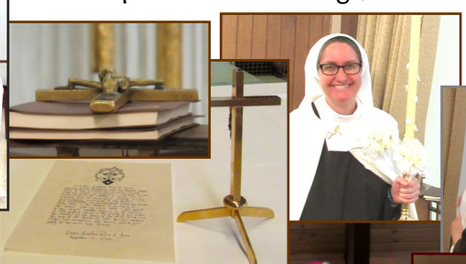
The donation of many flowering plants brought more cheer to our yards. They faced the winter season that came in soon enough! And, though we enjoy these gifts of creation during these days, our prayers are always with those who have no shelter or heat. We are inspired by those who minister to them with such Christ-like concern.

Our yard is full of arrivals of more birds, some back for the winter and some in migration. They are beautiful and remind us of God's gifts in creation. One visitor has been a female wood duck found injured at our pond in the woods. We took her into our inner courtyard for safety and hope she will heal from her injury to fly away to join her group or a safer area. Near-by lakes may be a nice home for her. Our two black Labradors, Toby and Sadie, are now two years of age. Did they mature as expected?.. not exactly, but they have become wonderful and protective guardians of the monastery. Toby, our male dog, did chase an intruder over the wall; he hasn't been seen since. Paulo, our "grandpa" is doing just fine in his later years and reminds the younger ones that he is top dog.

Our inner courtyard has been re-worked a bit and now has the desert atmosphere with lovely rock formations done by Sister Lucia, a reminder of our Carmelite desert roots and our spiritual inspiration of St. Elijah the prophet. Along with the ponds, it is a reflection of St. Elijah's fountain garden in front of our Chapel – a quiet place for people who like to come and pray. For some reason our little turtles did not like this change and disappeared for a while, then returned briefly before going into hibernation.

It was a bit of a shock to us, but we contracted COVID in early November. Our dear Sister Bernadette, who turned 99 years young in Oct, had to go to St. Vincent's ER and that is when we found out what we had! We were informed that it was a mild case and we have come through it well enough. We were so grateful to our loyal Mass people who came to our rescue to boost our hoarse voices for the few hymns we had. Sisters who still had some voice took turns as lectors. We are now back to receiving the Precious Blood, and were thankful that our friends could continue to receive in the Chapel. Because of our set-back, we had to cancel our long –awaited Community retreat and look forward to it next year during Lent.

With great joy we celebrated the First Profession of Sister Josefina Rose of Jesus, OCD, in our Chapel on September 10th. Our Bishop Anthony Taylor celebrated the Mass and gave a wonderful homily on consecrated life. Sister's parents and siblings, some with their family, attended the event from Arizona and Minnesota. Our many friends joined with us in this significant occasion. Our Carmelite Seculars were gracious hosts and our exquisite music was provided by one of our daily communicants, Paul Vogler.



Other good news: We rejoiced this past October 7th when our Sister Anu Maria became an American citizen. Sister is originally from Kerala, India. She and Sister Lucia, our Prioress, drove two hours to Memphis, TN, for the ceremony. Memphis is the "local" location for this occasion. With Sister there were others from different countries and all were so happy to become Americans.

We are grateful to you, our devoted friends. We keep you and all your loved ones and personal intentions in our prayers, especially during this season of thanksgiving and the Advent and Christmas seasons to come. May you be blessed in every way.

Please join us for the Christmas novena
December 16 - December 24

Christmas Mass Schedule

Saturday, December 24th, 7:30 A.M. and 12:00 Mid-night
Sunday, December 25th, Christmas, 8:30 A.M.

The Design of God

"The designs of the Lord stand forever,
the plans of his heart from age to age." (Ps 33:11)

Thus reads this memorable verse in Ps. 33. Who would have guessed that this plan for all generations included the willing ascent of a humble maiden in an "out of the way" village of Nazareth some two thousand years ago. Archeologists continue to unveil and bring to light the great plans of leaders, civilizations and empires of past generations, while we presently grapple with the ravages of war, multi–dimensional devaluation of human life, climate control and vast immigration of peoples. Yet the plans of his heart through all generations echo the steadfastness of a merciful and caring God continually embracing and providing for all generations through the pages of history.

The plan of his heart is a saving plan, a plan of hope kept alive by the unswerving faith of a remnant receptive in humble awareness of utter dependence on the creator God; he who fashions from nothingness and who holds all creation in existence. Only such as these are able to be open to a God becoming man, rejected, crucified and resurrected who can offer hope and eternal bliss to all who believe in him. The plan of his heart cannot be thwarted by hell itself as has been demonstrated by saintly men and women in all walks of life. In the book of Numbers, we find Balaam, son of Beor uttering an oracle,

"I see him though not now;
I observe him though not near:
A star shall advance from Jacob,
And a scepter shall arise from Israel." (Nm 24:17)

This was among the prophecies of hope that the Israelites carried and handed down for generations. St. Matthew sees the star not as an astral phenomenon but the king himself. The "prophetic" star represented a sign of hope, a pledge of future deliverance. It was accepted as part of God's great saving plan. Mary the humble maiden of Nazareth knew of this prophecy.

She and Joseph both of the line of David shared in this glimmer of hope which in the lives of both was becoming ever more brilliant until its reality became dominant. Mary and Joseph opening themselves in humble receptivity as the plan of God unveiled in their own lives offer us an example of ready willingness and cooperation to the unexpected in our lives, the puzzling events of everyday happenings. The design of his heart is a saving plan for each of us to be trusted. We too, of this generation live our lives in the plans of his heart, following Christ our bright Star of hope.

We wish you a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year!