

GENTLE BREEZES

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OF CARMEL



ST. THÉRÈSE SEMI-PROVINCE OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FRIARS

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Brothers & Sisters,

Sometimes it seems as though not many things are occurring in the life of our Semi-Province. However, when we review these past two years of the present triennium, we realize that we have been quite busy with our daily responsibilities in each of our four communities and with the work of discerning the present and future life of our Semi-Province.

As I have mentioned in past newsletters, we have been meeting in Dallas at Mount Carmel center almost every month. In each one of these meetings, we discuss the different aspects of Carmelite life, such as the Charism of our Order, community life, Prayer life, and our Ministry work. We have also been evaluating each one of our communities to understand their present and future needs and to determine how we can address them with the help of God.

In some of our meetings we have addressed very difficult topics, like the demographic of our Semi-Province. It is not easy to speak about how many friars we are and the age and health of each one of us. As you know, some of the brothers have been dealing with health problems like cancer. Nevertheless, our limitations have not stopped us trying to fulfill our vocation and the needs of our pastoral work in each one of our communities and all the places where we have committed ourselves to serve God's people.

When we speak about our future, we are not only trying to find solutions, but more than that, we are seeking ways that can help us strengthen our community life and the contemplative aspect of our vocation as Carmelites. In our plans for organizing our future, we are working to build a formative community where we can receive future vocations and form them. At the present time Fr. Jorge Cabrera is taking care of vocation promotion. This past year he was Br. Vladimir's formator. For this coming school year, Fr. Jorge will be the postulant director. We are happy this summer to have a candidate who will begin the postulancy in our community in San Antonio. His name is Nicholas Facundo, from Louisiana. This summer, Br. Vladimir, after finishing a year in his post-novitiate, will continue his Carmelite formation and begin his formation in the priesthood in the Washington student house in Brighton, MA. We are very thankful to Fr. Michael Berry, Provincial of

Washington, and his Province, for supporting us in the initial formation of our candidates.

I cannot close this newsletter without speaking about the events that this year have caused so much sorrow in the archdiocese of San Antonio and the whole state of Texas: First the shooting at the elementary school in Uvalde where 19 children and 2 teachers were killed, then the 50 immigrants who were found dead and the 3 more who died in the hospital. We pray for all the victims of human trafficking.

All these events have impacted the life of many people in our local community in San Antonio and the whole world. We celebrated a special Mass for the children and the 2 teachers who were killed in Uvalde and for their families. Moreover, in our daily Mass at Little Flower Basilica we have been praying for those immigrants who were abandoned and found dead in the 18-wheeler truck. With sorrowful hearts, yet trusting on the mercies of our good Lord, our Carmelite community here in San Antonio prays every day for the needs and the conversion of our society.

Our next meeting is in September. At the present time, each one of us is taking care of his pastoral responsibilities. We are, of course, always faithful to our prayer and community life. In our daily prayers we include your personal and family intentions. Every day we pray for our country, especially for the protection of all people and the end of violence.

May you enjoy the rest of the summer and may our good Lord bless all of you with many graces.

*Fr. Luis Castañeda
O.C.B.*

Fr. Luis Castañeda, OCD



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On the Cover:

The Ghent Altarpiece,
Virgin Mary detail, circa 1426.
Jan van Eyck

The Great Sign of Our Lady's Assumption

Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD

Every year on the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary we hear the following reading from the Book of Revelation:

God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant could be seen in the temple. A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth.

Then another sign appeared in the sky; it was a huge red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadems. Its tail swept away a third of the stars in the sky and hurled them down to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, to devour her child when she gave birth.

She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne. The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have salvation and power come, and the Kingdom of our God and the authority of his Anointed One." (RV 11:19A; 12:1-6A, 10AB)

When faced with the fantastic imagery of this passage, one might naturally wonder, "What does this reading from Scripture mean for me in relation to Mary's Assumption and to my daily life?"

First of all, one might note that the first image to appear in this passage is the ark of God's covenant that appears in the heavenly temple. In the Old Testament, the ark of the covenant was a gold-plated wooden container crowned with gold-plated angels, mounted on poles for carrying. It was built to contain the tablets of the Ten Commandments, the staff of Aaron, an urn of the miraculous manna with which God had fed his people in the desert, and the bronze seraph serpent used by God to heal his people who had been bitten by seraph serpents in the desert. It was meant to contain these holiest signs of God's faithfulness towards his chosen people, and was the sign of God's presence and saving power among his people. At the time of the exile, the ark of the covenant was hidden in the mountains by the prophet Jeremiah until God gathers his people together again and shows them mercy. (2 Mac 2,7)

In his Gospel, St. Luke uses imagery to speak of the Virgin Mary that evokes Old Testament imagery surrounding the ark of the covenant. For example, John the Baptist leaps for joy in the womb of his mother, Elizabeth, when he hears Mary's greeting, just as King David leaps and dances for joy in the presence of the ark. Elizabeth declares: *Who am I, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* just as King David proclaimed, *How can the ark of the Lord come to me?* (2 Sam 6,9)

Mary is the "new ark of the covenant" in whom God's promises to his people are fulfilled. She bears within herself, not just signs of God's love, but God himself. And she proclaims in her Magnificat: *He has remembered his promise of mercy...* In Mary and her Son, who will draw all people to himself, the hour of God's mercy has arrived in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy.



The Assumption of the Virgin (detail) Juan Carreño de Miranda (ca. 1657)

Similarly, in this passage from Revelation, the sign of the ark of the covenant in the heavenly temple is followed immediately by the sign of the woman crowned with twelve stars, clothed with the sun and standing on the moon. Scripture scholar Ugo Vanni relates this passage to Psalm 89, in which the Lord proclaims to King David and his heirs: *My mercy is established forever; my faithfulness will stand as long as the heavens. [David's] dynasty will continue forever, his throne, like the sun before me. Like the moon it will stand eternal, forever firm like the sky!* (Ps 89, 3.37-38) The imagery of the woman of Revelation 12 signifies that she is clothed in the fulfillment of God's promises. In her son Jesus, David's dynasty will reign forever. On the feast of the Assumption, we are reminded that in the mystery of God's raising Mary, body and soul, into heaven we are reminded of God's faithfulness, and we see the fullness of his mercy and favor towards his people.

The mystery of the birth of this woman's son, the threat of the dragon, the son's being caught up into heaven,

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Br. Vladimir Guadalupe's Renewal of Vows (June 9, 2022)

Province Update

In June we had our yearly Provincial Assembly in Dallas. In addition to reports and presentations from our Executive Director and members of the Development Department, we began to organize and prepare ourselves for the Canonical Visitation from the General definitory. We also spent some hours speaking about the Policy for Creating a Safe Environment for Children. This kind of work has to be done every two years to maintain our accreditation from Praesidium.

Besides attending different presentations and work during our assembly, we also had the opportunity to share time with each other during times of recreation. To be with our brothers from other communities in the Semi-Province always helps to strengthen our fraternal life. On Thursday evening of the assembly Br. Vladimir renewed his vows for a second year. The ceremony took place during our daily Mass.

St. Thérèse Province needs your help!

"There is no retirement age from the work of proclaiming the Gospel." - Pope Francis

Your gift today helps us provide loving care for our older members as we continue to serve you in our apostolic work.

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The Great Sign of Our Lady's Assumption

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and the woman fleeing to a place in the desert prepared for her has been interpreted in many different ways. Dr. Brant Pitre, another Scripture scholar, interprets this passage as referring to the death and resurrection of Jesus. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says to his Apostles in reference to his impending crucifixion: *Amen, amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy. When a woman is in labor, she is in anguish because her hour has arrived; but when she has given birth to a child, she no longer remembers the pain because of her joy that a child has been born into the world.* (Jn 16, 20-21). So, rather than portraying the birth of Jesus that we celebrate at Christmas, this passage from Revelation can be seen as describing the birth of the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, born from the mystery of Jesus' death on the Cross, the moment at which he constituted Mary the Mother of the beloved disciple and all those who follow her Son. This passage portrays Mary as Mother of the Church.

Later in this passage from Revelation, John tells us that *The dragon became angry with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus.* (Rev 12, 17) This verse reinforces the notion of Mary being portrayed here as Mother of the Church. We who strive to keep God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus in our daily lives, therefore, should not be surprised when we face temptation, opposition and even persecution. The battle continues between the dragon and the Church.

However, on the feast of Mary's Assumption we are reminded in this passage of Scripture that in Jesus, God has already won the victory over evil, sin, and death and promises a share in this victory to all who follow him in faith, as Mary did. By his death and resurrection, Jesus preserved his Mother in advance from all stain of sin, filling her with grace and allowing her to keep God's commandments without fail. In her being raised body and soul to heaven, clothed with the sun, crowned with stars, we see the fulfillment of all God's promises of mercy towards us, his people. As we continue the struggles of our lives as Christians, Mary is with us to encourage us, to remind us of the great things God has done for her and that he does for us each day. *He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.* Through the help of our Blessed Mother, our Lady of the Assumption, may we see come to see God's promises fulfilled in our own lives.