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# GENTLE BREEZES —OF CARMEL—

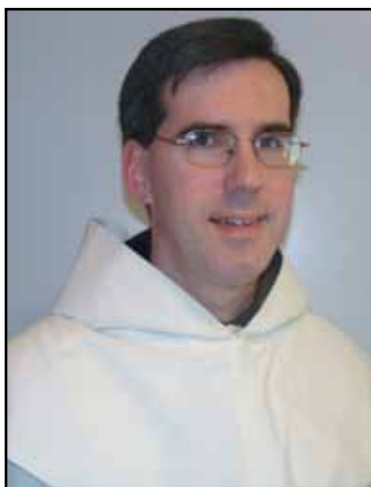


*Celebrating 75 Years*

*St. Thérèse Province of the Discalced Carmelite Friars  
1936-2011*

ST. THÉRÈSE PROVINCE OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FRIARS  
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## FROM THE PROVINCIAL · FATHER GREGORY ROSS, OCD



Dear Friends,

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ! As you can see on the cover of this issue of *Gentle Breezes of Carmel*, our Province of Discalced Carmelite Friars is celebrating our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Blessed be God for his faithfulness to us through these years!

On January 1, 1936, the friars of the “Oklahoma Province” were granted autonomy from their “mother Province” of Valencia, Spain. The friars received the right to elect their own superiors and to otherwise set their own course as they served the People of God in the southern USA. They took as their patroness St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus.

This choice of the Little Flower as the patroness of this newly autonomous group of friars grew out of the friars’ great devotion to this recently canonized (at that time) saint and to the role that they had played in popularizing devotion to her among the faithful in the United States. The friars had been publishing their *Little Flower Magazine* since 1920, spreading the word about the life, spirituality, and powerful intercession of “Little Thérèse.” They had constructed the National Shrine of the Little Flower in San Antonio, Texas, which was dedicated in 1931 (and thus will celebrate its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year). The choice of St. Thérèse as their patroness seemed a logical one.

With this history in mind, we present ourselves to you in this our jubilee year as your St. Thérèse Province of the Dis-



**Friars in front of the altar on which was offered the first in honor of Thérèse of Lisieux in the United States, 1925.**

calced Carmelite Friars. By this name we honor our patroness, the Little Flower, and acknowledge the history and identity of our Province with its close ties to this “greatest saint of the modern era” (to use the words of Pope Pius X).

This newsletter comes to you as we approach the holy season of Lent during this jubilee year of our Province. In the liturgy of the Thursday after Ash Wednesday, the Church prays: *Lord, may everything we do begin with your inspiration, continue with your help, and reach perfection under your guidance.* This Lenten prayer serves to call to mind some of the aspects of this season of renewal in our lives as followers of Christ.

Lent is a time to remember our “beginnings”: our creation by God, the fact that our very life is a gift from him. It is the season in which we recall the gift of our baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the season in which we seek to find anew our inspiration in this truth that we have been claimed by Christ as his own. He has made us his brothers and sisters, adoptive sons and daughters of his heavenly Father. He has united us into his Mystical Body. During

Lent we are called to remember our origin in Christ and to pray for the grace to be inspired always to act as true children of our heavenly Father.

Lent is also a time to pray for the grace to “continue with the Lord” along the journey of our life. At each moment of our lives, it is the Lord who sustains us by his loving providence. His sustaining us at each moment is no less of a gift to us than is his having first called us into existence. Lent is thus a season to be renewed in our awareness that at all times, we are dependent upon the Lord for our very life’s breath. This attitude is what it means to be “poor in spirit,” and *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.*

As we walk with the Lord through the season of Lent, we recall not only our complete dependence upon him, but also his infinite dependability – the truth that he is faithful. He has loved us to the point of laying down his life for us. Now risen, he has promised to *remain with us always, until the end of time.*

This faithfulness of God should inspire confidence in the hearts of all Christians, encouraging us as we continue each day in our journey with him. Lent is a time to be renewed in our baptismal commitment to follow Christ with a determination and a confidence founded on the goodness of God. St. Teresa of Jesus writes: *In the past*

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## FROM THE PROVINCIAL - CONTINUED

I frequently kept in mind St. Paul's words that all things can be done in God. I understood clearly that of myself I couldn't do anything. Understanding this helped me very much; and also what St. Augustine says: 'Give me, Lord, what You command, and command what you desire.' I often thought that St. Peter didn't lose anything when he threw himself into the sea, even though he grew frightened afterward. These first acts of determination are very important. So as we enter into Lent, let us do so with this determination that St. Teresa describes – a determination grounded in the truth of God's faithfulness and mercy.

Finally, Lent is a time to look forward to our sharing in Jesus' resurrection, to his bringing to perfection the good work he has begun in us. The Lord has created us, he accompanies us along our journey, and

***Lent is a time to remember our "beginnings": our creation by God, the fact that our very life is a gift from him.***

he is the one who can and will bring us to our heavenly home with him at the right hand of the Father if we accept his grace in faith, hope and love. The penance of Lent only makes sense as a preparation for Easter, after all! We seek to share in the Cross that Jesus endured out of love for us in order to be able to share in his Resurrection. St. John of the Cross speaks of Christian penance as a preparation to be open to *the inner resurrection of the Spirit Who dwells within your souls.*

This prayer of the Church's liturgy is also appropriate for us Carmelites to offer as we celebrate this 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. As we look back upon our history and all the friars who have come before us, and as we look forward to the future in hope, we pray: *Lord, may*

*everything we do begin with your inspiration, continue with your help, and reach perfection under your guidance.*

In this issue of our newsletter, we share with you some of our history as well as some of our "current events." You will find an article on Fr. Edward (Eduardo) Soler, O.C.D., one of the pioneering friars of our Province. His life and legacy serve as an inspiration to all of us and embody what we strive to live as Discalced Carmelite Friars. You will also find news of our most recently ordained priest, Fr. Juan Evangelista Cabrera, who is studying in Avila, Spain, the birthplace of the Discalced Carmelites. You will also read of our Fr. John Suenram, long-time rector of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower, and his miraculous recovery from injuries suffered in a horrible car accident.

Please be assured of our daily prayers for you, our friends, and for all of the intentions you have commended to us. Thanks to you for your support of the St. Thérèse Province of the Discalced Carmelite Friars. You are in our daily prayers. May our merciful Lord manifest to you his loving providence during this Lenten season and guide you all to that *inner resurrection of the Spirit Who dwells within your souls.*



**Friars with the monumental painting of St. Thérèse given to them by Thérèse's Sisters, Mother Agnes, of the Lisieux Carmel.**

*"I will spend my Heaven doing good upon earth."*

— ST. THÉRÈSE

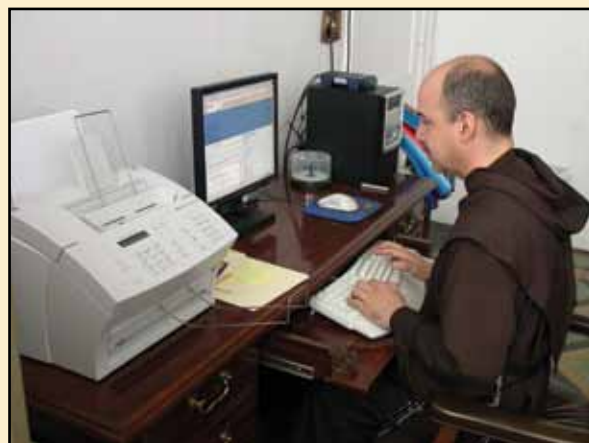


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*The Discalced Carmelite Friars serve the People of God each day by our prayer and active ministry. Now there is a new way to communicate with us and to let us serve you. We invite you to visit us on the web at [www.carmelitefriarsocd.com](http://www.carmelitefriarsocd.com). Our new website offers you new ways to interact with us by enabling you to send us your prayer requests, comments, etc., as well as to receive nourishment for your spiritual life from our Carmelite saints. The site is updated daily with a new Carmelite meditation. Come visit us and join us on our journey up Mt. Carmel!*





## Discalced Carmelite Friars

Province of St. Thérèse  
Home of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower

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**Welcome**

The Discalced Carmelite Friars are a community of Priests and 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 women and men to grow in friendship with God and with neighbor.

Fr. Gregory Ross, O.C.D.  
Provincial Superior



**Carmelite Thought for the Day**  
October 21, 2010

*"Just as the sun shines simultaneously on the tall cedars and on each little flower as though it were alone on the earth, so our Lord is occupied with each soul as though there were no others like it!"*

*-St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and of the Holy Face*

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# MY AVILA EXPERIENCE

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

In my short time as a Discalced Carmelite priest I have come to see more deeply the need that we all have to know and understand the ways in which he works in our lives. This is particularly important when God takes us through roads that are mysterious and bewildering. Our Carmelite saints have been a tremendous gift to the Church in this regard. The legacy of their lives and writings give us valuable points of reference that help us remain in the right road in our process of transformation. Even though God has given us this treasure there are many who have not been exposed to it.

This is why, when my superiors asked me in what field I wanted to do further studies I chose the spirituality of our Carmelite saints. I was sent to Avila, Spain, where our Order has the University of Mysticism or CITEs (Centro Internacional Teresiano Sanjuanista). I arrived on January 4 after a long and tiring trip from Oklahoma City.

The community here has been very warm and welcoming. Our states of life, backgrounds and nationalities are truly diverse. There are priests, religious men and women, and lay



The walls of the city of Avila, Spain.



Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila, Spain.

people from all over the world: Poland, Lebanon, Korea, Colombia, Honduras, Peru, Ecuador, Mexico, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, France, El Salvador, Argentina, United States, Italy, Ireland, India, Venezuela, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, etc. It is edifying to experience the atmosphere of community that is lived here. We come together for prayer, study, meals, and recreation. CITEs is not just a place where people from different places come

to study St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. We also experience here a sense of collaboration, mutual care and support.

In terms of the studies we have experts who also come from different parts of the world to teach us about mysticism as well as the lives, works, and times of St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross.

Apart from the rich experience of community and studies in CITEs, there is the priceless blessing of being in Avila, the actual geographical birthplace of our holy Mother St. Teresa and our Discalced Carmelite heritage. It is such a grace to walk the streets where she walked, celebrate Holy Mass at the sites where she was born, grew up and lived as a Carmelite nun! Everything in Avila (its walls, churches, streets, market places) speak about St. Teresa and the great interior and exterior adventure she undertook under the prompting of Christ.

In my view, there are three places in this beautiful walled city that stand out because of their close connection with St. Teresa: the Church of “La Santa”, and the convents of the Incarnation and St. Joseph. The Church of “La Santa” stands at the actual site where her family’s house was, the place where she was born and grew up. It is attached to a monastery that belongs to our Discalced Carmelite Friars. Every Sunday they have a Mass with heavenly live Gregorian music. There is also has a great museum of St. Teresa in the church’s undercroft.

The convents of the Incarnation and St. Joseph are a true spiritual experience to visit as well. To be where St. Teresa lived for many years and the first convent of her reform makes the reading of her writings come to life even more. One can breathe the atmosphere of prayer, silence and Teresian joy in those walls.

As I continue studies in this Carmelite “holy land” I pray that I may be receptive enough to drink from this blessed opportunity so that I can grow intellectually and spiritually. In this way I hope to be able to be of better service to others in their transforming journey through the mansions into the heart of God. I entrust myself to your prayers.



## Father Edward Soler, O.C.D. (September 17, 1879 – January 11, 1953)

*(From the Biased Perspective of a Carmelite Sister of St. Therese)*

By Sr. Patricia Ann Miller, C.S.T.

Fr. Edward (Eduardo) Soler was one of the pioneer Discalced Carmelite Fathers of the Southwest: builder of the National Shrine of the Little Flower in San Antonio, Founder of a women's religious order, educator, missionary to the Mexicans and leader to the Carmelite Fathers. Fr. Edward was born in Spain on September 17, 1879. the day of his ordination, ary 22, 1902, to the time of his death, he was almost always a superior in his order. In addition to his leadership duties, Fr. Edward was usually engaged in founding a new project and in missionary work among the poor. After an appointment teaching philosophy at the Car-



From  
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***Fr. Edward, in particular, formed a bond with the Choctaw Indians. He learned their language and translated the catechism into Choctaw***

melite college in Valencia (1902-1905), Fr. Edward was assigned to be Rector of the Carmelite Seminary at the Desert of Palms (1905), then Vicar at San Clemente (1912-1914), his last office in Spain.

In 1914, Fr. Edward arrived in Aguas Calientes, Mexico, in the middle of the revolution led by Pancho Villa. This was a period of extreme persecution of the Catholic Church. After a short time, Fr. Edward escaped from Mexico, stayed briefly in Cuba and then came to the United States later that same year.

He was appointed Superior of the small group of Carmelite Fathers in the Southwest from 1915-1924. He initially joined three other Carmelite Fathers who had also escaped the persecution in Mexico – Frs. Luis Benages, Bernard Brotons, and Cyril Corbato, all originally from Valencia, Spain. In 1917 they received formal permission from Bishop Theophile Meerschaert to establish themselves in Oklahoma if they would undertake the pastoral care of the immigrant miners (mostly from Poland, Italy and Mexico) and catechize the native Indians in the southeast part of the state. Fr. Edward and the other priests took their assignments seriously, establishing parishes and caring for the spiritual needs of the people. Fr. Edward was loved by the people; so much so that they named the new church in Pittsburg,

Oklahoma St. Edward's.

Fr. Edward, in particular, formed a bond with the Choctaw Indians. He learned their language and translated the catechism into Choctaw. A particular challenge existed with regard to the education of young Indian children. Indian boarding schools took children in the third grade, but nothing was done for younger children. Fr. Edward realized the importance of reaching younger children with some form of education, but there were

no catechists or teachers in Oklahoma to do the job.

Fr. Edward took the matter in hand and went to Chicago where he recruited three young women to undertake the service. They arrived in Bentley in the fall of 1916. Two of the women

left in 1917, so Fr. Edward made another recruiting trip, this time to New England. He found two young women, one of which was Marie Loretta Cavanaugh. Gradually other women came to join them and became the Companions of the Little Flower when Bishop Meerschaert determined that the women were ready to become a formal community. (The name was changed to the Carmelite Sisters of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus after the canonization of Sr. Therese.) On July 24, 1919, Mother Agnes Cavanaugh, the only one of the recruits to persevere, made her first profession. The Carmelite Sisters of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus received formal recognition from Rome in 1928. The community was aggregated to the Discalced Carmelites on December 11, 1937.

At the request of Bishop Meerschaert, Mother Agnes and the Companions of the Little Flower left their work in southeastern Oklahoma to another group of Sisters and moved to Oklahoma City. They joined Fr. Edward as he established the Little Flower parish in 1925, the same year that St. Therese was canonized.

The Carmelite Sisters of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus moved into their current Motherhouse, Villa Teresa, in 1933. Since that time, the Sisters have pursued numerous teaching and catechizing assignments. Villa Teresa School, has been in continuous operation since 1933. Mother Agnes remained as General Superior until her death in 1951. Fr. Edward continued to assist the community, especially by spiritual encouragement that consisted of both regular conferences and lectures until his death in 1953.

In 1921, Fr. Edward began working among the Mexicans in Oklahoma City, walking miles along the lowlands of the Canadian River and railroad tracks looking for fallen away Catholics amongst the Mexicans working in the meat packing plants. His work was so productive that several civic clubs and the Chamber of Commerce actively assisted him. This assistance included



Above left: Fr. Edward, center, with Carmelite novices, 1942.  
Above right: Fr. Edward with children.



## Father Edward Soler, O.C.D.

*Continued from page 6*

obtaining an automobile for him. He used it to bring bread to the destitute workers, who had been on a strike for over a year, and to transport sick persons to the hospitals in the city. Fr. Edward continued this ministry while building the Little Flower Parish. He never lost his love for working with the poor and outcast. In 1926, Father Edward was assigned as Superior of the new mission in the Archdiocese of San Antonio where he built a combination church and school at Pearsall, the first of the churches in Frio County. He began the magnificent Shrine of the Little Flower, selecting the site in a poor neighborhood to be with his precious charges. He undertook the office of editor of the Little Flower Magazine, which had been founded by his confrere Fr. Innocent. From 1933 to the time of his death, Fr. Edward continued to establish new parishes and to train seminarians in Carmelite Spirituality.

Fr. Edward's missionary efforts were untiring. In his early days in the Southwest, he traveled by horseback or in a buggy along unknown trails through rugged country that was only semi-civilized, many times on an overnight trip to visit the sick and dying. His prudence and practical counsel kept him in the confessional or parlor with troubled penitents for long and arduous hours. In 1921 and 1924, he managed to travel to Arkansas to teach at St. John's Home Mission Seminary at the invitation of Bishop Morris of Little Rock. Then in 1927 when he was elected a subprior of a monastery in Spain, he declined the office to remain with his poor, his first love.

Fr. Edward was constantly in demand for retreat conferences among religious, especially the Carmelite Nuns throughout the country. His contemporaries reported that he was engagingly pleasant and congenial, never refusing the opportunity to be of service to others. At the same time, he was a fervent religious and faithfully fulfilled his duties as a Carmelite, giving the best of example at home as well as in the missionary fields. He had made his meditation and attended the 6:00 Mass on the day he died.

Without a doubt, Fr. Edward Soler left an indelible mark on the development of the Discalced Carmelite Fathers in Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas. We Carmelite Sisters of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus hold in our hearts special gratitude for his perseverance in recruiting the original women of the Companions of the Little Flower and for his continued guidance and spiritual direction in the first 46 years of our existence.

Sources:

1. Southwest Courier obituary of Fr. Edward Soler
2. "Carmelite, Founder, Man of God - Fr. Edward Soler", by Sr. Mary Francesca, C.S.T.; Apostolate of the Little Flower, May/June 2001
3. "Carmelite Sisters of St. Therese Celebrate Ninety Years of Ministry in Oklahoma", by Eileen Dugan; Sooner Catholic, August 12, 2007
4. Archives of the Discalced Carmelite Friars, Oklahoma City

***In 1921, Fr. Edward began working among the Mexicans in Oklahoma City, walking miles...looking for fallen away Catholics amongst the Mexicans working in the meat packing plants.***

## An Update on Father John

*On October 11, 2010, Fr. John Suenram, O.C.D., a member of our community of Marylake monastery in Little Rock, Arkansas, suffered severe injuries in an automobile accident. His condition was so critical that his doctors placed him in an induced coma for nearly six weeks. Miraculously, he survived this trauma and was able to return home to Marylake on January 5, 2011. Due to a blood clot that developed in one of his legs, he had to return to the hospital on January 9. On February 17, Fr. John shared with us these words:*



Many people have asked for an update on my condition, so I would like to satisfy your concern and interest by telling you how I am. But before I do, I would like to give thanks to God for sustaining me during my time of illness. Secondly, I would like to thank all of you for your many, many prayers on my behalf. At a certain point in my hospitalization I was very close to death and I likely pulled through because of all your prayers. I've had several setbacks, including blood clots in my right leg and arm, but

now it appears that I'm definitely on the mend. Over the last several weeks I have made a great deal of progress in therapy. So much so that I am scheduled to be released on February 22. By the time you are reading these words, God willing, I will have returned to Marylake. Let me say finally that it will still take me some time to get back to my normal self, so I would humbly ask that you continue to keep me in your prayers.

## The Endless Traveler

**By Michael Montoya, Development Director**

From the Development office of the St. Thérèse Province of the Discalced Carmelite Friars I wish you a solemn, contemplative, blessed and providential Lenten season. Many wonderful things have happened in the Province as you have read and we have had some promising advancement in Development. Therefore, since our last opportunity to share with you, there is much to honor, contemplate, bless and celebrate. Considering the 2010 year and looking forward to the 2011 and 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the Province, it seemed fitting to write to you about the subject of “journeys” for this Lenten Newsletter.

I choose this subject purposefully, as I am fully aware of its implications on the happenings of the Development work of the Province and consequently its coherence with the messages of Lent. Lent, like moments in our daily life, like moments throughout the history of the St. Thérèse Province, and moments in the Development realm, prove to be the necessary catalyst that allow us to prepare, practice and ultimately present to God the profit of the talents he has given us. The overlaying precedent is to always have God be the ultimate glory and that the work and the journey be our reward.

Lent is our journey to the Cross and it is through the Cross that we find the path to salvation: God Our Father. First we must choose this path and have the strength to endure. St. Teresa of Avila instructs us when writing about contemplation and recollection that we should “learn self-conquest, persevere thus for a time and you will perceive very clearly the advantages you gain from it.” I liken this very much to what we are called to do throughout the season of Lent and throughout all the seasons of our life; to better our self, so as to better serve the world around us. She also writes that “God gave us faculties for our use; each of them will receive its proper reward. Then do not let us try to charm them to sleep, but permit them to do their work until divinely called to something higher.” Our vocation is constant and the journey endless until God’s will is done.

Every day we chose a path that fundamentally has its roots in an end. We may begin a day with the reward of being able to end in comfortable sleep, or begin a work day with the end reward being when the proverbial clock signals “quitting time”, or even beginning a meal and the end reward being dessert. This simple and seemingly inescapable “truth” allows for structure and is beneficial at times; however it also can allow one to merely focus on the end and not on the process or journey. St. Teresa instructs us further that “We can only learn to know ourselves and do what we can - namely, surrender our will and fulfill God’s will in us.”

As you have read in this issue, the history of the Province began officially 75 years ago. However, it is more than evident that the friars’ journey stretches back much further and finds its roots in the hearts and minds of some of our Faith’s most profound and charismatic Saints. Through the Discalced Carmelites’ contemplative and prayerful life and by helping those communities they serve foster spiritual growth, they have left a lasting impact that will endure for generations to come.

Since devotion to St. Thérèse has been a big part of our Province’s history, we are happy that we will now, during our 75<sup>th</sup> year, declare ourselves anew, as the St. Thérèse Province of the Discalced Carmelite Friars. St. Thérèse has always had a unique place in our history, and has been a constant inspiration to us. This name change reflects the need to return to our roots and give honor to the foundations that the first missionary Friars committed to, the journey that they began all those years ago, and “The feeling remains that God is on the journey, too.” History and his story has been written and more stories are being continually written through our relationship and partnership with you.

So we honor you and thank you, our patrons and supporters, for the gift you give us to be able to serve. This truth is the very nature of our Development, the very nature of any process of development; to serve and cultivate the relationships with the world around us to ultimately give greater glory to God Our Father. Thank you for being part of our story and journey. Call us or write to us at any time. We are here to serve!

*God gave us faculties for our use; each of them will receive its proper reward. Then do not let us try to charm them to sleep, but permit them to do their work until divinely called to something higher.*

– St. Teresa of Avila

**For inquiries into a vocation to the Discalced Carmelite Friars, please contact our Vocations Director at [carmelitesok@yahoo.com](mailto:carmelitesok@yahoo.com).**

### **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.*