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GENTLE BREEZES —OF CARMEL—

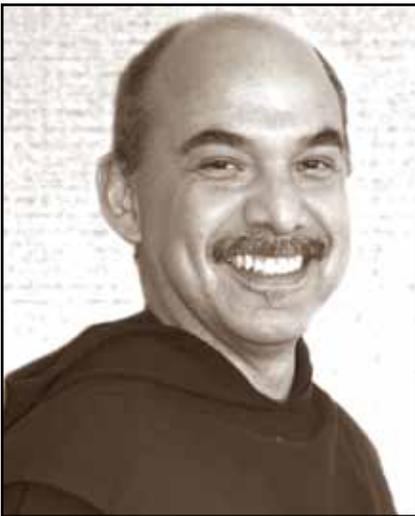


The Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was ended, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven.

(Munificentissimus Deus, Pius XII)

*The Assumption of the Virgin, 1577
El Greco*

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Queen Beauty of Carmel

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In July the Carmelite Order celebrates the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary over our Order. We, as her children “clothed in the habit of her order,” seek her protection and strive to imitate her as the ideal contemplative (“Mary pondered these words in her heart”). She

has been the Patroness of the Order since the 1200s, when the first hermits on Mt. Carmel would gather for the Eucharist at the Chapel of St. Mary.

All Christians are called to strive for a union with Christ that we find exemplified in the life of Mary’s faithful disciple-

ship. Yet, this patronage of and devotion to Mary does not exempt us from our own struggle to bring about the birth of Christ within our own lives. Mary can and does intercede for us, but she can’t do our praying for us, nor can she make up for what is lacking in our Christianity – that is the work of each disciple.

For us as contemplatives, our imitation of Mary is found in our love of silence and solitude, not as an escape from the world but as a way of immersing ourselves in the Word of God as Mary did. We hope to come to that total receptivity that we find in Mary’s response to the Word and then to bring the fruit of this encounter with the Word to the rest of the believing community.

May the Mother of Carmel keep us under the protection of her mantle as we seek to be faithful disciples of her Son.

In Him,

Fr. Stephen

Please pray & give to support the Discalced Carmelites and the Province of St. Thérèse

The 15 friars of the St. Thérèse Province, with communities in Oklahoma, Dallas, Little Rock, and San Antonio:

- Minister to over 5,200 parish families.
- Serve nearly 10,000 individuals annually through spiritual direction, confessions, masses, retreats, and other programs.
- Direct the 880 Discalced Carmelite Secular Order members in 37 communities, who join us in our mission of sharing Carmelite spirituality.
- Serve and support the nuns of our Province (about 100 religious in seven communities in four states) through conferences, retreats, and spiritual direction.

We need your help. Will you support our work?

As we face a future of aging friars and a decline in vocations, we are now investing in forging new directions: refocusing on our contemplative charism and mission, while assessing, consolidating, and adapting. We are building collaborations with Secular Order members and laypersons. Establishing our Province central office in San Antonio and staff to support our mission was an investment that has significantly improved our financial stability and organizational structure. We still have work ahead of us to tackle our challenges.

Urgent needs now

- Province central office operations. Formation support for the friars in their many roles and for staff to unite them in the Carmelite mission.
- A major capital campaign to raise over \$7 million urgently needed for the restoration of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower in San Antonio.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

By Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD

The Immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever Virgin, when the course of her earthly life was ended, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven

(Munificentissimus Deus, Pius XII)

With these words, Pope Pius proclaimed in 1950 this doctrine of the Assumption of Mary, based on Sacred Scripture and deeply embedded in the minds of the faithful, explaining that it has received the approval of liturgical worship from the earliest times; it is perfectly in keeping with the rest of revealed truth, and has been lucidly developed and explained by the studies, the knowledge and wisdom of theologians (*Ibid.*). The Church celebrates this mystery every year on August 15, the solemnity of the Assumption.

In reflecting on the impact of this truth of Mary's Assumption on our day to day lives as Christians, my thoughts go back to the days in which I was a teenager, eagerly awaiting the day when I would receive my first driver's license. On Sunday afternoons, my dad would take me out to an area in which there was little to no traffic. He would let me drive around, instructing me as we went along. At one point, he noticed that I was moving forward haltingly, awkwardly trying to stay in the lane by looking at the front of the car to make sure that I was staying within the boundaries. He explained that the way to stay properly in the lane was to focus my attention on a point further down the road, in the direction in which I desired to go. By doing so, I would remain on track, moving along much more smoothly and safely reaching the point on which I was focusing.



Like that point further down the road, the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary assumed body and soul into heaven can help us to stay on track in our life of Christian discipleship. The Church directs our attention to Mary, redeemed body and soul and standing at the side of the Risen Christ, to help and to encourage us to remember the heavenly, divine destiny for which God created us. As the preface to the Eucharistic prayer for the Mass of the Assumption declares to our Heavenly Father: *Today the Virgin Mother of God was assumed into heaven as the beginning and image of your Church's coming to perfection and a sign of sure hope and comfort to your pilgrim people.*

In contemplating our Blessed Mother sharing body and soul in the joys of the heavenly life for which God created us, we can find comfort, encouragement, and direction as we struggle to make our way through this life on earth, this "valley of tears."

Sometimes we can become so focused on the problems and concerns, or on the joys and successes of each day, that we can lose our perspective on our life's journey. This loss can slow down our spiritual progress, just as my misguided focus on the front end of the car slowed down my forward progress in driving. The solemnity of the Assumption reminds us to keep the present moment in perspective, and to remember also the destination to which Jesus is leading us and guiding us. Mary calls to us from Jesus' side, as one who has already completed her journey of faith. What Jesus has done for his Immaculate Mother through the merits of his Cross and Resurrection, he desires to do for his entire Church and each of her members when he will raise us up body and soul at the end of time.

May you, too, find guidance and encouragement from our Most Blessed Mother. With the Church's liturgy for the solemnity of the Assumption, our prayer for you is:

Almighty ever-living God, who assumed the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of your Son, body and soul into heavenly glory, grant, we pray, that, always attentive to the things that are above, we may merit to be sharers of her glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

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Meet the Postulants...

During the month of July, our Province welcomed two men as postulants. The postulancy is the first step of formation as a Discalced Carmelite Friar. It serves as a time of discernment and transition into religious life before the more intensive training of the novitiate year.

Jeffrey Huber, 27, grew up mostly in Portland, Oregon, but moved with his family to Austin, Texas, when he was in high school. He has called San Antonio home for the past 8 or 9 years. He studied at Our Lady of the Lake University, where he got his degree in social work with a minor in religious studies. Before entering Carmel, he worked with seniors at a senior center, with refugees, in the Archdiocesan Tribunal with people who are divorced, and with disaster survivors and migrant families.



Celebrating the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel at Little Flower Church in Oklahoma City: (left to right) Postulant Thomas Marchetti, altar servers Joshua Garcia and Giovanni Rangel, Fr. Ralph Reyes, Fr. Luis Castaneda, altar servers Jafet Garcia and Steven Valle, and Postulant Jeffrey Huber.

When asked about his vocation, Jeffrey jokes, “I would be lying if I said that seeing the friars [at the Basilica in San Antonio] wearing sandals at Mass wasn’t something that initially pulled me towards the Discalced Carmelite friars.” On a more serious note he adds: “However, what ultimately attracted me to the Discalced Carmelites was the balanced life they live – a contemplative life of prayer that fuels their apostolic work out in the world. They aren’t cloistered (the friars aren’t anyway), but community and a significant amount of time during the day for personal and communal prayer does shape their lives. That balance gives me life and joy and I am very happy to begin growing even more in my love of the Lord with the Discalced Carmelite friars.”

Thomas Marchetti, 26, was born in New Braunfels, Texas, but moved with his family to East Texas at the age of ten. He has five brothers and a sister. Before entering Carmel, Thomas attended Texas A&M University and completed a B.S. in Biological & Agricultural Engineering. Afterwards, he discerned religious life with several communities, including the Franciscans (OFM) with whom he lived for two-and-a-half years.



Regarding his decision to enter our Province, Thomas states: “Now, I believe the Lord is calling me to discern with the Discalced Carmelites, who I first met in Aggieland about six years ago. Though I can cite many reasons for my attraction to this community - devotion to the contemplative life, my relationship with the Carmelite Saints, especially the little flower St. Thérèse, and the special protection of Our Blessed Mother Mary of Mt. Carmel - ultimately it is by the Holy Spirit’s invitation that I am here to discern God’s Will: Love.

We are grateful to the master of the harvest to have sent us these two young men to test out our way of life. God willing, they will be joined soon by a third postulant. Look for him to be introduced in our next issue of *Gentle Breezes*. Thank you for your continued prayers for vocations!



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YOUR LEGACY WILL LIVE ON IN OUR MINISTRIES FOR GENERATIONS.