

GENTLE BREEZES — OF CARMEL —

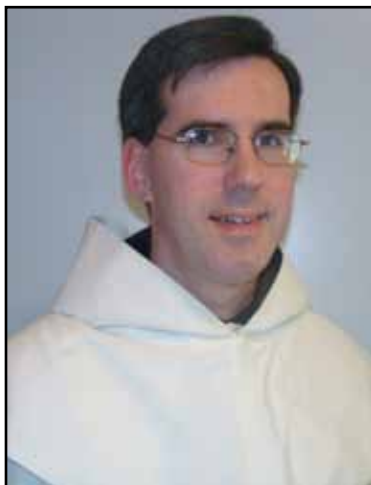


The child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

Luke 1:35



FROM THE PROVINCIAL · FATHER GREGORY ROSS, OCD



Each year on December 14th, during the season of Advent, the Church celebrates the feast day of St. John of the Cross, the first Discalced Carmelite Friar. St. John of the Cross lived in Spain during the 1500's. He lived a life of intense union with God, tireless apostolic activity, and collaboration with St. Teresa of Jesus in the reform of the Carmelite Order. His writings offer sound spiritual guidance to those who seek a more profound union with God. He has been named a Doctor of the Church due to the holiness of his life, the soundness of his doctrine, and the universal nature of his teaching.

This joy and hope that God gives us is genuine and enduring, because it is rooted in truth, in reality -- the reality of Jesus, Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary.

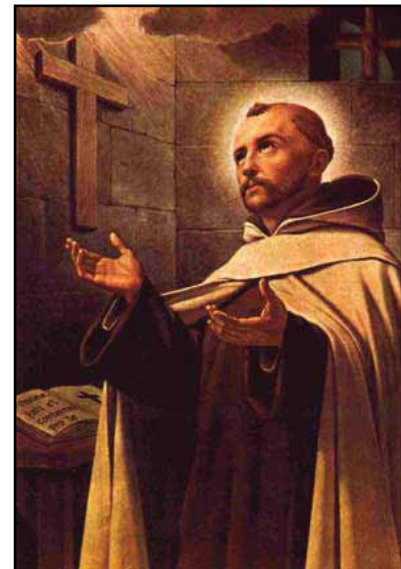
It seems fitting that we celebrate this great saint's feast day during Advent. During this holy season, we ponder the mystery of the Incarnation – the mystery of how God the Son took on our human nature and was born of the Virgin Mary. 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,' which means 'God is with us.' (Matt 1,23, citing Isaiah 7,14). God comes to us to be with us and to save us! This mystery of the Incarnation was the subject of much reflection by St. John of the Cross.

St. John of the Cross was at heart a poet, and is considered to be the greatest

lyrical poet of the Spanish language. In one of his poems, St. John of the Cross imagines the Father and the Son having a dialogue regarding the Incarnation, the Father's loving plan to send his Son into the world, to rescue humanity. St. John of the Cross portrays humanity as a "bride", whom the Father has created for his Son, who is the "bridegroom". In this poem, St. John of the Cross imagines the Son saying to the Father: *I will go and tell the world, spreading the word of Your beauty and sweetness and of your sovereignty. I will go to seek My bride and take upon Myself her weariness and labors in which she suffers so; and that she may have life I will die for her, and, lifting her out of that deep, I will restore her to you.*

We see in these lines how St. John of the Cross touches upon the heart of the mystery of the Incarnation – the heart of the reason for the hope and expectant joy that so characterizes Advent. God comes to be with us, to dwell among us, to share our burdens, and to rescue us – to restore us to friendship and union with God. The child whose birth we will celebrate at Christmas smiles at us with the beauty and sweetness of God our Father, who so longs to see his children restored and reconciled to himself and to one another.

Advent is a season during which the Church guides us to remember that God loves us so much that he sent his own Son to dwell among us. He is the Light that shines in the darkness and which the darkness has not – and cannot – overcome. Into the darkness of our world, into the darkness that we experience during our lifetimes, God comes to give us light and to invite us to a renewed faith in his presence and in his desire and power to "lift us out of the deep."



St. John of the Cross

The birth of a child into a family naturally brings joy – a new life, a new beginning; such innocence and simplicity; a sense of renewal in a family, in a community. How much more so does the birth of the divine child do all these things. The infant Jesus manifests to us something of his Father's simplicity, innocence, and power to give hope and new life – to renew the entire family of humanity.

Jesus, the Son of God made man, is the Father's great gift to the human family. The gifts we exchange at

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FROM THE PROVINCIAL · FATHER GREGORY ROSS, OCD

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Christmas time, and the generosity that we feel welling up in our hearts towards others – the “spirit of Christmas” – are but an echo of this infinite gift of Jesus and the generosity of our Heavenly Father to us.

This joy and hope that God gives us is genuine and enduring, because it is rooted in truth, in reality -- the reality of Jesus, Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary. It is not a false and passing joy and hope drummed up by good marketing, such as are the superficial sentiments conjured up by advertisers who aim to create desires and needs, to induce gift-giving and to sell merchandise. The true joy of Christmas is genuine, for Christ is the true gift, the only one who can satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart. And the Father gives him to the world freely – to each and every member of the human family. How can those who believe fail to rejoice at this good news?

As Fr. Sam Anthony mentions in his column for this issue of *Gentle Breezes*, Advent is also the season of Mary. She is the one who accompanies us in our preparation to celebrate the birth of her Son. We are invited to accompany her, too, as she learns of the role she is to play

in the Father’s plan to save humanity, and as she responds to the Father’s call with great faith, surrender, and generosity. We are invited to ponder and to share in her joy at the birth of her child, just as we are told that she pondered and “kept all these things in her heart.”

St. John of the Cross was himself very devoted to the Mother of God, and aware of her role in the mystery of the Incarnation. In the poem cited above, St. John of the Cross also writes of the mystery of the Annunciation, of the angel Gabriel’s words to Mary, and of how the power of the Most High overshadowed her and the Holy Spirit came upon her, working in her the mystery of the Incarnation. St. John says of the divine child conceived in Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit: *He who had only a Father, now had a mother too.*

Those who knew St. John of the Cross reported that he celebrated the seasons of Advent and Christmas with great devotion. During the days of Christmas one year, he was discussing



St. John says of the divine child conceived in Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit: *He who had only a Father, now had a mother too.*

with the friars the love of God shown to us in the infant Jesus. Suddenly, overcome with joy, St. John of the Cross got up, went over to the table where there was an infant Jesus on display, and picked up the statue of the little infant in his arms. He proceeded to dance around the room (“with art and fervor” according to the witness), singing the verse: “My sweet and tender Jesus, if love is to slay me, today must be the day!”

May St. John of the Cross and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, accompany you with their prayers during this holy season of Advent. Be assured of the prayers of all of your Carmelite brothers as well. May the infant Jesus smile on you and your loved ones during this joyous season, and may he grant you a glimpse of the beauty and sweetness and sovereignty of our all good and merciful Father in heaven.

GOOD NEWS! IRA ROLLOVER PASSES FOR 2008/2009!

In “Division C -- the Tax Extenders and Alternative Minimum Tax Relief Act of 2008” of H.R. 1424, Congress extended an excellent charitable planning opportunity for both 2008 and 2009. This act permits an IRA owner age 70½ or older to make a direct transfer to charity. The transfer may be up to \$100,000 in one year and this IRA rollover will exist for year 2008 and year 2009. Sec. 408(d)(8)(A).

“I will spend my Heaven doing good upon earth.”

– ST. THERESE

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Annual Retreat 2009



The friars of the Southern Province gathered in October for their annual retreat. They are:
L to R: Br. Joseph Le, Br. Daniel Marie LaCourrege, Br. Juan Guillermo Quintana, Fr. Jenaro de la Cruz, Fr. Jerome Earley (below), Fr. Bonaventure Sauer (above), Fr. Ralph Reyes, Fr. Gregory Ross, Fr. John Michael Payne, Fr. Raphael Kitz (seated), Fr. Stephen Sanchez (standing next to chair), Fr. John Suenram (above), Fr. Jesus Sancho, Fr. Sam Anthony Morello, Fr. Marion Bui, Fr. Luis Joaquin Castaneda, Fr. Luis Gerardo Belmonte, Fr. Juan Evangelista Cabrera, Fr. Matthias Montgomery (retreat master, Washington Province).

Each year, during the third full week of October, all the friars of the Southern Province gather for our annual retreat at Marylake Monastery in Little Rock, Arkansas. This retreat is a time for intense prayer, renewed fellowship, and spiritual nourishment.

This year, the friars gathered from October 18-26. We were led in our spiritual reflection by Fr. Matthias Montgomery, O.C.D., a Discalced Carmelite friar from the Washington Province. Fr. Matthias offered us rich reflections on aspects of the spirituality of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the patroness of our Province. Fr. Matthias spoke to us of St. Thérèse's "Christmas conversion," of her understanding of God's mercy and justice, of her offering of herself to Merciful Love, and of her understanding of fraternal charity. We were all very appreciative of Fr. Matthias' insightful conferences and of his understanding of St. Thérèse.

On Wednesday, October 21, we took advantage of this time of fellowship to celebrate the jubilees of two of our brothers: the 50th anniversary of priestly ordination of Fr. Raphael Kitz, and the 25th anniversary of profession as a Discalced Carmelite of Fr. Stephen Sanchez. Fr. Raphael hails from Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was ordained a priest in

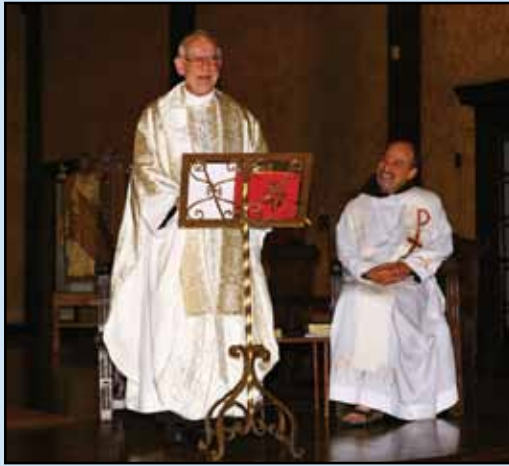
Rome on September 19, 1959. He lives at Marylake, and has served many years as our Province's novice master, responsible for the formation of our new candidates. Fr. Stephen is originally from San Antonio, Texas. He made his first profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience as a Discalced Carmelite Friar on July 16, 1984. He is currently stationed at Mt. Carmel Center in Dallas, where he serves as superior of our community there.

This happy occasion was highlighted by the celebration of the Eucharist, at which Fr. Raphael presided and Fr. Stephen served as principal concelebrant. Fr. Raphael spoke to the community of his gratitude to God for his fidelity and for having carried him to this point in his life and his vocation. We all joined Fr. Raphael and Fr. Stephen in expressing our gratitude to God, and we were sure to thank these two brothers, too, for their generous service to the Province. After Mass, we were treated to a delicious supper provided by a friend of the friars.

All of you who have commended your intentions to our prayers and all of you who have offered your support to our life and ministry were remembered each day of the retreat during our community prayer. May God's blessing be upon each of you and upon all your loved ones.



Fr. Raphael Kitz, O.C.D., Golden Jubilarian

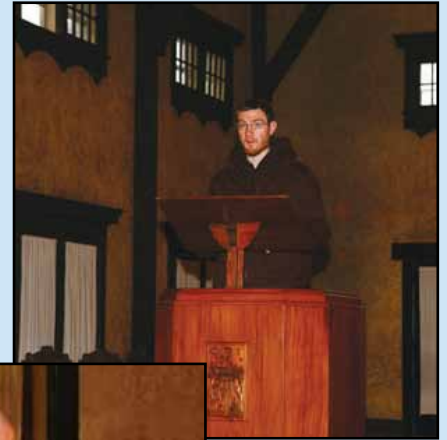


Fr. Jesus Sancho, Fr. Raphael Kitz, Fr. Stephen Sanchez (Silver Jubilarian).

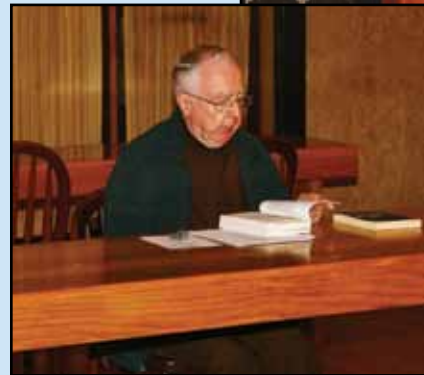


The friars at Mass.

Br. Daniel proclaiming the Scripture.



The Jubilee Supper in Marylake's refectory.



Fr. Matthias Montgomery, O.C.D., retreat master



Marylake's Chapel



Br. Guillermo and Fr. Jenaro in Marylake's kitchen, preparing a Spanish paella.

Discovering Our Lady of Advent

Fr. Sam Anthony Morello, OCD., STL.

This article is the personal sharing of a significant Marian discovery that re-educated me as a young friar and gave me the tools for a more solid devotional life. What I speak of is the discovery and growing appreciation of the primary sources of devotion and spirituality-- namely Sacred Scripture, liturgy, and church teaching (the magisterium). [As secondary sources of spirituality we can list Catholic Theology, and the Great Spiritual Classics, like the writings of our own Carmelite doctors-- Sts. Teresa, John of the Cross, and Thérèse.]

Perhaps like me, a good number of you grew up in the '30s, the '40s and the '50s of the last century. As a Catholic boy in Houston, Texas, I knew Catholic popular devotions of all kinds. Rosary piety, especially in May and October, along with the cultivation of the five-first Saturdays, was very prominent among the devotions. Perhaps that was second only to the Sacred Heart devotion with its nine-first Fridays. Then too, there were countless popular novenas. But growing into young adulthood and becoming a Carmelite seminarian in the '50s brought me to the developing awareness of a more substantial devotion to Christ and the Blessed Virgin. Again, this was by way of an emerging clarity on the importance of Sacred Scripture, liturgical prayer, and the official teaching of the Church as the very foundation of the devotional life.

As a student in Rome I discovered theology. That was from 1958 to 1963 at the International College of the Discalced Carmelites. As theology became more integrated with real life, it added a new and stimulating ingredient to personal devotion. I felt the positive impact of biblical studies and systematic theology on my prayer life and future priestly ministry. Well, it was in that Roman environment that one evening at prayer something simple enough happened that was to prove very significant on a long-term basis.

It was probably in late November or early December of 1960 when one evening at prayer time, in the long airplane-hanger-like chapel of our Carmelite Pontifical College, the Teresianum, and in the silent company of some 160 international students and professors of our Order, while kneeling at my place with bible in hand and attentive to some Christological New Testament text, that a fresh and altogether inviting notion dawned on me. The quiet awareness settled in as something of a gentle question: 'Advent is about to start. Why not spend this Advent with Mary, seeing and appreciating the Incarnation distinctively through her eyes?' The moment, as I reflect on it now, seemed different from a fleeting inspiration. It carried its own-staying power and energy, and it initiated a willing response to an invitation experienced as a free gift.



I took the inspiration to my student master who was also my spiritual director. Immediately after submitting the idea to him, his eyes revealed connection and identification. He assured me that the notion was a grace and something to pursue. And so it was a grace indeed for that Advent and for every Advent since. Advent became the great Marian Season for me, dearer than month of May, more special than October. Advent served as four heightened Marian weeks of the year. (Then slowly in time, the continuity of the Christmas-Epiphany Season with Advent opened up and offered me a substantial and enjoyable liturgical unity with our Lady of the Liturgy that feeds me to this day in my mid-seventies.)

Ordination to the priesthood arrived at the end of April in 1962. The Second Vatican Council opened in October of that same year under Blessed Pope John XXIII. Our dogmatic theology from the Lowlands was already anticipating the Council's re-orientation. In 1964 the Council published the wonderful Dogmatic Constitution on the Church with its famous Chapter VIII devoted to the role of the Blessed Virgin. It treated Mary exclusively and thoroughly in the double light of: 1) the Mystery of Christ, and 2) the Mystery of the Church. The Council theologically "located" Mary's identity and role in life and in glory totally within these two parameters. This was the most authentic Mariology I had ever encountered. I felt ripe for a more mature formation in devotion through the employment of conciliar theology. As they say in ecclesiastical-academic circles, "Good theology makes for good spirituality." Perhaps even better said, "Good theology makes for healthy spirituality!"

Returning to our Lady of Advent... Not long after the Second Vatican Council concluded, what a providential confirmation I received again from a wonderful commentary on the new three-year cycle of liturgical readings for Sundays and Solemnities, written by Fr. Adrian Nocent, OSB. This Roman-Benedictine liturgist wrote a four-volume commentary on the new liturgical readings for Ordinary Time and the High Liturgical Seasons. The work is entitled, *The Liturgical Year* (English translation published in 1977 by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota.) It was precisely in the first volume that covers the Advent and Christmas-Epiphany readings (p. 160) where I found the following passage that confirmed in a whole new way my earlier Marian-Advent reorientation. The author writes:

"...It does not seem out of place to contrast the great attention given to the 'month of May' with the almost total neglect of the Marian season of Advent. We must respect the efforts made during 'Mary's month,' but we cannot allow a tradition as old as



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Discovering Our Lady of Advent

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the veneration of Mary during Advent to be overshadowed or even completely unknown. Many Christians are so unaware of the presence of God’s Mother during Advent that they celebrate the Immaculate Conception [on December 8] as though it were an isolated feast, closely connected with Lourdes but unrelated to the rest of the Advent liturgy!



“There is a lot of scope here for pastoral effort. The point is not to do away with ... [popular] devotion[s] that the Church has encouraged, but rather to establish a hierarchy of values and to become conscious that a liturgical celebration such as that of Advent has a rightful priority over other forms of Marian devotion....” (Emphasis added)

To that clear statement I almost sang a resounding “AMEN” and “Alleluia!” And for me as a preacher, Advent homiletics took off on a regenerated track.

To conclude these notes on the Marian character of Advent, I invite anyone interested in the subject to browse through the post-Vatican II books of the Liturgical Hours (the Divine Office). You will find that from day one of the Advent Season Mary is regularly featured and mentioned in the antiphons, readings, and prayers. For the old Roman liturgy too the principle of Mary’s special place in Advent was operative. But the newer schema, drafted after the Council, makes it perfectly clear that the Church walks through all of Advent with Mary from beginning to end. So another happy confirmation of the discovery of our Lady of Advent has been the breviary of Pope Paul VI.

Hopefully you perceive how one can be enthusiastic about this substantial theme. May Mary of Advent and our Lady of the Liturgy walk with you and me all the days of our lives, the closer to Jesus Christ, our Incarnate Lord and Savior. Amen.

*We Carmelite Friars wish each of you a
Happy Marian Advent
and a
Very Merry Christmas!*

Opening the Doors of Hope

By Michael Montoya, Executive Director

From the Latin, Adventus, meaning “to come”, this season is one in which we await the coming of the Nativity of Christ. However, beyond merely passively waiting, a possible question we can ask ourselves is, what can we actively do during this season to gain a deeper understanding of it, and consequently a deeper understanding of ourselves? I believe that a two-fold conclusion can be gathered from this Advent season through the exploration of the relationship between qualities of two virtues that overflow during this time: Hope and Charity.

In 1986, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, said in his book, *Seek That Which Is Above*, that “It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope”. Our own Catholic Catechism defines hope as the theological virtue by which we desire eternal life as our happiness, place our trust in Jesus’ promises and rely not on our own strength but in the grace of the Holy Spirit. Hope also harkens to the happiness that God has placed in all of our hearts. However, like all gifts from God and all talents that we receive, nurturing them is a necessary element. We must work toward being hopeful in times of need, steadfast during times of transition, and then must use hope to protect us from selfishness and lead ourselves to the “happiness that flows from charity.”

Our patroness, St. Therese tells us that “Nothing is done well when it is done out of self-interest.” The beauty of this hope and charity connection and its relation to Advent, is that not only can we find happiness through our hope in the coming of Christ, but in the active practice of charity. What a truly joyous season this is. What greater moment in our faith can we draw upon for hope, than that Birth of Christ and what better way to give glory to this immense moment than by being charitable to one another? Through mutual, charitable sharing the Kingdom of God is established. If the talents that we possess are shared and given to one another, what need is left?

As Catholics, our level of charity is formed to model that which Jesus himself showed during his life. Our Carmelite saints like Therese of Lisieux, John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila lived each day of their lives in selfless giving. This is the life that your brothers in this Discalced Carmelite Community of the Southern Province have chosen. This publication along with their constant prayer and dedication to service is their sharing with the world. This gives me hope! I can see in their sharing with you and with your partnership with them a generation of hope appropriate for this season of transcendence. Thank you very much for your sharing and may God Bless!

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The Birth

When the time had come
for him to be born,
he went forth like the
bridegroom
from his bridal chamber,
embracing his bride,
holding her in his arms,
whom the gracious Mother
laid in a manger
among some animals
that were there at that time.
Men sang songs
and angels melodies
celebrating the marriage
of Two such as these.
But God there in the manger
cried and moaned;
and these tears were jewels
the bride brought to the
wedding.
The Mother gazed in sheer wonder
on such an exchange:
in God, man's weeping,
and in man, gladness,
to the one and the other
things usually so strange.

■ *St. John of the Cross*
"Romances"
(ICS Publications)

It is for me that He has Come

In the cold, in the humble stable,
How beautiful He is, the Infant Jesus!
O grace, O wonder, O miracle,
Yes, it is for me that He has come.

Contemplating the great distress
Of the children that He loved exceedingly,
The Father, in a holy inebriation
Gives them His adored Word.

This gentle Lamb, this Little One,
He is the eternal and true light,
He who reigns in the bosom of the Father
And comes to tell us everything of Him.

O pure, O gentle vision!
It is in my soul that is worked
The great, the sublime mystery,
The new incarnation!

I live no longer, I; He lives in me.
Oh! It is already the face to face,
The vision that the shadow of faith
Does not erase.

He comes to reveal the mystery,
To share all the secrets of the Father,
To lead from glory to glory
Even unto the bosom of the Trinity.

Oh, how good it is in silence
To listen to Him again and always,
To rejoice in peace in His presence,
And then to surrender oneself entirely to Love.

■ *Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity*
Discalced Carmelite
Christmas, 1901