

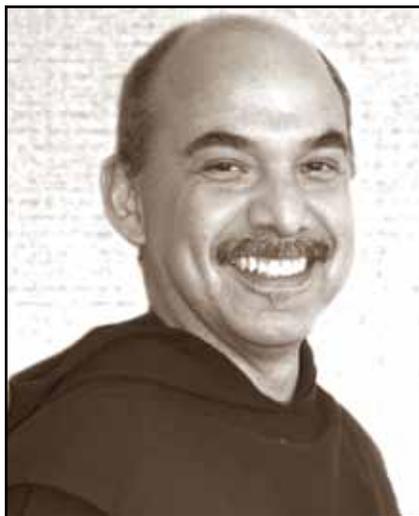
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GENTLE BREEZES — OF CARMEL —



ST. THÉRÈSE PROVINCE OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FRIARS
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A Time for Renewal



My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We friars who were blessed with the guidance of Fr. Adrian Cooney, OCD, as our novice master always saw an exuberant joy in him during the Easter season.

“We are an Alleluia People!” he would tell us

novices, absolutely beaming. We would look at him with respect, reverence, and bewilderment. The joy of being redeemed in Jesus Christ, the joy of the Father’s dedicated love for us, the joy of having been blessed with the Holy Spirit can all be in our hearts throughout the year—but especially during the Easter season. It is the joy of confidence in our Father’s love for us. His commitment to us was made Flesh in the Person of His Only Son Jesus Christ through whom He makes us one with Himself.

Unfortunately, we may allow our pathological anxieties to extinguish this Christian joy. If we do not enter deeply enough into the Easter Season, its celebration may be as shallow as was our preparation. Let us allow the fire of the Risen Lord represented by the Paschal Candle to banish the darkness of our hand-wringing fears and the myriad of competing emotions and behaviors that those fears raise in our hearts. These fears will dissipate if only we allow the Holy Spirit to enter in and bless us with the peace of the Risen Lord: the Lord who has conquered eternal death for us and makes possible for us to return once again to our source.

Since we are called to be “a people,” our internal, personal considerations are joined to the growing intensity of our liturgies, culminating in Holy Week with its great event of the Easter Vigil. Easter is the Church’s central liturgical celebration. The Church’s Lenten preparations ready

us for this great feast. The disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are meant to drive us deeper into reflection and consideration of our relationship with God the Father through His Christ. We are called to recommitment of ourselves.

Let us pause and reflect upon this great liturgical crescendo. May the mounting hope and joy expressed in the Easter Vigil’s “*Exultet*” (the hymn sung at the Lighting of the Paschal Candle) also be the tone carried through the entire Easter Season to Pentecost.

St. John of the Cross, in *Prayer of an Enamored Soul*, blurts out in exuberance:

“Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth; mine are the peoples, the just are mine, and mine the sinners; the angels are mine, and the Mother of God and all things are mine, and the Godhead Himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me.

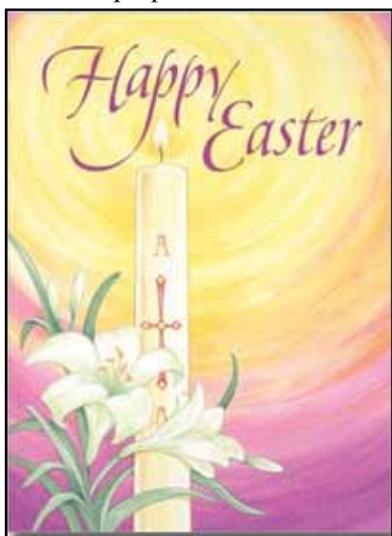
So, what do you ask and seek, my soul? Yours is all of this, and all is for you. Do not place yourself in something less, nor consider the crumbs that fall from your Father’s table.

Go forth and glory in your Glory, hide yourself in it and rejoice, and you will obtain the petitions of your heart.”

May the Holy Spirit bless you with confidence in the Father’s Love for you and may that peace beyond all understanding, only given by the Christ, be your Easter Gift.

In Him,

Fr. Stephen Sánchez, O.C.D.



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Cover Art: Rembrandt’s *Supper at Emmaus*

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Finding Heaven in the Eucharist

By Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. (Lk 24,30-31)

From the very day of the Resurrection when Jesus appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Church has always associated the Eucharist with the presence of the Risen Christ. As on that first Easter Sunday, it is in the breaking of the bread that he makes himself known as the Living One. And just as the Risen Christ has opened the gates of heaven to us, so might we contemplate the mystery of the Eucharist in the light of this mystery of heaven.

While the Eucharist is the memorial of Jesus' suffering and death, it is also the memorial of his resurrection, as we hear at Mass in the second Eucharistic prayer and in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (n. 1330). His sacrifice of himself on the Cross is made present during the Mass, but also his rising to new life. The faithful are able to receive the body and blood of Christ in holy Communion precisely because Jesus is alive and seated in glory at the right hand of his Father in heaven!

One of our Carmelite saints, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity, had a profound appreciation for this truth of the presence of the Risen Christ in the Eucharist. She writes in a letter: *When the Blessed Sacrament is exposed in the chapel ... in entering there it seems to me that it is heaven that is opening up, and it is just that in reality, since it is the Same whom I adore in faith and whom those in glory contemplate face to face.*

Likewise, when receiving our Risen Lord in the Eucharist, St. Elizabeth had a similar experience of the heavenly dimension of this mystery: *It seems to me that nothing speaks more of the love that is in the Heart of God than the Eucharist: it is union, consummation; it's He in us, us in Him, and isn't this Heaven on earth? It is Heaven in faith while waiting the face-to-face vision so much desired.*

She also implies that one encounters all the citizens of heaven in the Eucharist as well: *It is so good to think that after Communion, we possess all of Heaven in our soul, except for the vision.* When we receive Christ, we are united with him, but also with all those who have gone before us and are now united with him in heaven as members of the Mystical Body of Christ in glory.

For Elizabeth, heaven is union with God in eternity, a union we begin living even during this life in faith, love, and sacrament. During our life on Earth, it is the Eucharist that is the source and summit of the Church's life of union with her Divine Head.

As such, the young saint understood that when one receives Christ in the Eucharist for the first time, this experience creates a new type of relationship with him. Fr. Conrad de Meester, OCD, has written that St. Elizabeth really understood that, like Baptism and Confirmation, the Eucharist is truly a sacrament of initiation.



Before she entered Carmel, St. Elizabeth was entrusted by her parish priest with the preparation of a few girls for their First Communion. Since she had already entered Carmel by the time these young people made their First Communion, Elizabeth was not able to be with them for the occasion; but, she sent both of them words of encouragement and catechesis. To one, she writes: *If he came this morning into your little heart, it isn't just to pass through and then to be on his way, but to dwell there always; keep him, my dear, and keep me, too, in that dear little sanctuary.* To the other, she declares: *It's not just for a few moments that He comes to her, but to dwell there always, remember well. And when the beautiful day will have passed, tell yourself that it is not finished, but that between Jesus and his little communicant is beginning a union that must be a foretaste of Heaven.* One can see from these words how the saint contemplates the Eucharist in the light of the

mystery of heaven and encourages her two young charges to do the same. At the same time, she also communicates to them how through this sacrament of initiation their relationship with Christ now takes on a new dimension. The risen, Eucharistic Christ transforms the person who receives him into a type of sanctuary, establishes a union that is a foretaste of heaven.

St. Teresa of Jesus, too, reflected on the presence of the Risen Christ in the Eucharist. She saw his coming to us under the appearances of bread and wine as a mercy that he shows us in compassion for our weakness. In her *Way of Perfection* she writes: *If it pains you not to see Him with your bodily eyes, consider that seeing Him so is not fitting for us. To see Him in His glorified state is different from seeing Him as He was when He walked through this world. On account of our natural weakness there is no person capable of enduring such a glorious sight, nor would anyone in the world want to continue in it. In seeing this Eternal Truth, one would see that all the things we pay attention to here below are lies and jokes. And in beholding such great Majesty, how would a little sinner like myself who has so much offended Him remain so close to Him? Beneath that bread He is easy to deal with. If a king were disguised it wouldn't matter to us at all if we conversed with him without so many gestures of awe and respect. It seems he would be obliged to put up with this lack since he is the one who disguised himself. Who would otherwise dare approach so unworthily, with so much lukewarmness, and with so many imperfections!* St. Teresa seems to understand that, just as he appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus in a manner according to their capacity to receive him, so the Risen Christ mercifully desires to come to us in a manner that enables us to receive him as well.

This Easter season, may the Risen Christ help you to recognize more and more his presence "in the breaking of the bread." Like our Carmelite saints, may he help you to experience in the Eucharist the mystery of heavenly union with him *in faith while awaiting the face-to-face vision so much desired.*



In early January, several friars from the St. Therese Province participated in an interprovincial retreat with friars from the other two US provinces of Discalced Carmelite Friars (Washington and California provinces.) The retreat was held in Wichita, Kansas, and was a time of prayer and fellowship for all the participants.



In mid-January, our Marylake Monastery in Little Rock, Arkansas, was coated in a beautiful blanket of snow. The friars were housebound by the icy roads for a few days, but enjoyed the view of the monastery grounds during those days! It is not often that Marylake receives such a substantial snowfall.