Carmelite Bulletin

Carmel of Saint Teresa of Jesus
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Our dear friends of Carmel,

How quickly time flies by! After a rough winter for most of our country we can happily say that spring is just around the corner. The severe snap of frigid cold in January was definitely not what we are used to here in Arkansas. We did what we could to protect the vegetation and green house, but the duration of the low temperatures prevailed. It began with two to three inches of dry snow which did not melt or move until the following week. And it was too cold to enjoy it! Even Toby and Sadie refused to stay out for more than a few minutes. The temps went into single digits at night and when it got up to 20 degrees in the daytime we thought we were lucky! We kept in prayer all who suffered without enough shelter and warmth. Some of us even did some exercises to get warmed up. Yes, for that it must've been severe indeed!

This past Epiphany Sr. Bernadette, our centenarian now, found the infant Jesus in her Epiphany cake, which meant the saint she had drawn from the basket became our patron for this year. Yay for St. Joseph and us! Sr. Bernadette then became King for the day, with Sr. Mary Ann as Queen. They had to throw the party that night. King Bernadette decreed a "dance party!" "What? A dance party?" We tried some square dancing moves and some impromptu jigs, of which we are quite happy no one else saw! Then we closed the night with a procession through the monastery with hymns and an image of St. Joseph. He has always been so loved by our sisters here, and always a special provider for us. Each Wednesday we have special prayers and a votive Mass of St. Joseph with the intention of good vocations. He seems to always provide - in God's time, of course!

Speaking of vocations, we were blessed to have some discerning candidates the last few months. Sr. Mary Ann, OCD is here for six months discerning permanent transfer from another Carmel. We are happy to have her with us. A young lady from Wichita, Renee Kendall, is also here for a three month live-in. She and her mother offered to help us make small scapulars with some special embroidery equipment her mother has. In the process Renee made them all! Truly, a lot of work and a huge gift to our community! We are also expecting another woman to make a live-in of three months in the near future. Perhaps more? We don't know, but your prayers are working! Several have inquired into our life. Please pray for these discerners. Thank you, and dear St. Joseph.

Our triennial Visitation was held January 15th-18th - just in time for the "artic hammer blast". Thankfully, our guests did not get snowed or iced in. Visitation is a time of evaluation on how we are living the aspects of our contemplative life. Each sister visits with the Visitators - our Association President, Sr. Mary Clare, OCD and our provincial superior Fr. Luis Castenada, OCD. The Visitators synthesize the input from each sister and make a report to share with us in a final meeting together, with recommendations on how we can improve and what we are doing well. The report goes to our Order's Generalate in Rome. Please pray for us to bear fruit from this experience and become the Carmelites we are called to be. Thank you!

On February 3rd we hosted our diocesan Consecrated Life Day Mass and Luncheon at our monastery. Bishop Anthony Taylor and 55 consecrated religious attended the celebration. Sr. Cecilia Nguyen, OSB, our diocesan Minister of Religious, organized and carried out all the details of the day, of which we are grateful. It was beautiful to experience holy Mass with so many other fervent religious. Bishop Taylor gave a meaningful homily and noted the great diversity of Orders, ministries, ethnic backgrounds, ages and locations of all present. The music was provided by Br. John Marmion, BSC of the Little Portion Hermitage and Monastery, who played piano, led the singing and played the guitar at different points in the Mass. It added so much depth and beauty to our prayer and worship. During the Mass the Jubilarians were recognized, which included our Sr. Mary Petra of the Cross for her upcoming 60 years this October, and Sr. Mary Ann of Jesus, OCD (discerning with us) for her Golden Jubilee this March. Blessed be God Who is so faithful!

Since He is faithful, we entrust to Him all of your intentions, and are so grateful for your constant love and support. We offer our lives in prayer and sacrifice for the needs of the Church and our world. *Have a Blessed Lent and Easter!*

"Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes unnoticed,
a daily, discreet and hidden presence – an intercessor,
a support and a guide in times of trouble.
Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows
can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation."

Pope Francis - Apostolic Letter, Patris Corde

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

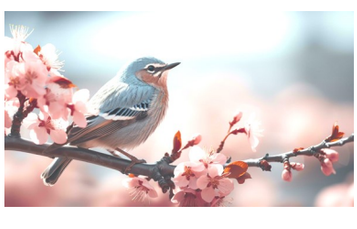
St. Joseph, Minister of Salvation

Among the new invocations inserted into the Litany of St. Joseph, we find him proclaimed as Servant of Christ and Minister of Salvation. These two titles follow in sequence. In reflection on his dedicated life in service to Jesus and Mary, both titles are well chosen. We have come to recognize Joseph as head of the Holy Family and foster father of the Son of God portrayed in the Gospel. At the angel's bidding received in a dream, to take Mary as his wife pregnant with child, a whole new vista of service unfolds before Joseph's eyes. This new role of spousal relationship is so much more than he ever anticipated. His willing response to his role in the plan of salvation history not only sheds light on the personal holiness of the man, his righteousness or justice as the psalmist declared, but a whole ministry of service.

To minister means to serve and Jesus surprising His apostles assumed the role of a slave washing their feet before His last supper with them. The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve. The image of the willing servant of God already spoken of in Isaiah's suffering servant found a foothold and blossomed in the life of Joseph of Nazareth. When the summons comes from the angel to flee into Egypt with mother and child, new vistas of service lay before him living among these strangers. Joseph with Jesus in Egypt together in this foreign land become means of silent evangelization.

Like Joseph living daily in the company of Jesus and Mary, anyone desiring to live rightly and justly as Joseph finds himself or herself in accommodation and service to others. This necessarily presupposes an ongoing accompaniment with the living God. For a true evangelist has to keep company with Christ pulsating with the Spirit of the living God to be able to impart Him to others. Like St. Joseph, our own call to minister may take various forms. It is the same Holy Spirit who kindles a flame within and unites us in one body of Christ.

St. Teresa made St. Joseph the founder of her reform by entrusting to him the protection of her monasteries. (Life Ch 32.11). She enjoyed his ministerial aid in founding her monasteries and gave his name to several of the monasteries that she founded. Teresa's manner of prayer which she taught to her daughters was to keep company with Christ. And this is exactly what the one who ministers does. Joseph proves himself as a faithful minister of Christ and it is in Christ's company that he ministers to us in all our needs when trustingly invoked as servant and minister of salvation. New pathways open before our eyes so we can surrender to God's plan of salvation in our own lives and those we cherish.

The home of the Holy Family was a domestic church in which virtue flourished and sanctity was cultivated. As the head of the family, Joseph served as a priestly figure and an earthly shadow of God the Father. Joseph would have been a man of Scripture who obeyed God's commandments and lived a life of authenticity and virtue. How beautiful it is to think that Jesus "learned at the school of Joseph." St. Joseph, teach us to do the will of the Father.

Pope Francis - Apostolic Letter, Patris Corde