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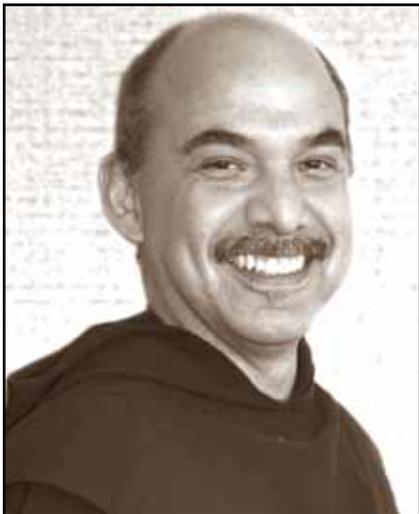
GENTLE BREEZES —OF CARMEL—

Blessed Christmas!



ST. THÉRÈSE PROVINCE OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITE FRIARS
824 KENTUCKY AVENUE, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78201 · 210.735.9126 · WWW.CARMELITEFRIARSOCD.ORG

Working Toward the Future



Dear Friends of Carmel,

May the Lord of Lords and King of Kings come into your hearts as you give Him room in this Advent season and may He bless you as you seek Him with a peace that only He can give.

I'd like to share with you an update on the Province of St. Therese of

the Discalced Carmelite Friars.

One of our main projects right now as a Province is the restoration of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower in San Antonio. Key steps in beginning the actual work on the 90-year-old Basilica, which is suffering from severe water infiltration, are to acquire a solid construction plan and begin to raise the significant funding it will require—some \$7 million for the first stage of repairs. Earlier this year, with the help of fundraising professionals, we completed a planning study for the capital campaign. We continue to build our connections with local authorities and potential donors to identify all potential sources of support. With the help of our building committee, we are now in the process of interviewing three consulting firms to take on the project management process, which will include the development of a master plan, engineering/architectural designs and a construction plan. We have much work ahead of us, but we are hopeful as we continue to move forward. Please continue to pray for this enormous

project and consider a contribution to this effort.

I'm happy to report that we are also making progress in our Provincial restructuring. In this process, begun in 2017, we are systematically re-examining our situation through the lens of the future and reviewing our religious life and ministry in light of our Carmelite mission. It is a difficult process. Please pray for us.

We meet regularly to continue this work. In September, we 15 friars met at Mt. Carmel Center in Dallas. At this meeting, we continued to consider the obstacles to continuing our current course, taking stock of our assets and preparing a mission statement, to be used to guide us going forward, and a beginning to formulate a plan. We hope to complete the entire process and have the plan in place by the time of our Provincial Chapter before the midpoint of 2020.

Thank you for your interest in our Order and we cherish your prayers and support.

In Him,

Fr. Stephen Sanchez, OCD
Provincial

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Christmas at Little Flower



- Dec. 7** Advent Retreat 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.
- Dec. 9** Immaculate Conception
Masses: 12 p.m. & 6 p.m. (Solemn Mass)
- Dec. 11** Serenata a la Virgen de Guadalupe
5:30 p.m.-12 a.m.
- Dec. 12** Mañanitas a la Virgen de Guadalupe 6 a.m.
Masses: 12 p.m. & 6 p.m. (Solemn Mass)
- Dec. 14** Solemnity of St. John of the Cross 8 a.m.
Basilica Walk-in Tours 3-4 p.m.
Christmas Dance 7:30 - 11:30 p.m.
- Dec. 15** "La Gran Posada" 20th Anniversary 6 p.m.
- Dec. 24** Children's Choir Christmas Show 4:30 p.m.
Christmas Vigil Mass 5:30 p.m.
Adult Choir Christmas Program 8:15 p.m.
Christmas Eve Vigil Mass 9 p.m.
- Dec. 25** Christmas Day Mass 12 p.m. (Bilingual)
- Dec. 31** Solemn Vespers & TE DEUM 6 p.m.
New Year's Eve Mass 6:30 p.m.
- Jan. 1, 2020**, Mary Mother of God 12 p.m. (Bilingual)

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THE DISCALCED
CARMELITE FRIARS
OF OKLAHOMA
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YOUR WILL.

OUR TAX ID # IS:
73-0580271



**YOUR LEGACY WILL LIVE ON
IN OUR MINISTRIES FOR GENERATIONS.**

St. John of the Cross: Poet of Advent

By Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD

During the season of Advent of the year 1577, St. John of the Cross, the first Discalced Carmelite Friar, found himself in a dark prison cell in Toledo. He was being held captive by some of his Carmelite brothers of the Ancient Observance who believed that, in his work to renew the Carmelite Order, the holy friar had been disobedient. In his dark prison cell, the future doctor of the Church pondered some of the Scriptural texts relevant to the season of Advent and the approaching feast of Christmas and composed a series of poems inspired by these sacred texts. These poems contain a whole theology of the creation, the Incarnation, and the fulfillment of God's plan for the world.

The Carmelite saint first of all pondered the prologue to the Gospel of St. John, the Gospel passage that even today is proclaimed at Mass on Christmas Day. In reflecting upon the creation of the world and of humanity through the divine Word (*All things came to be through him. Jn 1,3*), St. John of the Cross portrays all of the created world, especially humanity, as a bride given to God the Son by God the Father. He presents humanity as a bride longing for the promised arrival of her Bridegroom, her Messiah and Savior. In focusing upon Jesus as Bridegroom, St. John of the Cross draws upon Jesus' own use of this title for himself in the Gospels, as well as St. Paul's use of this title. He also draws upon a rich Old Testament history of spousal imagery for God's relationship with his people Israel (e.g. Hosea, Song of Songs, Isaiah).

Then, ponders St. John, when the Father sees that the moment in time arrives when it is fitting to rescue humanity, he presents to his Son his plan that the Son take on the human nature of his bride, in order to bring her consolation and delight. The Son happily agrees, responding: *I will go and tell the world, spreading the word of Your beauty and sweetness and of your sovereignty. I will go to seek My bride and take upon Myself her weariness and labors in which she suffers so; and that she may have life I will die for her, and, lifting her out of that deep, I will restore her to you.*

We see in these lines how St. John of the Cross touches upon the heart of the mystery of the Incarnation – the heart of the reason for the hope and expectant joy that so characterizes Advent. God comes to be with us, to dwell among us, to share our burdens, and to rescue us – to restore us to friendship and union with God. The child whose birth we will celebrate at Christmas smiles at us with the beauty and sweetness of God

our Father, who so longs to see his children restored and reconciled to himself and to one another.

Advent is a season during which the Church guides us to remember that God loves us so much that he sent his own Son to dwell among us. He is the Light that shines in the darkness and which the darkness has not – and cannot – overcome. Into the darkness of our world, into the darkness that we experience during our lifetimes, God comes to give us light and to invite us to a renewed faith in his presence and in his desire and power to “lift us out of the deep,” to use the imagery found in St. John of the Cross' poetry.

During Advent, the Church invites us to reflect not only upon the first coming of Jesus as an infant born in Bethlehem, but also upon his final coming in glory at the end of time. His second coming is an important element of the faith of the Church, which proclaims, *Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again*. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states: *On Judgement Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil* (681). This definitive triumph of good over evil by the Risen Christ is an essential element of the Gospel proclamation.

St. John of the Cross, too, reflected on this culmination of

God's plan for creation and humanity in his poems. In seeking to express this realization of God's plan for the bride of his Son, he writes: *For he [The Bridegroom] would make himself wholly like them, and he would come to them and dwell with them; and God would be man, and man would be God, and he would walk with them and eat and drink with them; and he himself would be with them continually until the consummation of this world, when, joined, they would rejoice in eternal song; for he was the Head of this bride of his to whom all the members of the just would be joined, who form the body of the bride. He would take her tenderly in his arms and there give her his love; and when they were thus one, he would lift her to the Father where God's very joy would be her joy. For as the Father and the Son and he who proceeds from them live in one another, so it would be with the bride; for, taken wholly into God, she will live the life of God.*

One can see in these lines how the poet saint sees the unity in God's plan for humanity from the first coming of Christ as Emmanuel, “God with us,” through his restoring all things to his Father at the consummation of this world.



Our Lady appears to St. John of the Cross in his prison cell. Stained glass window at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower.



The friars process into the Basilica for Mass.



Fr. Luis Belmonte, pastor, delivers the homily at the anniversary Mass.



Fr. Ralph (Raúl) Reyes, OCD, Jubilarian.

On October 12, the friars marked the 90th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone for the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower in San Antonio, Texas. The occasion was celebrated with a solemn Mass, a reception, and a gala fundraising dinner. The keynote speaker for the gala was Cecilia Abbot, First Lady of the state of Texas.

From October 20-26, the friars made their annual retreat at Mt. Carmel Center in Dallas, Texas. During the retreat, the friars celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Fr. Ralph (Raúl) Reyes' ordination to the priesthood. Congratulations to Fr. Ralph for his 50 years of priestly service!



The ceremonial cornerstone of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower.

St. John of the Cross: Poet of Advent – *Continued from page 3*

Rather than drawing from Scriptural scenes of Christ returning as judge, St. John of the Cross seems to draw his primary inspiration from the Gospel of John. In the prologue of this Gospel, we hear that *The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us* (Jn 1,14). Then, at the end of Jesus' life, we hear him pray at the Last Supper, *I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world* (Jn 17, 20-24). The poet saint sees the coming of Jesus at the end

of time as the realization of his prayer to his Father at the Last Supper.

Those who knew St. John of the Cross after his escape from his unjust imprisonment reported that he celebrated the seasons of Advent and Christmas with great devotion. During the days of Christmas one year, he was discussing with the friars the love of God shown to us in the infant Jesus. Suddenly, overcome with joy, St. John of the Cross got up, went over to the table where there was an infant Jesus on display, and picked up the statue of the little infant in his arms. He proceeded to dance around the room (“with art and fervor” according to the witness), singing the verse: “My sweet and tender Jesus, if love is to slay me, today must be the day!”

This Advent and Christmas season, may you, too, experience the hope and joy that is found in the coming of Jesus Christ into our world and into our individual lives. May he realize fully for our world and for each one of you, our readers, his saving plan for you, that lifted up in Christ, you may come to share fully the life of love for which God created you.