Carmelite Bulletin

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

We hope you are well and enjoying the changing of the seasons. As we write this, our trees are in their glory with all the lovely shades of red, orange and yellow. Our dogs, Toby and Sadie, are doing well. They are more active now with the cooler temperatures. We were also grateful to have our "house cleaning" during the fall this year as we prepared for the Association meeting of Mary, Queen of Carmel.

As we alluded to in our last Bulletin, we had the great joy of celebrating the 100th Birthday of our Sister Bernadette on October 14th. Many of Sr. Bernadette's extended family came from all around the country to celebrate with us. Our Carmelite Seculars had a Mass offered for her in our chapel on her birthday which was on their meeting day. We were all able to attend. Her family decorated our foyer and outside the chapel beautifully with many balloons and lovely decorations. We were able to celebrate together and share cake and ice cream and a touching slideshow of pictures of Sr. Bernadette and her family over the years. We are grateful to God for Sr. Bernadette's good health and her presence here in this Carmel for over 70 years.

For some time now we have been preparing to host our Association's triennial meeting. It was supposed to happen a few years ago but was postponed due to COVID. Well this October it finally happened. Our Bishop, Anthony Taylor, graciously offered the diocesan center facilities. He provided his staff, along with our dear devoted friends who rolled out the red carpet to see that all the Sisters who attended were made welcome and at ease in a true southern spirit. Fr. Daniel Chowning, OCD, Provincial of the Washington Province, gave talks on the "Art of Seeking the Face of God" a document from the Vatican which provides guidelines for the formation of women contemplatives. His talks provided wisdom and clarity as we seek to renew our communities and develop community plans of life. On Sunday we welcomed our Association Sisters for Mass, and a tour of our monastery and grounds. Then all went over to Marylake, our Friar's monastery, where we were all greeted by our Carmelite Provincial, Fr. Luis Castaneda, OCD, and Fr. Stephen Sanchez, OCD. Our dear friends at Marylake provided a delicious cook-out, a hayride, tours of the beautiful property, Vespers and prayer, ending with another delicious meal. As part of the Arkansas experience we were also blessed to have John Michael Talbot come and do a night of sacred music towards the end of the meeting. Overall it was a very blessed time and a gift to be with our Sisters from the Association. We are grateful to all our dear friends and Secular Carmelites who volunteered their time to help serve during the meeting. May God bless everyone abundantly for their generosity and hard work.

The Holy Spirit breathed powerfully through the great and historical event of the Synodality in Rome in October. To see so many from various backgrounds come together as Church and bring the riches of their experiences on several issues with prayer and peaceful exchanges was truly uplifting. Yet, "Our assembly took place in the context of a world in crisis, whose wounds and scandalous inequalities resonated painfully in our hearts, infusing our work with a particular gravity, especially since some of us come from countries where war rages." Holy Spirit, silence, discernment, prayer, respectful listening, harmony, inclusive, communion-participation-mission … a plan for us all!

Encouraged and inspired by the spirit of Synodality and the recent Bishops' Fall meeting in Baltimore, we had public Adoration and Benediction on the Sunday of Christ the King, Nov. 26th. This devotion expresses our love for the real Presence of Jesus and our union with those celebrating the Eucharistic Revival during these three years. May the blessings and graces flowing from this sacred time renew, console and strengthen all followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we begin Advent and prepare for the coming of the Prince of Peace our hearts and prayers are with all those who are suffering in the many wars and conflicts that are occurring around the world. May Jesus help us sow peace and harmony where there is conflict and division in our hearts, our homes and our world. You are in our daily prayers with love and gratitude for your friendship and support. May our Prince of peace come with His peace that surpasses all understanding into your hearts and your homes in a special way this Christmas.

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

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

Christmas Mass Schedule
Sunday, December 24th, 7:30 a.m.
Carols 11:45 p.m. Midnight Mass 12:00 a.m.
Monday, December 25th, Christmas Mass 10:00 a.m.

Bethlehem, House of Bread

In the liturgical year as we move toward the season of Advent and on into the Christmas season, the often repeated refrain, "O come let us adore Him" fills the air of the listener. To where are we invited to go and who is this person whom we are seeking? The prophet Micah heralds him with these words, "But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah least among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is of old, from ancient times. (Mi 5:1) Again, in verse 2 "He shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord."

Bethlehem, sometimes refers to as "House of Bread" because of its yearly harvest of wheat and barley is to offer shelter to the newborn babe of Mary and Who will later proclaim Himself as the living bread come down from heaven. "I am the bread of life." (Jn 6:35) As ruler and shepherd of His flock, He feeds us plentifully in the sacrament of the Eucharist. It is in Bethlehem that a group of simple and lowly shepherds come to welcome Him. Like the shepherds, we too of the Catholic faithful are invited to come and adore and partake of this living bread. No one is excluded; all are invited. Gazing on an infant lying on a bed of straw in a manger, we may quietly reflect on His divine origin clad in such humble attire. Approaching in admiration with humility of heart whether we kneel before a manger or a beautiful tabernacle, it is the same Lord of heaven and earth Who claims all our attention. "O Come let us adore Him." Matching the plain white host of pressed and baked wheat, the inward eye of the beholder may reflect on that first Christmas.

In his homily at the closing Mass of the recent Synod, Pope Francis gives us these words for reflection: "Adoration is the first response we can offer to God's gratuitous and astonishing love. The amazement of adoration, the wonder of worship, is something essential in the life of the Church, especially in our own day in which we have abandoned the practice of adoration. To adore God means to acknowledge in faith that He alone is Lord and that our individual lives, the Church's pilgrim way and the ultimate outcome of history all depend on the tenderness of His love. He gives meaning to our lives. For only through silent adoration will the Word of God live in our words; only in his presence will we be purified, transformed and renewed by the fire of his Spirit. Brothers and sisters, let us adore the Lord Jesus!"

Seeking to be a worshiping Church and Church of service, washing the feet of wounded humanity, accompanying those who are frail, weak and cast aside, going out lovingly to encounter the poor – Come let us adore Him!

A blessed Advent and joyful Christmas season to all of our relatives, friends and benefactors. May the Lord Jesus come in his transforming power and bring you his peace. **Come, let us adore Him!**