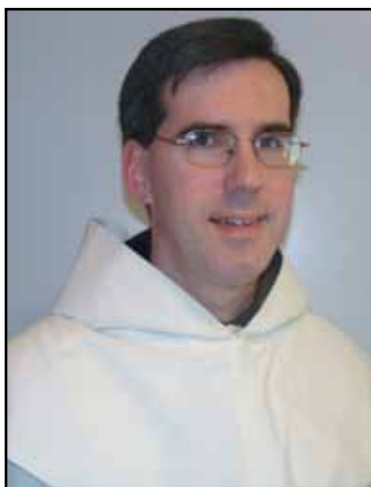


# GENTLE BREEZES — OF CARMEL —



“WITH ZEAL HAVE I BEEN ZEALOUS  
FOR THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS.”  
— 1 KINGS 19,14

## FROM THE PROVINCIAL · FATHER GREGORY ROSS, OCD



*With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts. (1Kings 19,14)* These words of the prophet Elijah serve as the motto of the Carmelite Order and appear on the official shield of the Order, along with an image of Elijah's fiery sword.

From the very beginning of our Order's history, which dates back to the early Thirteenth Century, we Carmelites have always looked to the prophet Elijah as the model whom we strive to imitate. The first hermits on Mount Carmel chose to settle in the Wadi Carith, near the fountain of Elijah – the place where God instructed the prophet to go to live in solitude during the drought that was visiting Israel at the time (*cf. 1Kings 17,3-6*).

We see in Elijah a man completely rooted in the word of God. I remember hearing a conference on Elijah several years ago given by a Carmelite, Fr. Craig Morrison, in which he pointed out that every major movement and action of the great prophet (except one – but that story will have to wait for another column!) is preceded by the phrase, "The word of the Lord came to Elijah...", or "God spoke to Elijah." Elijah is a man who hears the word of God and acts upon it. He ponders it in solitude, and his actions spring from his close communion with God. He is zealous for the Lord God of Hosts, completely at the service of the Living God, "in whose presence [he] stands." (*cf. 1Kings 18,15 – King James version*)

As such, we Carmelites strive to

imitate Elijah's zeal, his being rooted in the word of God. Our Rule of Life, given to us in 1206 by St. Albert of Jerusalem instructs us: *Each of you is to stay in his own cell or nearby, pondering the Lord's law day and night and keeping watch at his prayers unless attending to some other duty.* Likewise, it tells us: *The sword of the spirit, the word of God, must abound in your mouths and hearts. Let all you do have the Lord's word for accompaniment.*

Elijah lived in silence and solitude. As such, we Carmelites strive to cultivate a spirit of silence – a silence that is geared towards cultivating a spirit of attentive listening to the word of God. In his famous encounter with God that is recounted in 1Kings 19, Elijah encounters God not in the sound of the strong wind, nor in the earthquake or fire, but in the whisper of the gentle breeze, in the sound of silence. It is in this silence and gentleness that God reveals his presence to Elijah, and Elijah responds by veiling his face in the presence of the All Holy One. This is the scene depicted by the statue of Elijah that you can see on the cover of this issue of *Gentle Breezes of Carmel*. You can see this statue at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower, just outside the St. Elias Eucharistic Adoration Chapel, where the faithful enter into the presence of the All Holy One as he is present to us in the Blessed Sacrament.

In this issue of *Gentle Breezes* you will find several articles related to the theme of Vocations. Here I have attempted to touch upon the notion of Elijah as the model of the Carmelite vocation of prayer centered upon the Word of God and ministry that springs from our experience of God in prayer. Fr. Jim Curiel, in his article on the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, writes about the Marian aspect of the Carmelite vocation, an aspect that all can share in by wearing the Brown Scapular. Our director of



development also speaks about the theme of vocation. Finally, we introduce to you our two newest vocations – our two new postulants, who are just beginning their training in the Carmelite way of life.

We also take this opportunity to ask that you pray for vocations to our Province of the Discalced Carmelite Friars, as well as to our monasteries of Discalced Carmelite Nuns.

*Continued on page 3*

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## FROM THE PROVINCIAL *Continued from page 2*

I remember during Pope Benedict XVI's visit to the USA several years ago how he met with the U.S. bishops. Several bishops were invited to ask the Pope questions. One asked him about the "vocation crisis" and asked what advice he had to offer in this regard. I was struck by His Holiness' response:



*In the Gospel, Jesus tells us to pray that the Lord of the harvest will send workers. He even admits that*

*the workers are few in comparison with the abundance of the harvest (cf. Mt 9:37-38). Strange to say, I often think that prayer – the unum necessarium [the one thing necessary] – is the one aspect of vocations work which we tend to forget or to undervalue! Nor am I speaking only of prayer for vocations. Prayer itself, born in Catholic families, nurtured by programs of Christian formation, strengthened by the grace of the sacraments, is the first means by which we come to know the Lord's will for our lives. To the extent that we teach young people to pray, and to pray well, we will be cooperating with God's call.*

*Programs, plans and projects have their place; but the discernment of a vocation is above all the fruit of an intimate dialogue between the Lord and his disciples. Young people, if they know how to pray, can be trusted to know what to do with God's call.*

Words of wisdom for all of us to follow! What a great gift it is when parents teach their children to pray, when they cultivate a spirit of prayer in the home, and teach this spirit of prayer by their own example of practicing prayer! They help their children greatly to learn to hear God's call and to respond to it. What a great gift we can offer the young people we know by helping to foster in them the spirit of prayer, the spirit of friendly dialogue with Christ in the silence of their hearts. As Pope Benedict XVI points out, this prayer is the door that opens young people's hearts to God's call, to his action in their lives.

Again, we might all look to the prophet Elijah as a model for discovering our own personal vocations. This man who listened attentively in silence and in hope for the word of the Lord received this word and acted upon it. The Lord invites all to ponder his word and to act upon it. Like he did for Elijah, the Lord

often reveals to us his loving presence and makes known his will for us in the "gentle breeze" – in moments of silence and stillness. May he give each of us the grace to act upon this word with courage and zeal so that we may fulfill the vocation with which he has blessed us!

*Fr. Gregory Ross, O.C.D.*

Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD  
Provincial

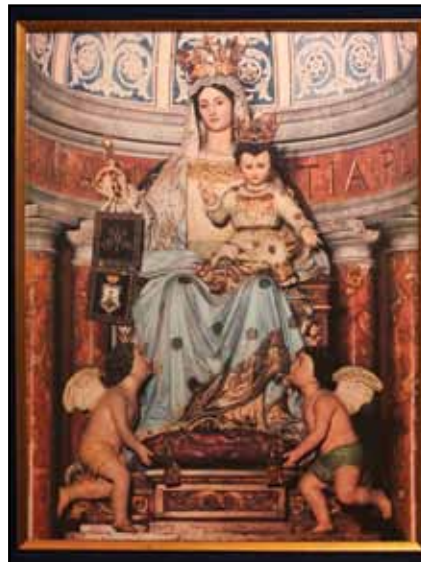


## The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel

By Fr. Jim Curiel, O.C.D.

The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel is an essential part of the Discalced Carmelite habit. In the pamphlet titled "The Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel", one reads that:

*Stories and legends abound in Carmelite tradition about the many ways in which the Mother of God has interceded for the Order, especially in critical moments of its history. Most enduring and popular of these traditions, blessed by the Church, concerns Mary's promise to an early Carmelite, St. Simon Stock, that anyone who remains faithful to the Carmelite vocation until death will be granted the grace of final perseverance. The Carmelite Order has been anxious to share this patronage and protection with those who*



*are devoted to the Mother of God and so has extended both its habit (the scapular) and affiliation to the larger Church.*

*Private revelation can neither add nor detract from the Church's deposit of faith. Therefore, the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel echoes the promise of Divine Revelation: 'The one who holds out to the end is the one who will see salvation' (Mt 24:13) and 'Remain faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life' (Revelation 2:10). The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is a reminder to its wearers of the saving grace which Christ gained upon the cross for all: 'All you who have been baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves in him.' (Gal 3:27). There is no salvation for anyone other than that won by Christ.*

*Continued on page 4*



## The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel *Continued from page 3*

–*Pastoral Comments on the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel by the North American Provincials, p. 1*

The Brown Scapular is an outward sign that gives witness to the wearer's being devoted to Our Lady in her virtues -- her obedience to God, humility, pondering of the Scriptures (the Word of God), praying at all times as St. Paul insists, and actively helping others, even anticipating their needs, as she did in visiting her cousin Elizabeth and at the wedding at Cana. Showing compassion, too, is important for the person striving to imitate Mary, since she suffered at the Cross with her Son.

The scapular is so named because it originated as an apron that was worn over the shoulders both in front and in back of the body. The Latin name for "shoulder" is *scapula*, hence the name "scapular." In the early days of the Benedictine Order, the scapular was used as summer wear, a sleeveless garment that was used as an apron in order to work. As time went on, more of the religious Orders, including the Carmelites, began to use this as part of their religious garb, or "habit." Today's scapulars, as worn by the laity, are small: two small pieces of cloth are connected by two cords that are worn over the shoulders.

The Brown Scapular has been quite popular among Catholics throughout the centuries. It used to be a tradition that when children received their First Holy Communion, they were then enrolled in the Brown Scapular. Most Catholics today still wear their scapulars and consider it to be important enough in their lives to be devoted to Our Lady, of whom the Brown Scapular is a reminder.

There has long been a popular notion, called "the Sabbatine Privilege," that claims that Our Lady will rescue the person who dies wearing the Scapular from purgatory on the first Saturday after their death. This notion of the Sabbatine Privilege, despite its continuing popularity, is not true and is taught neither by the Carmelites nor by the Church. The aforementioned document on the Scapular explains that "Historical research has shown that the alleged fourteenth-century appearance of the Blessed Mother to Pope John XXII [that is allegedly the foundation of the Sabbatine Privilege] is without historical foundation. As a matter of fact, in the year 1613 the Holy See determined that the decree establishing the 'Sabbatine Privilege' was unfounded and the Church admonished the Carmelite Order not to preach this doctrine. Unfortunately, the Order did not always comply with this directive of the Holy See." The Holy



See did acknowledge "that the faithful may devoutly believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary by her continuous intercession, merciful prayers, merits, and special protection will assist the souls of deceased brothers and sisters and members of the confraternity, especially on Saturday, the day which the Church dedicates to the Blessed Virgin."

The Brown Scapular really has more to do with devotion to Our Lady and imitating her virtues than anything else. Therefore, those who wear the Scapular should try to do the will of God completely in their lives as Mary did, pondering the Scriptures, recommending to others to do the will of God, and trusting that despite our suffering, Jesus will always see that we are cared for as the Apostle John cared for Mary (ref. Jn 19:26-27).

Any person can be invested in the Brown Scapular. Any priest or deacon has the faculties to bless a Scapular. A person given authority to act in the name of the Carmelite Order may receive people into the confraternity of the scapular, which is a sharing in the spiritual affiliation of the Order. One may wear the Scapular out of devotion, without being formally invested, yet still share spiritually in the rich traditions of the Carmelite Order's Marian spirituality and traditions. – *cf. Pastoral Comments on the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel by the North American*

*Provincials, p. 5*

In 1933, the pious union called the Archconfraternity of the Brown Scapular was established by Fr. Sebastian Valles, OCD, at the National Shrine of the Little Flower in San Antonio, Texas. The mission of the Archconfraternity is to promote and spread devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and to St. Thérèse. Members profess their dedication to them, asking for their protection and spiritual guidance. In their zeal, the members of the Archconfraternity not only strive to imitate Our Lady's virtues but also help the Pastor of Little Flower Parish in various ways and support the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Seton Home for unwed mothers and also Little Flower School.

The Brown Scapular is an important part of our Carmelite and Catholic identity as followers of Jesus Christ, Son of God and son of Mary. We as Carmelites are proud to wear it as a sign and reminder of our Marian identity and as a symbol of our oneness with all those devoted to the Mother of God. We are happy to have the privilege of sharing the blessings and spirituality of the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel with all of you.

# Vocation Requires Generosity, Discernment

By Fr. Juan Evangelista Cabrera, O.C.D.

A vocation to the Carmelite Order is a gratuitous call from God which requires generosity and discernment from the person who is called. Contact with a vocation director and reading literature about Carmel can help in this process, but these things can never take the place of a complete immersion in the Discalced Carmelite way of life. This direct experience is essential before a candidate moves into more serious stages of commitment. In our Order we provide this direct experience to men who feel called to Carmel. The first immersion experience in candidates' discernment process is called the *postulancy*. It is the answer to Jesus' invitation, "Come and see" (Jn. 1: 39).

In the postulancy, those who feel called to our way of life come to live, pray, work, and recreate with one of our communities. "Its purpose is to give candidates the opportunity of gaining firsthand knowledge of our way of life, and to give those responsible in the Order a chance of assessing their suitability. It is to be a time of gradual transition from secular life to religious life in the novitiate."<sup>1</sup> The novitiate will be the following stage in discerning their call to Carmel. As postulants, candidates have the opportunity to experience all this without being official members of the Order. The length of the postulancy varies among provinces. In our Province of St. Thérèse it lasts six months.

This year in February we rejoiced in receiving Brad Wagner and Jorge Morales-Nazarario into the postulancy. They are both at our monastery in Oklahoma City. Here, our two postulants introduce themselves to you:

"I am Brad Wagner. I am currently a postulant with the St. Thérèse Province of the Discalced Carmelite Friars. I was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, but have lived in the US since I was five years old. I am the youngest of five siblings. Before entering Carmel I worked as a system technician at an Information Technology Company. Even though it was not easy for me to leave behind my job and family I am happy to have responded to the call to follow Christ and the Virgin Mary, our Mother. What drew me to the Carmel was the friars' dedication to contemplative prayer and their fraternal life. Living a

life of prayer, work and recreation with them has been a very beautiful and positive experience. I am very thankful to God for bringing me here to grow in intimate friendship with Christ in the context of the Carmelite life, which is founded on prayer."



Brad Wagner



Jorge Morales-Nazarario

"My name is Jorge Morales-Nazarario. I was born and raised in Puerto Rico. I first began to feel a desire to be a priest when I was around eight years old, as I helped as an altar server. But as I grew up I put these thoughts to the side. As an adult I joined the US Navy. I later worked in San Antonio as an office manager at an Institute for Ministry Development, an organization dedicated to

the formation of lay ecclesial ministers. Something that helped me respond to God's call was the entrance of my two sisters into religious life, one with the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters and the other with the Dominican Sisters of St. Rose of Lima. This allowed me to see how real God's call is, it motivated me to follow him. Why Carmel? I was drawn by the life of deep contemplative prayer balanced with the apostolic life of the Discalced Carmelite Friars. The postulancy has allowed me to know myself more closely and deeply. It has been a time of joy in which I have been introduced to a new family and to new depths of God's mercy. He continues to strengthen and care for me through his Son in the Holy Spirit and the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Carmel."

These are our postulants, men who have had the courage to answer Christ's invitation, "Come and see." Let us keep them in our prayers so they continue to respond with openness and generosity to the loving voice of our Lord.

## (Endnotes)

- 1 Discalced Carmelites, *Constitutions and Norms*. p. 84.

## Mission Statement

*The Discalced Carmelite Friars are a community of priests and religious brothers serving the Church through a life of contemplative prayer. In our apostolic work, we also strive to foster growth in the spiritual life, helping men and women to grow in friendship with God and with neighbor.*

# Our Calling Voice

**By Michael Montoya, Development Director**

Thank you to all of you who shared in the Lenten meditations from the previous *Gentle Breezes* of Carmel issue. I felt extremely blessed to have heard from some of you throughout the past couple of months, as I prayed that I would. As my tenure as Director of Development continues and as I now reflect on this new theme of “vocations” for this *Gentle Breezes* issue, the clarity of the message that I want to share with you crystallizes, and I feel that much more blessed to be able to share again with you all.

In the previous issue our Provincial spoke eloquently about the message of the parable of the “Prodigal Son” and of its implications toward our relationship with God our Father. More than the obvious messages of forgiveness, acceptance, and an indefatigable welcoming of open arms, I also gathered this message to show that no matter where we are in our lives “we always belong to God.” Being children of God and being created in his image and likeness, it is by default our “vocation” in life to do all in his name with the ultimate promise of being able to return to him one day. Our Catechism teaches us when referencing vocations that, we “with the help of grace, grow in virtue, avoid sin, and if we sin we entrust ourselves as did the prodigal son to the mercy of our Father in heaven.”

St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross also teaches us that, “the limitless loving devotion to God, and the gift God makes of Himself to you, are the highest elevation of which the heart is capable; it is the highest degree of prayer. The souls that have reached this point are truly the heart of the Church.”

Our calling in life is to “entrust ourselves as the prodigal son to the mercy of God our father. From this we can always derive a sense of peace with the notion that beyond our self, our free-will, our autonomy, our pride, our desire to control, we are graced with God’s infinite mercy to always bring us back to where we need to be: as close to him as possible.

Now you may ask yourself, “How this is attainable?” Like all talents the multiplication of them is attained through action. Just as we become close to individuals in our life, through conversation, interaction and dialogue, so too is this true with God. Pope John Paul II once said during a homily while on a pilgrimage to India, that “in the recesses of the human heart, the grace of a vocation takes the form of a dialogue”...“a dialogue between Christ and an individual.” We must strive to always connect to Christ and our Father through dialogue, and also keep this dialogue through the service of others; for we are all made in his image and likeness. That which brings us close to others ultimately brings us closer to God. So that we are able to receive our call, we must first be receptive and sensitive to it, to receive others and be sensitive to others. As God is in us all, so too is the call to serve within us all, the call to give and to receive with open arms.

Again it is my prayer, that as I was blessed to hear from many of you during Lent, I may also be able hear from you again, throughout the summer and continuously through these months.

*We must strive to always connect to Christ and our Father through dialogue, and also keep this dialogue through the service of others; for we are all made in his image and likeness.*

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

– ST. THERESE

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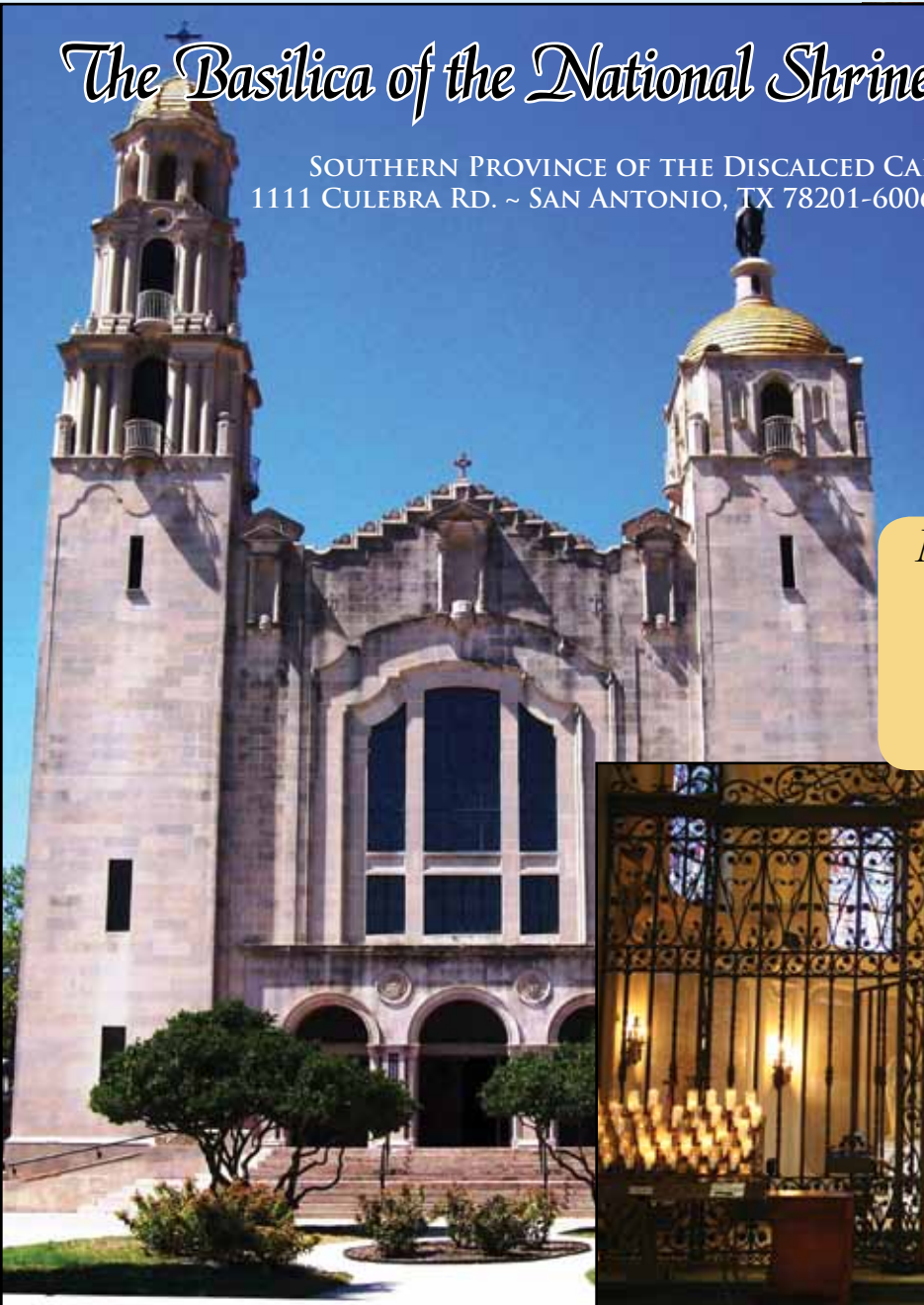




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