

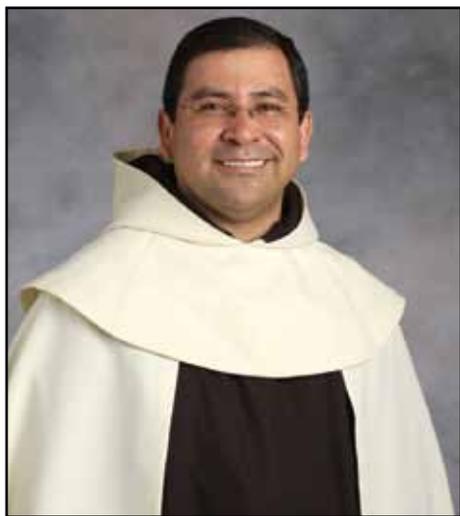
FALL 2015  
VOL. 8 NO. 3

# GENTLE BREEZES OF CARMEL



ST. THÉRÈSE PROVINCE OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FRIARS  
824 KENTUCKY AVENUE, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78201 • 210.735.9126 • [WWW.CARMELITEFRIARSOCD.COM](http://WWW.CARMELITEFRIARSOCD.COM)

## “Let us thank and praise our merciful God for His many blessings”



It's December and we are beginning the holy season of Advent, a time in which we are invited to prepare ourselves, in a spiritual way with prayer, to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus. For this reason, may I invite you to do so, but in a thankful prayer? We the members of the Discalced Carmelite Order learn to be thankful people from the example of our Holy Mother St. Teresa of Avila. She was a very grateful person to God for his mercies and to all the people who helped her and her nuns. During this year 2015, different events were held to celebrate the 5th Centenary of the birth of St. Teresa. We closed the year on October 15th with a Thanksgiving Mass at the Cathedral in Dallas, Texas. In that celebration, with grateful hearts, we gave thanks to all mighty God for the closing of the celebrations and for the many gifts the Order, and in particular our Province, have received.

I hope in the love of God that all of you in one way or another received different graces through the intercession of our Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus during the five years in which we prepared and celebrated the Centenary of her birth. Moreover, I hope that you had the opportunity to deepen your knowledge of St. Teresa as well as your relationship with her in your Carmelite vocation, or any of the many vocations in which the Carmelite spirituality can be lived. For us in the Province, it was a very special time because we had the opportunity, with our communities and individually, to once again visit her writings. It was refreshing to the life of our Province to study and live in the

spirituality of our Holy Mother. During these five years, we learned, we evaluated, and we taught, and more importantly, we deepened our vocation by living the values of the teachings of St. Teresa.

Another important celebration that helped us in our vocation was the celebration of the Year of Consecrated life. This celebration helped us to renew our vocation as consecrated people called to love and serve God and His people. There are many things for which we are grateful to our heavenly Father during these five years, but in a special way the last year. Time goes by very fast, and as we begin a new liturgical year and calendar year in which we will celebrate the Jubilee Year of Mercy, we must thank our loving God for His blessings to us, to the Order, to the Church and to the entire world.

We all receive countless blessings, even though many times we are not fully aware of them; therefore, I encourage you to live this Advent season with a heart full of gratitude to our Merciful Father. Perhaps you do not know how to do so and ask yourself is there any method, instructions or something that can help me? The truth is that you do not have to look far; you just have to look at our Blessed Mother Mary during her visit to her cousin Elizabeth. What I am inviting you to do is to pray with the Canticle of Mary. This is the prayer that our Lady expressed when she visited her cousin in response to what Elizabeth said to her “And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Luke 1: 43) The Virgin Mary answered with the Magnificat, thanking God for the blessings to her and through her to all people:

*“My Soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For He has looked upon His handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is His name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.” (Luke 1:46-50)*

What better than the heart of our Blessed Mother to teach us to love, to for-

give, to understand and to help. With her, let us share the joy and blessings in our life with others in friendship, and together let us sing thanks to our heavenly Father for the past, the present, and the future of every one of us.

Following the example of our Blessed Mother, let us live with a grateful and humble heart, that we may see and live the Holy presence of God in our personal history as well as in the human history of Salvation. Let us sing the greatness of our Lord in our life, especially in those moments of sadness, hopelessness and depression. Let not the negativity of life neither the negativity of our society take a place in our soul. On the contrary let the blessings and the thankfulness fill our soul. Be sure that if this happens in our personal life, it will give us light of faith and the hope of life of salvation. Having a thankful attitude will give us direction in our prayer life and in our present and future life.

This Advent season, let our soul proclaim the greatness of God for all He does in our life and in the world. Let us thank our Lord for His blessings, and at the same time ask Him to extend His blessing from generation to generation. This Advent let us attempt to discover the blessings, even in the small things that can then become great things in our life.

I cannot close my letter without thanking our good Lord for the visit of our Holy Father Pope Francis to our country in September. Without a doubt, he brought many blessings to all of us who followed him to the cities that he visited or on TV. In him, we have another good example of someone who in a simple way lives his faith with a grateful heart. In this holy time, I unite my prayers to your prayers and give thanks to our loving God for all His blessings to you and your family. May your grateful heart unite with Mary's heart and sing for ever her canticle.

In Christ and Carmel,

*Fr. Luis Castañeda*  
o.c.b.

Fr. Luis Castañeda

## Christmas Programs Are Time-honored Tradition

By Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD

Each year at Christmastime, countless numbers of the faithful participate in and attend a traditional “Christmas Program” at their local church, school, or other community gatherings. Children dressed as angels and shepherds, much singing of Christmas carols, and a whole range of decorations help to renew the Gospel proclamation of the birth of Jesus.

Things were no different in the Carmelite monastery of Lisieux when St. Therese of the Child Jesus was a member of its community of nuns. In fact, in Carmelite monasteries around the world, there is a time-honored tradition of producing skits, or “pious recreations,” for various feast days throughout the year, including Christmas.

St. Therese was called upon several times to compose and to direct such pious recreations for her community. Eight such compositions remain – two centered on St. Joan of Arc, one on St. Stanislaus Kostka, and several focused on mysteries in the life of Christ. Two of these recreations were composed for the feast of Christmas. And both of them focus on the humility and mercy of Jesus, who became a little child out of love for each one of us.

One of these recreations was composed by St. Therese to accompany the sisters’ veneration of the Christ Child in the manger. The saint composed 26 little verses that could be sung to the tune of popular Christmas hymns of the time. She presented the Christ Child as the “Divine Little Beggar of Christmas.” In presenting him in such a way, Therese wanted to emphasize to the sisters the humility of Christ, who came as a little child, making himself dependent upon others, reduced to the state of “begging” from each of us.

The verses Therese composed were written on 26 separate pieces of paper, folded, and placed in a basket. As each nun approached the Christ Child in the manger, she would pick a paper from the basket, and hand it to an “angel” (one of the sisters in costume), who would then sing the verse out loud, as a type of personal message to the sister from the Christ

Child. The sisters were reminded in song that “The one begging from you is the Eternal Word.”

A sampling of some of the things the saint has Baby Jesus asking of the sisters: a pillow of a heart burning with love where he can rest his head, a smile given in kindness to another that will wipe away his infant tears, the cradle of a faith and love that remain ardent although Jesus may seem to be sleeping. All of these petitions were meant to encourage the sisters to generously show their love for the Divine Little Beggar through the practice of various practical virtues.

In a second pious recreation that she composed for Christmas, St. Therese imagined four angels adoring the Christ Child in the manger. The Angel of the Child Jesus, the Angel of the Holy Face, the Angel of the Resurrection and the Angel of the Eucharist all adore in awe of the beauty and humility of the Son of God born as a tiny and humble child, hidden from the world whom he has come to redeem. They marvel at how his eternal glory is hidden in the little child in the manger, and how he will continue to hide himself in an even more profound way in his Passion, in his tomb (whose stone the Angel of the Resurrection will roll away), and finally in the Eucharist.

Then the Angel of the Last Judgment appears on the scene, holding sword and scales and declares:

*Soon will come the day of vengeance, this impure earth will pass through fire. [...] You will tremble, inhabitants of the earth, you will tremble on your final day. You will not be able to bear the wrath of this child, who is today the God of Love.*



Carmelite nuns venerating the Christ child.

*For you, mortals, He chose suffering, asking only your weak hearts. At the judgment you will see His power. You will tremble before the Avenging God!!!*

In response to these words, the other angels intercede for humanity with the Child Jesus. His voice is then heard speaking of his mercy and work of redemption and how he will purify and pardon humanity through his death and resurrection.

The Angel of the Last Judgment objects:

*Jesus, supreme beauty! Have You then forgotten that sinners must be punished at the end?... Have You forgotten in Your extreme love that the number of the impious is countless?... At the judgment, I shall punish crime. I want to wipe out all the ungrateful.... My sword is ready! [...] I'll know how to avenge You!!!*

But the Child Jesus will hear none of this, replying: *O Beautiful angel! Lay down your sword. It is not for you to judge the nature that I raise up and have desired to redeem. It is I, named Jesus, who will judge the world! The fecund dew of My blood will purify all my elect. [...] Also, in the Holy Fatherland, my elect will be glorified. By giving them my life I will make them like unto gods!...*

*Continued on page 4*

*Christmas Programs — Continued from page 3*

The Angel of the Last Judgment is won over by the Child Jesus' words and finally bows down in adoration at the goodness and love of the Son of God become human.

In writing this little play and having the sisters perform and enjoy it, St. Therese was sharing her faith that God's mercy triumphs over his judgment. The Child Jesus of her Christmas skit seems to be anticipating his future pronouncement: For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. (John 3,17)

As you prepare for this year's celebration of the birth of Christ, perhaps participating in or attending a Christmas play or pageant, remember that our beloved Saint Therese did likewise within the walls of her monastery! May the Child Jesus who inspired such trust and confidence in her, inspire you also. May the Divine Little Beggar of Christmas win you over once again by his love, humility and mercy and inspire you to live the coming year in faith and generosity of heart towards God and neighbor.

*From the Archives...*



THÉRÈSE IN COSTUME AS ST. JOAN OF ARC.

GENTLE BREEZES OF CARMEL IS PUBLISHED  
BY ST. THÉRÈSE PROVINCE  
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FOR OUR FRIENDS AND BENEFACTORS.

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**Christmas Liturgical Services**

*Basilica of the National Shrine  
of the Little Flower,  
1715 N. Zarzamora, San Antonio, Texas 78201*

*Wednesday, December 16th  
7:00 p.m. La Gran Posada*



La Gran Posada

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

*Thursday, December 24th  
4:30 p.m. Children's Choir Christmas Program  
5:30 p.m. Children's Vigil Mass  
9:00 p.m. Vigil Mass*

**CHRISTMAS DAY**

*Friday, December 25th  
8:00 a.m. English Mass  
10:00 a.m. Spanish Mass  
12:00 p.m. English Mass*



*"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.**

**Cover:**

"The Tree of Jesse," depicting some of the ancestors of Jesus along with some of the prophets who spoke of him.....