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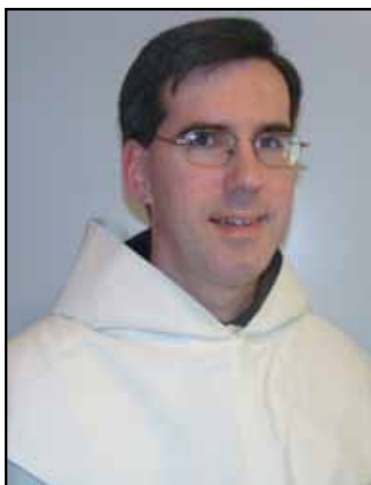
GENTLE BREEZES — OF CARMEL —



Love is repaid by love alone.

— St. John of the Cross

God Always Takes the Initiative



In the first place, it should be known that if a person is seeking God, his Beloved is seeking him much more.

– St. John of the Cross

These words of St. John of the Cross, the first Discalced Carmelite friar, offer encouragement to all those who are seeking God or are seeking to deepen their relationship with him. The saint reminds us that in our relationship with God, it is always God who takes the initiative. He loves us first, and by his loving us, he sparks in us the desire to “find” him and to love him in return. Our saint’s words echo the words of Jesus to his disciples: *I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.* (Jn 15, 15-16).

Jesus’ words assure us that it is always he who gladly takes the first step in friendship. He seeks us, he makes us his friends. But his words also remind us that his call to friendship has at the same time the dimension of a *sending forth* to bear fruit. Jesus sends his friends to be instruments of his love, to cooperate with him and his Holy Spirit in creating new friends of God.

This dynamic of Christ’s calling us to friendship while simultaneously sending us forth to bear fruit is at the heart of the notion of *vocation*. In the Gospel of Mark, we hear that when Jesus called his

twelve Apostles, *He went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.* (Mk 3,13-15) The vocation of the Apostles was first to “be with” Jesus – to follow him, to know him, to live in friendship with him. From this life of “being with” Jesus, the Apostles are sent forth by him to proclaim the Gospel – first to Israel, and then, after his resurrection, to the whole world.

In this whole process, it was Jesus who sought his Apostles – making them his friends and sending them forth to bear fruit. Before they could proclaim God’s love as it is manifested in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, they were first given the gift of experiencing it through living with him, seeing him give his life on the Cross, and encountering Jesus risen from the dead.

Similarly, before his death, Jesus said to the Twelve that he no longer called them slaves, but friends. He declares that they are his friends if they do what he commands them. *This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.* (Jn 15,12) Jesus, by loving the Twelve as the Father has loved him and by sharing with them all that he has heard from the Father (cf Jn 15,9.15), has created a new relationship between them and his Father. His disciples are commanded to do the same by imitating Jesus in their love for one another. This mission is fully realized, though, only after the death and resurrection of Jesus – after he sends his Holy Spirit to give the Apostles the grace and strength they need to fulfill this mission.

And so it is with our vocation as Christians, and with the

particular vocation with which God has blessed us in our lives. Christ chose each of us through our baptism. Through this sacramental gift, he has infused the love and grace of the Holy Spirit into our souls.

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He has planted the gifts of faith and hope into our hearts as well. Our Christian faith is at the same time a gift, a calling, and a mission. In all of these, it is not we who have chosen Christ, but he who has chosen us. He has made

us his friends, and even his brothers and sisters, adopted sons and daughters of his Father. He has created a new relationship between human beings and God, a new way of “being with” God. As St. John says in his first letter: *See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet so we are.* (1Jn 3,1)

Our gift of baptism as Christians also includes the mission to live as Jesus did, to do God’s will and thus to bear fruit, to increase the number of the children of God, of the friends of Jesus Christ. The words that Jesus spoke to his Apostles he also speaks to us: *You are my friends if you do what I command you. ... This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.* (Jn 15, 14.12)

Continued

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Building upon the foundational gift of our baptism into Christ, upon our foundational vocation to live as his adopted children, God calls each person to a particular mission in life – to love others as Jesus loves them in a unique way. Be it through the vocation to priesthood; to religious life as a consecrated sister, brother or priest; to marriage or to the single state – all these paths have in common the quality of being ways of giving witness to Christ’s love to others, to help others experience the reality that God is seeking them in love, just as St. John of the Cross declares to us.

As Discalced Carmelites, we see our vocation to follow Christ within this framework of friendship with Christ. When St. Teresa of Jesus founded the first community of Discalced Carmelite nuns, she declared, “All my longing was and still is that since [the Lord] has so many enemies and so few friends that these few friends be good ones.” And so St. Teresa desired that all communities of Discalced Carmelites live as good friends of Jesus, living the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience fully, and offering our lives of prayer as a service to the Church – to be a support to the Church in



Jesus and the Apostles

her mission of giving witness to the love of the Risen Christ.

And so our prayer for you, our friends, is that during this Easter Season, you, too, may encounter the Risen Christ who seeks you in friendship – the Christ

who has laid down his life out of love for you and has been raised up by the Father to a new life that he desires to share with you, his friends. We pray also that he give you the light of his Holy Spirit to discover and to follow the particular vocation with which he has blessed you, to fulfill the unique mission of love that he has entrusted personally to you. We ask, also, that you pray for vocations to our St. Thérèse Province of the Discalced Carmelite Friars, that we may continue to grow in our witness of Christ’s love and fulfill our mission of leading others to friendship with our risen Lord.

Fr. Gregory Ross, O.C.D.

Father Gregory Ross, OCD

P.S. By the time you receive this issue of *Gentle Breezes*, we friars will have installed a new Provincial superior, Fr. Luis Joaquín Castañeda. It has been a privilege for me to serve in this role over these past several years. Please remember Fr. Luis in your prayers as he begins this new stage in his service of our Lord and of his Church. Look for more news regarding changes in the Province in the next issue of *Gentle Breezes*!



Discalced Carmelite Friars

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



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- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- California Province
- Washington Province
- The Vatican

Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower

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

Gentle Breezes

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Secular Carmelites

Visit us on the web at:
WWW.CARMELITESOK.ORG

General Superior Cannistrà Visits U.S.



Fr. Saverio addresses the nuns.

This past March, the Discalced Carmelites of the United States were honored to receive a visit from Fr. Saverio Cannistrà, O.C.D., General Superior of the Order of Discalced Carmelites throughout the world.

From March 14-16, Fr. Saverio visited Holy Hill, Wisconsin. He was accompanied by Fr. John Grennan, O.C.D., of Ireland, one of the General Definitors (Councilors) who assists the General at our Order's headquarters in Rome. At Holy Hill, Fr. Saverio met with fifteen Discalced Carmelite Friars from around the USA – the Provincials and Councilors from the three American Provinces – St. Thérèse, St. Joseph, and Immaculate Heart of Mary. These days of fellowship afforded our General the opportunity to become familiar with the life, ministry, and situation of the friars in our country.

From March 18-20, Fr. Saverio met in Oklahoma City with eighty-five Discalced Carmelite Nuns from around the USA, Canada, and Guam. His meetings with the nuns served much the same purpose as those with the friars.

Fr. Saverio is from the Province of Tuscany (Italy). He was elected as General in April of 2009. Our Order's Constitutions describe the role of the General in the following way: "He is entrusted with the government of the whole Order. Solicitous for the common good, he must foster the life and development of the Order and promote close cooperation between the provinces and the central government."



Fr. Saverio leads the friars in prayer.



Fr. Saverio shares a meal with nuns.

For inquiries into a vocation to the Discalced Carmelite Friars, please contact our Vocations Director at carmelitesok@yahoo.com.

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

– ST. THÉRÈSE



PLEASE CONSIDER THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FRIARS OF OKLAHOMA WHEN MAKING OUT YOUR WILL.

OUR TAX ID # IS: 73-0580271

YOUR LEGACY WILL LIVE ON IN OUR MINISTRIES FOR GENERATIONS.



Father Saverio Cannistra (center) with Discalced Carmelite Nuns, along with Fr. John Grennan (rear left) and Fr. Gregory Ross.



From left to right: Fr. John Grennan, Fr. Sam Anthony Morello, Fr. Saverio Cannistra, Fr. Gregory Ross, Fr. Luis Joaquin Castan, Fr. Luis Joaquin Castaneda, Fr. Ralph Reyes, and Br. Joseph Le.



Praying the Liturgy of the Hours.



The meeting at Holy Hill.

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.

ALL and NOTHING

By Michael Montoya, Development Director

From the Development office of the St. Thérèse Province of the Discalced Carmelite Friars, it is my honor to be able to share with you once again through this summer issue of the Gentle Breezes of Carmel. Each new issue that we are able to offer gives the Friars further opportunities to deepen their relationship with you, through your deepening of your relationship with God our Father.

I know that since our last message, you have been in the Friars' constant prayer. As you journeyed with us through the spiritual reflection of Lent and Easter, perhaps now you can find yourself with a renewed vision, to look forward to the mission of Pentecost and its implications on our calling to serve daily throughout our lives. This is the life's work of our dear Discalced Carmelites, to serve in all; and it serves as an example that we should all strive to live similarly. Our models are our Carmelite Saints, our strength Jesus and Our Blessed Mother, and our ultimate goal God our Father.

It is for this reason that in this summer Development message, I want to share with you a principle of one of our Patrons and Discalced Carmelite founders, St. John of the Cross, that is sometimes overlooked, forgotten and even set aside, because of its being misunderstood as being too difficult. This principle is the "Nada Doctrine." Its effect on our daily life is far and wide and its practice makes perfect sense as we begin the summer season of rest and preparation. Allow me to begin with some of St. John's prose.

- To reach satisfaction in all*
- Desire its possession in nothing.*
- To come to possess all*
- Desire to possession of nothing*
- To arrive at being all*
- Desire to be nothing*
- For to go from all to the all*
- You must deny yourself of all in all...*

St. John goes on to finish this stanza with the words "In this nakedness the spirit finds its quietude and rest." The implication is that the only "all" in our life centers on the one who is all: God. What better message can we contemplate throughout the summer of "rest" than to practice this doctrine of "nothing", and to lose ourselves in the peace of Christ? What else in our life can matter more, than to be closer to those that teach us how to pray and bring us closer to our Father? Nothing!

In Matthew's gospel we are called to discipleship through a similar message of Jesus, that "who ever wishes to follow me, must deny them self...for what profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and lose one's soul." This dichotomy of saving and losing and self denial and true service is a constant message for us to cling to, though it is not as difficult as it may seem. Think of how St. Thérèse, the Patroness of our Province,



Representation of St. John of the Cross' doctrine of the Ascent of Mt. Carmel, by which the soul arrives at "the All" by following the path of "nothing"

makes this attainable daily and in all that we do. The ever present message is to become less attached to the things of the world and more attached to world of creation and its creator, our creator, our Father. Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John that "there is no greater love than this, to lay one's life down for a friend." Jesus literally did this for us, however figuratively and more applicable to our daily lives we can call this action, service and the self denial of putting the needs of others before our own. When we reserve nothing for ourselves there is so much more to give to others.

This idea is what grounds me in Development, that while your support and donations are greatly appreciated and serve in the capacity that allows the Friars to continue their work and that has sustained them for 75 years, the true reward is you, your friendship, your continued relationship with these wonderful religious that I am able to work with on a daily basis.

God bless you and thank you once again for your continued connection with the Friars of the St Thérèse Province of the Discalced Carmelites. Thank you for your generosity and for the giving that you give to us each day. It is our true honor to serve!