Carmelite Bulletin

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

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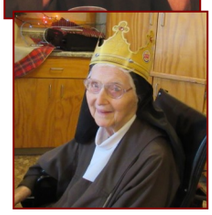
Dear Friends,

Greetings of peace and love from your sisters in Carmel. We trust that since our last Bulletin you have been blessed in many ways, especially during the Advent and Christmas seasons. It was particularly beautiful in the monastery this year with all the decorations. Midnight Mass was beautiful, also. Our novices Sr. Beatrice and Sr. Karith Michael played the violin and trombone for parts of the prelude, which added particular depth to the music and, in turn, joy to our spirits.

November celebrates All Saints' Day and All Saints of the Carmelite Order, as well. We have many saints' relics which we displayed in our chapel for veneration. It makes one feel closer to them as our friends in heaven. It was truly edifying to see so many daily Mass attendees venerating them before and after Mass.

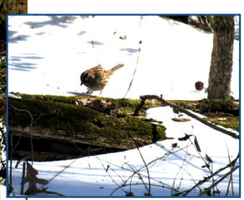
Every year we look forward to spending time with our Secular Carmelites at our Christmas party with them. They are growing in numbers so our reception room was full this year - thanks be to God! It was a pleasure to meet the new members, and visit with those friends of many years in our family of Carmel. All enjoyed the potluck meal and singing carols together - simple fellowship with good friends.



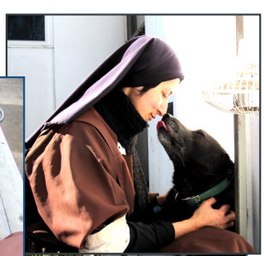
Sister Andrea found the Infant Jesus in her piece of the Epiphany cake and became a king for a day. She chose Sr. Camilla to be the queen. Their "reign" was very peaceful and lighthearted … treating their "subjects" with a hallmark movie. The Infant Jesus is the patron saint of our monastery this year.

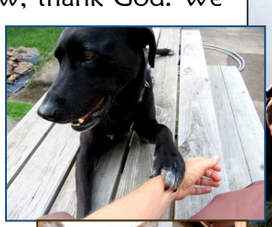
Sr. Karith Michael's family visited after Christmas. They drove all the way from North Carolina. They (and Sr. Karith Michael) taught us a line dance, all crowded in the speak room! They can dance! Now, we have some physical activity to add to our recreation periods - the "Cha Cha Slide" and "Cupid Shuffle" (no pictures will be displayed of this activity!). Sr. Beatrice's mother also came for a quick visit, driving alone from Wichita, KS. But, with a mother's love the long drive is barely a price to pay to see her daughter. Sr. Anu Maria's sister and family also came through on an even longer road trip from New Jersey to Texas and spent short, but quality time with her.

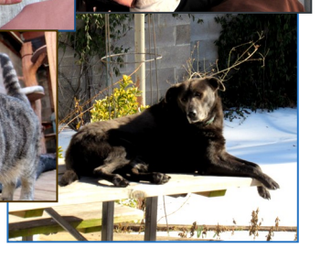
We were among most of the country to experience the winter storm, "Fern", in late January. For Arkansans it is a huge deal to get any frozen precipitation whatsoever. Last year's Winter Bulletin was an exception with the pictures of the sisters with "Sister Snowman". This year we got several inches of sleet, no snow. Sr. Anu Maria kindly cut a clean path down the slope with the weed-eater by our pond, which made a better track for sledding. A slick track with plastic dog food bags and cardboard!



We haven't mentioned much about the "Animal Kingdom" here at Little Rock Carmel recently. Our dogs Toby and Sadie are finally both healthy at the same time. Each had the long treatment at different times for heartworm. Both are doing well now, thank God. We had to give our chickens away some months ago as it was too taxing to take care of them - "Nugget" had the cross beak and needed to be hand-fed every day. The bees are settled in for the winter for now. Matatu is the feral kitty who is definitely the most "hermit-like" of all of us. He lives in the greenhouse and scurries away if someone enters. But he is well-fed and survived the cold snap, and is still a very cute cat! Last, but not least, all the Box Turtles in our courtyard are in hibernation now, but up until it got cold they continued to beg for food from the sisters... And obey God's command to "be fertile and multiply."







We are so grateful for you, our friends and family. Let us continue to pray for one another as we approach Lent and the solemnities of St. Joseph and the Annunciation.

Through Joseph's piety and charity, a Son was born of the Virgin Mary, and He was the Son of God

– Saint Augustine: *Sermon* 51: 20, 30

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

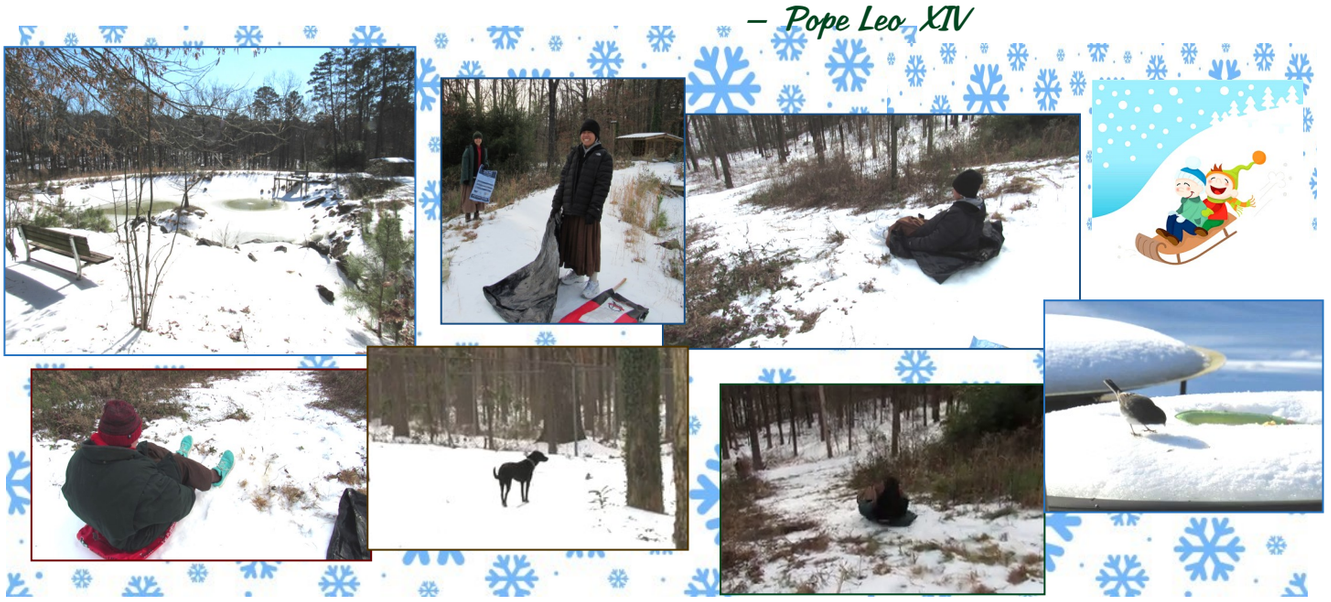
St. Joseph, a Righteous Man

"As Joseph lay uneasy, sore troubled and distressed.
There came angel message to soothe his sad unrest."

These are familiar lines that form the first verse of a favorite Christmas Carol, known as "The Cherry Tree Carol." The remaining four verses narrate in pleasing rhyme and melody St. Joseph's plight upon learning of Mary's unexplained pregnancy. St. Matthew recounts the matter quite simply: "Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matt. 1:18-21)

When one takes a penetrating look into this passage admirable qualities of Joseph's character are unveiled. St. Matthew tells us that he was a righteous man. In the midst of his perplexity and anguish and before the angel revealed in his dream the explanation, Joseph had made a decision. Of the two alternatives offered him according to the law, Joseph chose the least embarrassing one for Mary and that which would have left him perpetually separated from his chosen beloved. Joseph decided to divorce Mary quietly. What largesse, nobility and compassion on his part! Having accepted separation as the only workable solution, Joseph no doubt, realized that plans for his own future would radically change.

How easy it is for each of us when unexpectedly faced with perplexing and seemingly difficult situations, to think that our hopes and plans for the future are dashed to pieces. At the time of such felt misfortune, feelings seem to take over and the mind is clouded. Stepping away for some quiet moments of prayer can enable us to open in faith and trust to God's greater and all-encompassing plan for our lives.

When Joseph is faced with a situation that is difficult to understand and accept, with regard to his future bride, he does not choose the path of scandal and public condemnation, but the discreet and benevolent path of secret repudiation (*Matthew* 1:19). In this way, he shows that he understands the deepest meaning of his own religious observance: the meaning of mercy.

– Pope Leo XIV