

Apostolate of the Little Flower

St. Thérèse

*Transformed in Love's
Consuming Fire*

Come to Me

*In Jesus' mercy, we like
Thérèse can find our rest*

Transit of St. Thérèse

*The saint's last conversations
before her death*

*"I am not dying...
I am entering new life."*

Contemplatives in Action

A day in the life of a friar



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"I will spend my Heaven doing good upon earth."
—St. Thérèse

Please consider the Discalced Carmelite Fathers of San Antonio when making out your will.



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Your legacy will live on in our ministries for generations.

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Dear readers,



Dear Little Flower Friends of our Apostolate Magazine,

It is always a pleasure to be welcomed into your home and your life through this publication! We are now approaching the high point of our year: the Solemnity of our beloved St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, known as “The Little Flower,” our patroness. We, the Carmelite fathers who serve in the Basilica, are proud to see how many from around the city and from outside San Antonio come to visit her, especially for the Mass of the Roses.

St. Thérèse is identified with roses, not because of a particular love for that flower; rather, she aspires to be one of the simple wildflowers that delight the eyes of God. The connection of Thérèse with roses comes from her most famous saying: *“When I die, I will send down a shower of roses from the heavens; I will spend my heaven by doing good on earth.”*

As one of many of those roses, we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the blessing of the Basilica’s cornerstone this year. The Basilica was built as a result of the enormous devotion to St. Thérèse that followed the publication of her book, *The Story of a Soul*. The first Carmelite fathers, established in San Antonio in 1926, were profoundly moved by this devotion. They believed that their Little Flower would provide the financial and spiritual support for this enterprise. Her words stirred the hearts of thousands to contribute to the Basilica’s construction, in spite of the hardships of the Great Depression.

The Pearl of the Westside, beloved by the neighborhood, changed the lives of many. Since that day, this place has been a source of the Carmelite spirituality and a sanctuary of devotion to the Little Flower, where the faithful find peace and intimacy with God.

I ask for your prayers and continuous support as we approach these celebrations. We promise our prayers and blessings, especially during the novena in honor of Thérèse. Please submit your intentions on the enclosed envelope and let us pray with you and for you and your loved ones.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fr. Luis Gerardo Belmonte" with "OCD" at the end. The signature is stylized and includes a flourish at the bottom.

Rev. Fr. Luis Gerardo Belmonte-Luna, OCD
Pastor & Rector

ON THE COVER

Thérèse Plunged in the Fire of Love

On July 7, 1897, St. Thérèse's sister Pauline asked the saint, who was dying at the time, to recount the single mystical experience of her life. This window in the Basilica's Tomb Chapel of St. Thérèse illustrates this moment in the saint's spiritual journey, during Mass on June 9, 1895.

"I was beginning the Way of the Cross; suddenly, I was seized with such a violent love for God that I can't explain it except by saying it felt as though I were totally plunged into fire," Thérèse responded. "Oh! What fire and what sweetness at one and the same time! I was on fire with love, and I felt that one minute more, one second more, and I wouldn't be able to sustain this ardor without dying. I understood, then, what the saints were saying about these states that they experienced so often. As for me, I experienced it only once and for one single instant, falling back immediately into my habitual state of dryness."

Powerfully moved to offer herself as a living sacrifice to Merciful Love, she wrote the following pledge of devotion, which, according to her sister Céline, she thereafter kept next to her heart.



St. Thérèse Painting (\$50)

On display in the undercroft of the Basilica is one of its most treasured works of art. This seven-by-ten-foot oil painting was a gift to the Discalced Carmelite friars of the Province of St. Thérèse from the Discalced Carmelite nuns of Lisieux, France.

This painting depicts St. Thérèse scattering a shower of roses on the earth. On her right, an angel holds a scroll with a quote from the saint: "*Je reviendra sur la terre pour faire aimer l'amour*": "I will return to earth to make Love loved."

The saint's blood sister Céline Martin (1869-1959), also a nun (Sr. Genevieve of the Holy Face) in the Carmel of Lisieux, created the model for this painting. Called the "Little Apotheosis of the Canonization," the painting was produced at the request of the Vatican during the canonization process for Thérèse, according to the Archives of Carmel in Lisieux.

It's recorded in Basilica archives that Fr. Raymon Gomez went to France in 1927 to visit the sisters of St. Thérèse's convent in Lisieux to ask for their blessing on the project of building a National Shrine to be dedicated to the newly canonized St. Thérèse. The nuns, including St. Thérèse's sister Pauline, who was then prioress of Lisieux, were delighted with the idea and pledged their support. Along with their blessings, the nuns sent gifts, including autographed books and photos, medals, printed collection cards, relics of all degrees, and this beautiful portrait to grace the Shrine upon its opening.



Order your limited edition 20x26" print through the enclosed envelope.

St. Thérèse's
Act of Oblation to Merciful Love

Offering of myself as a Sacrifice to God's Merciful Love

O My God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to *Love* You and make you *Loved*, to work for the glory of Holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in purgatory. I desire to accomplish Your will perfectly and to reach the degree of glory You have prepared for me in Your Kingdom. I desire, in a word, to be saint, but I feel my helplessness and I beg You, O my God! to be Yourself my *Sanctity*!

Since You loved me so much as to give me Your only Son as my Savior and my Spouse, the infinite treasures of His merits are mine. I offer them to You with gladness, begging You to look upon me only in the Face of Jesus and in His heart burning with *Love*.

I offer You, too, all the merits of the saints (in heaven and on earth), their acts of *Love*, and those of the holy angels. Finally, I offer You, *O Blessed Trinity!* the *Love* and merits of the *Blessed Virgin, my Dear Mother*. It is to her I abandon my offering, begging her to present it to You. Her Divine Son, my *Beloved Spouse*, told us: "*Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name he will give it to you!*" I am certain, then, that You will grant my desires; I know, O my God! that *the more You want to give, the more You make us desire*. I feel in my heart immense desires, and it is with confidence I ask You to come and take possession of my soul. Ah! I cannot receive Holy Communion as often as I desire, but, Lord, are You not *all-powerful*? Remain in me as in a tabernacle and never separate Yourself from Your little victim.

I want to console You for the ingratitude of the wicked, and I beg of you to take away my freedom to displease You. If through weakness I sometimes fall, may Your *Divine Glance* cleanse my soul immediately, consuming all my imperfections like the fire that transforms everything into itself.

I thank You, O my God! for all the graces You have granted me, especially the grace of making me pass through the crucible of suffering. It is with joy I shall contemplate You on the Last Day carrying the scepter

of Your Cross. Since You deigned to give me a share in this very precious Cross, I hope in heaven to resemble You and to see shining in my glorified body the sacred stigmata of Your Passion.

After earth's Exile, I hope to go and enjoy You in the Fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for *Your Love Alone* with the one purpose of pleasing You, consoling Your Sacred Heart, and saving souls who will love You eternally.

In the evening of this life, I shall appear before You with empty hands, for I do not ask You, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is stained in Your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in Your *Justice* and to receive from Your *Love* the eternal possession of *Yourself*. I want no other *Throne*, no other *Crown* but *You, my Beloved!*

Time is nothing in Your eyes, and a single day is like a thousand years. You can, then, in one instant prepare me to appear before You.

In order to live in one single act of perfect Love, I OFFER MYSELF AS A SACRIFICE TO YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE, Asking You to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of *infinite tenderness* shut up within You to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a *martyr* of Your *Love*, O my God!

May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear before You, finally cause me to die and may my soul take its flight without any delay into the eternal embrace of *Your Merciful Love*.

I want, O my *Beloved*, at each beat of my heart to renew this offering to You an infinite number of times, until the shadows having disappeared I may be able to tell You of my *Love* in an *Eternal Face to Face!*

CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

St. Thérèse and Jesus' Invitation: Come to Me

By Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD

At that time Jesus said in reply, "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. [...] Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11: 25-26,28).

These words of Jesus from the Gospel of St. Matthew have been chosen for the Gospel reading for the feast day of St. Thérèse on October 1. The example and teaching of the Little Flower reveal that she responded with boundless confidence to Jesus' invitation, "Come to me."

She invites us to do the same, to draw near to Jesus with confidence and trust, no matter what we might be burdened with, even if it be the burden of our own sins. In Jesus' mercy, we, like Thérèse, will find our rest.

St. Thérèse realized that her littleness – in other words, her weaknesses, limitations, and imperfections – was not an obstacle in her relationship with God. Rather, it served God as an occasion to manifest his mercy in her. It is to the little ones that Jesus rejoices to manifest himself, he who is God's mercy incarnate.

A Wildflower Loved By Our Lord

As the saint reflects in the first chapter of her *Story of a Soul*, "Since the nature of love is to humble oneself, if all souls resembled those of the holy Doctors who illumined the Church with the clarity of their teachings, it seems God would not descend so low when coming to their heart. But He created the child who knows only how to make his feeble cries heard. [...] It is to their hearts that God deigns to lower Himself. These are the wildflowers whose simplicity attracts Him. When coming down in this way, God manifests His infinite grandeur. Just as the sun shines simultaneously on the tall cedars and on each little flower as though it were alone on the earth, so Our Lord is occupied particularly with each soul as though there were no others like it."

Raised by the Elevator of Grace

In the Old Testament, too, St. Thérèse discovered God's invitation to draw near to him.



"I wanted to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus, for I am too small to climb the rough stairway of perfection," the saint of Lisieux reflects in *Story of a Soul*. "I searched then, in the Scriptures for some sign of this elevator, the object of my desires, and I read these words coming from the mouth of Eternal Wisdom: 'Whoever is a LITTLE ONE, let him come to me' [Prov. 9:4]. [...] The elevator that must raise me to heaven is Your arms, O Jesus! And for this, I had no need to grow up, but rather I had to remain little and become this more and more."

Thérèse, at first experiencing her littleness as a burden, came to see it as something that stirred the merciful heart of Jesus to descend to her, to raise her to himself to fulfill his desire that the little ones come to him. She gained assurance that little ones like herself can come to Jesus because he has first come to them as Sun, as Elevator of love, to shine on them and to lift them to himself.

Enkindled with faith in this merciful love and desire of Jesus, St. Thérèse found the grace to be able to embrace her limitations and burdens and even to rejoice in them. In her poem, *To the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, she reflects:

*I need a heart burning with tenderness,
Who will be my support forever,
Who loves everything in me, even my weakness....*

She found this heart in Jesus, her merciful savior, “a God who takes on my nature/ And becomes my brother and is able to suffer!”

A Weak Little Bird

Another image that St. Thérèse uses to communicate her trust in God and her self-acceptance in light of God’s mercy also can be found in her *Story of a Soul*. She speaks of herself as a little bird in the following terms: “I look upon myself as a *weak little bird*, with only a light down as covering. I am not an eagle, but I have only an eagle’s EYES AND HEART. In spite of my extreme littleness, I still dare to gaze upon the Divine Sun, the Sun of Love, and my heart feels within it all the aspirations of an *Eagle*.”

Although she was enkindled with great desires to love God and to prove her love for him by great deeds, she did not take credit for these desires, nor did she see them as “earning” God’s love or making her great in his sight. To her older sister Marie, who was worried by the fact that she herself had none of these great desires expressed by Thérèse, the saint writes: “Dear Sister, how can you say after this that my desires are the sign of my love? ... Ah! I really feel that it is not this at all that pleases God in my little soul; what pleases Him is *that He sees me loving my littleness and my poverty, the blind hope that I have in His mercy....* That is my only treasure, dear Godmother, why would this treasure not be yours?...”

The little bird, admits St. Thérèse, commits its faults, but its trust in God’s mercy remains unshaken, so it does not become discouraged: “And yet after all these misdeeds, instead of going and hiding away in a corner, to weep over its misery and to die of sorrow, the little bird turns toward its beloved Sun, presenting its wet wings to its beneficent rays. It cries like a swallow and in its sweet song it recounts in detail all its infidelities, thinking in the boldness of its full trust that it will acquire in even greater fullness the love of *Him* who came to call not the just but sinners.” The saint of Lisieux, in other words, finding herself burdened with her misdeeds, does not hide in shame and fear, but rather, she hears and heeds Jesus’ invitation: “Come to me.”

One may think that it was easy for St. Thérèse to draw near to Jesus to find mercy since, as one of her confes-

sors had assured her, she had never committed a mortal sin. But can a person guilty of truly grave sin heed Jesus’ invitation to draw near to him with the same confidence? The saint herself addresses this question at the conclusion of *Story of a Soul*: “Yes, I feel it; even if I had on my conscience all the sins that can be committed, I would go, my heart broken with sorrow, and throw myself into Jesus’ arms, for I know how much He loves the prodigal child who returns to Him. It is not because God, in His anticipating Mercy, has preserved my soul from mortal sin that I go to Him with confidence and love....”

The Little Flower invites all of us to heed Jesus’ invitation with the same confidence and trust that inspired her to do so. She expresses a desire that nothing prevent us from drawing near to Jesus – neither our faults, our sins, our past, our present, our fears – whatever it is that might burden us. We do not need to impress God to be worthy of his love and to approach him. His love for us is rooted not in us, ourselves, but in himself. “God is love” (1 Jn 4:16), St. John tells us in his first letter. He also proclaims: “In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins,” (1 Jn 4:10) and, further, “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us” (1 Jn 4:16). St. Thérèse echoes this faith in God’s love for us to such a degree that this chapter from the First Letter of St. John has also been chosen as one of the Scripture readings for the Mass of her feast day.

Jesus does not say, “Come to me, you who have your act together, you who impress me, you who have proven yourselves to me.” He says, “Come to me you who labor and are burdened.” This is the Gospel message that St. Thérèse heard and believed. By her life and by her teaching, she encourages us to do the same. However we may have failed to fulfill any of Jesus’ other commandments, the Little Flower urges us not to hesitate to heed this command of Jesus, Mercy Incarnate: *Come to me*.

Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD, made his first profession as a Discalced Carmelite Friar in 1990 and was ordained a priest in 1995. During his years with the Province of St. Thérèse, he has served as student director, associate professor of dogmatic theology at Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans, and provincial superior. Since 2011, he has served as vocations director and is currently stationed at Marylake Monastery in Little Rock, Ark.



ILLUMINATING THE BASILICA

Celebrating the Solemnity of St. Thérèse of Lisieux

With 'Transit of St. Thérèse' and Mass of the Roses



The Basilica will commemorate the Feast Day of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face Sept. 30-Oct. 1 and Oct. 20. Leading up to the festivities, sung novena masses will be held at 6 p.m. daily, Sept. 22-30.

Transit of St. Thérèse

On Monday, Sept. 30, a special ceremony, the Transit of St. Thérèse, will be held at 5 p.m., followed by the Vigil Mass. Instituted in 2008 by Little Flower pastor Fr. Luis Gerardo Belmonte-Luna, OCD, the ceremony commemorates the saint's death of tuberculosis at age 24, narrating the saint's final conversations before her death on Sept. 30, 1897. Just after entering the infirmary on June 9, 1897, Thérèse wrote: "I am not dying; I am entering a new life." We invite you to contemplate her encounter with the Lord through her final words.

The saint's final months were spent in agony. She was unable to complete her memoirs, which her superiors had assigned, and which was to become one of the most popular spiritual autobiographies of all time: *The Story of a Soul*.

It was during this time that she spoke of her future: "I feel that my mission is about to begin, my mission of making others love God as I love Him, my mission of teaching my little way to souls. If God answers my requests, my heaven will be spent on earth up until the end of the world. Yes, I want to spend my heaven doing good on earth."

Her final words, witnessed by her Carmelite sisters, include:

- + It's the agony, really, without any mixture of consolation.
- + I no longer believe in death for me...I believe only in suffering...Well, so much the better!
- + Ah! my God!...Yes, He is very good, I find Him very good.
- + O Mother, present me quickly to the Blessed Virgin; I'm a baby who can't stand anymore! Prepare me for death.
- + Yes, it seems to me I never sought anything but the truth; yes, I have understood humility of heart.... All I wrote about my desires for suffering. Oh! It's true just the same! And I am not sorry for delivering myself up to Love. Oh! No, I'm not sorry; on the contrary!
- + Never would I have believed it was possible to suffer so much! never! never! I cannot explain this except by the ardent desire I have had to save souls.
- + O Mother, I assure you, the chalice is filled to the brim!
- + But God is not going to abandon me, I'm sure.... He has never abandoned me.
- + Yes, my God, everything that you will, but have pity on me!
- + My God! My God! You who are so good! Oh, yes, You are good! I know it.
- + Oh! I would not want to suffer for a shorter time
- + Oh! I love Him! My God...I love you!



Solemn Mass of Roses

Archbishop of San Antonio, Gustavo Garcia-Siller, M.Sp.S., will preside at the Solemn Mass of the Roses to be held on the saint's feast day, Oct. 1, at 6 p.m. The event is a Red Letter Day, meaning that the faithful may receive a plenary indulgence (their sins are absolved with attendance, receiving Communion, praying for the intentions of the Pope, and Confession).

This special liturgical celebration is hosted annually by the Discalced Carmelite Fathers of San Antonio and the Little Flower Parish community. The traditional shower of rose petals during the mass is in remembrance of St. Thérèse's promise: "I will let fall from heaven ... a shower of roses." Participants will receive a blessed rose after the celebration.

Rose Festival

On Sunday, Oct. 20, the community celebration will continue with the Rose Festival, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Festivities will include live music, refreshments, and children's activities.

Little Flower Basilica, the first National Shrine in the United States dedicated to St. Thérèse, was completed in 1931. The greatest tribute to St. Thérèse in the Basilica is the tomb chapel, with a reproduction of the sepulcher in Lisieux, France, presenting a likeness of the saint after her death.

The Basilica is home to three first-class relics of the Little Flower and a first-class relic of the saint's parents, Saints Louis and Zélie Martin. Among the Basilica's holdings also is a painting of Thérèse designed and re-touched by her blood sister for the 1925 canonization events.

St. Thérèse's Canticle of Love

The *Canticle of Love* was written in 1996 by Sr. Marie-Therese Sokol, OCD. The words of the hymn come from the writings of St. Thérèse. It is a traditional part of the Mass of the Roses.

*How great and tender is our God who has smiled on the lowly.
Eternally my heart will sing a new canticle of love.*

*Come, all who hunger, all who thirst,
all who long for fulfillment.*

*The God of mercy waits for you as a mother her child.
Oh come to the living water, fear not your weakness,
Forever trusting in God's merciful love.*

*Through the shadows of the night,
love will be my guiding light.
(Only for today.)*

*Presence hidden from my sight,
'til the clouds are put to flight.
(Just for today.)*

*Beneath your gaze I've blossomed forth,
as a rose in the sunshine.*

*With joyful heart I've given all to the myst'ry of love.
In peace I will come before you with empty hands,
relying solely on your merciful love.*

*Through the veil your face appears,
beauty shrouded bathed in tears.
(Only for today.)*

*Bread of sinners I will share, rose unpetalled ev'rywhere.
(Just for today.)*

*Ah, my God, I will sing of your love for this one eternal day,
for this one eternal today, eternal today.*

*Transformed in Love's consuming fire, lifted up in glory,
her fragrance filling all the earth, drawing us after her.*

*Until, in eternity we join in one chorus,
forever singing of God's merciful love--*

Canticle of love, this eternal day I will sing, sing of your love.

Presentation on Teresian Contemplative Prayer

With Local Secular Discalced Carmelites

The San Antonio chapter of the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order (OCDS) of the Province of St. Thérèse is beginning its second year of quarterly presentations on Carmelite spirituality at the Basilica. Their next talk, on Teresian contemplative prayer, will be held on Oct. 5, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.

The presentation will discuss Discalced Carmelite prayer as taught by St. Teresa of Avila. It will be primarily based on the writings of Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene, OCD, author of *Divine Intimacy*, a classic work on Carmelite prayer and meditation. *Divine Intimacy* leads us not only "through prayer and meditation, but also through expressions of love, petitions and acts of thanksgiving, helping to transport the soul toward God," according to Fr. Gabriel (1893-1952), considered an expert in the writings of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross. His writings also include *The Way of Prayer*, a commentary of St. Teresa of Avila's Way of Perfection.



Jane Bernal and Anna Peterson, members of our local Discalced Carmelite Secular Order and presenters for spiritual talks and tours at the Basilica.

"The talks are intended not as information only, but to prepare and touch hearts, leading participants into an encounter with Jesus and encouraging them to seek God in prayer," said Jane Bernal, OCDS, one of the presenters. "As Carmelites, we are privileged to have been given the precious charism of prayer, and we want to share it with all of God's Church."

To register for the presentation, call the Basilica administration office at (210) 735-9126 ext. 100 or visit littleflowerbasilica.org

The primary apostolate of the OCDS canonical community apostolate is to share Carmelite spirituality with others. Membership in this religious Order is a lifetime commitment to prayer, devotion to Carmelite spirituality, and evangelism. The San Antonio OCDS has been active as a full community of the Discalced Carmelites since 1956.

In collaboration with the Discalced Carmelite friars, the local OCDS community is spearheading the development of Carmelite faith formation programs centered on the Basilica. The goal is to assist the friars in renewing the Basilica as a center for the evangelization of the Carmelite charism (prayer, silence, solitude, zeal for the Church) and in promoting instruction in Carmelite spirituality.



Stained Glass window in the Basilica depicts St. Teresa of Avila receiving the habit in the Carmelite Order of the Ancient Observance.

Join us in celebrating

90th Anniversary of the Blessing of the Basilica's Cornerstone

The ceremonial blessing of the foundation stone, as a symbol of Christ, was held on Oct. 15, 1929. Join us in celebrating this milestone as we look to the future of the Basilica and its restoration.

Following a 5 p.m. Solemn Mass with the Discalced Carmelite friars of the Province of St. Thérèse, a reception and gala dinner will be held at Little Flower School and the Parish Hall. All proceeds of the evening will support the Basilica Restoration Project.

The keynote speaker for the evening will be the First Lady of Texas, Cecilia Abbott. A San Antonio native, Mrs. Abbott is a proud mother to her daughter, Audrey, and a devoted wife to her husband of 38 years, the Governor of Texas, Greg Abbott. The first Hispanic First Lady of Texas and a product of the American Dream, Mrs. Abbott believes strongly in giving back to our communities and has devoted her life to serving others.

Our emcee for the evening will be local TV newscaster Randy Beamer. In honor of the Basilica's Spanish heritage, the finale of the evening will be *Fuerza Flamenca* flamenco dancers.

The Basilica was built during the Great Depression (1929-31) by Spanish Discalced Carmelite friars to promote devotion to St. Thérèse following her 1925 canonization. The blessing of the Basilica's foundational cornerstone, symbolizing Christ, was on Oct. 15, 1929, with Archbishop of San Antonio Arthur Drossaerts, the Very Rev. Edward Soler, OCD (pastor), and other Discalced Carmelite friars of the Province of St. Thérèse.

The Basilica is one of only 86 in the United States and one of only four in the state of Texas bearing the papal designation. The church was designated a minor Basilica based on spiritual, historical, and architectural significance. It is the highest permanent designation for a church building, signifying a particular link with the Rome and the Pope. The Basilica functions as an apostolic center and a place of pilgrimage, receiving visitors from throughout the world.

CORNERSTONE
for **THE FUTURE**
Gala

SAVE THE DATE

SAT OCT 12
90TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BLESSING
OF THE BASILICA'S CORNERSTONE

MASS AT 5:00 P.M.

RECEPTION 6:30 PM LITTLE FLOWER SCHOOL	DINNER & PROGRAM 7:00 PM PARISH HALL	FINALE: FUERZA FLAMENCA
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**BASILICA OF THE NATIONAL
SHRINE OF THE LITTLE FLOWER**
1715 N ZARZAMORA ST

PROVINCE OF ST. THÉRÈSE

A Day in the Life of a Friar

Contemplatives in Action: Discalced Carmelites' Apostolate of Prayer & Spirituality

The five Discalced Carmelite friars who direct the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower are the only contemplative religious order of men still active in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. What is the unique role of this Order in the Church and what does it mean to live the contemplative religious life?

“The Church looks to us for prayer and spirituality, union with God,” explained Fr. Gregory Ross, OCD, who lives at Marylake Monastery in Little Rock, Ark. The founders of the Discalced Carmelites, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, are known as masters of prayer. While other religious orders may have a focus of ministry such as helping the poor, the Discalced Carmelites focus on the interior life and helping guide others on the spiritual journey to union with God.

The St. Thérèse Province, based in San Antonio, is a community of 15 priests and religious brothers with five communities in Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. They serve alongside the cloistered Discalced Carmelite nuns, who live in six communities in four states. Sharing their Carmelite vocation are 37 Secular Order communities of 960 members with those in formation.



Praying for the Church

The distinctive feature of the daily life of the Order since the 16th century is its commitment to devote two hours daily to individual mental prayer and meditation.

“Our prayer is done as a service to the Church,” Fr. Gregory noted. “We are in the Lord’s presence on behalf of the Church, and are also attentive to the Lord’s presence on behalf of the Church.”

He explained that Vatican II’s document on the religious life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, speaks about how each order and congregation has its unique way of manifesting the mystery of Christ. Solitary prayer in communion with the Father and teaching the disciples how to pray as seen in the Gospels is an aspect of the person of Jesus the Carmelites show forth. Their mission is also to help others grow in the life of prayer through their ministry.

Fr. Gregory noted that the Carmelites are a Marian Order whose official title is “The Discalced Brothers of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.” From the beginning, they have been dedicated to honoring Mary and following Christ in his love for her.



Prayer in Community

“One of our nuns once told me that prayer is like the windows in the Church through which the light of the Holy Spirit is shed on those inside,” says Fr. Gregory. “We pray to open the Church’s windows to the light of the Holy Spirit.”

The daily life of the Discalced Carmelite Friars as contemplatives is centered on the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours, the official public prayer of the Church. The friars join religious communities, priests, and deacons around the world in praying aloud the Liturgy of the Hours.

“If we are praying Psalm 100, the friars in Tanzania are praying the same passage,” Fr. Gregory explains. “We participate in a continuous song of praise offered to God around the world.”

The friars spend about an hour total in communal prayer each day. In San Antonio, the friars begin the day with Lauds at 7 a.m. followed by their first hour of individual mental prayer. Then at 8:15, they regather for the Mid-Morning prayer.

At 4:30 p.m. the friars pray the Office of Readings, followed by Vespers, with recitations of readings from scripture and the saints or documents of the Church, and prayers of petition. The friars then enter their second hour of mental prayer. They end the day with Night Prayer.

Life in Community

Life in community is a vital part of the Discalced Carmelite values and the structure of their time, though each house in the Province has its own schedule.

The friars take meals together in the monastery and spend “recreation” time as brothers in the evening. Nuns

traditionally would sit in a circle after supper with their embroidery or other handwork and chat, for example, Fr. Gregory noted. In the time of St. John of the Cross, friars would weave fishing nets together.

“Mainly we linger and visit around the table and do dishes together, like what family meals used to more commonly be,” Fr. Gregory said. “After dinner, our houses are quiet, to foster a prayerful attitude.”

Active in ministry

While the 15 friars serve the Church through their communal life of prayer, they also participate actively in many apostolates. They promote the spiritual life in the Carmelite tradition through retreats, spiritual direction, conferences, publications, confessions, and Masses.

With parishes in Dallas and Oklahoma City as well as San Antonio, the friars are responsible for over 5,200 parish families. Through Mt. Carmel Retreat Center in Dallas, the friars serve nearly 10,000 individuals annually. The friars also direct and serve the Secular Order and the nuns.

A postulant, Jeffrey Huber, now in formation in Oklahoma City, describes his experience with the friars and their way of life.

“What ultimately attracted me to the Discalced Carmelites was the balanced life they live—a life of contemplative prayer that fuels their apostolic work out in the world. Community and a significant amount of time during the day for personal and communal prayer shape their lives,” he said. “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 friars.”



God's "Coincidence" Launched a Journey



By Belinda Mooney

While ordering books some years ago for homeschool that I thought would be about St. Martin of Tours, I received a tremendous surprise. Two books arrived entitled Leo Dupont, the Holy Man of Tours and The Golden Arrow: The Life and Revelations of Sister Mary of St. Peter (Marie Pierre), a Discalced Carmelite nun. Curious, I began reading about Leo Dupont and realized that he assisted Sr. Marie Pierre in the Work of Reparation through Devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus and that my dear St. Thérèse of Lisieux was also later involved.

The story was fascinating. An accident to his hand prevented Leo Dupont from becoming a priest. Instead, he married and became a lawyer. After his wife died, he moved to Tours, France. In an incredible turn of events, he went to assist the exact Carmelite Convent where Sr. Marie Pierre was experiencing revelations and promises similar to those of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque about the Work of Reparation through Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

In God's Providence, when the Bishop who originally approved this devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus withdrew his approval, Leo Dupont, as a layperson, could continue to promote the Work while the priests were forbidden to be involved. Four Bishops later, Archbishop Colet told Leo, as Sr. Marie Pierre had predicted, that the ban was lifted and the Work of Reparation would go forward: not just in France, but to the whole world. The Archconfraternity of the Holy Face was established in Tours, France in 1885. Among the members of the Archconfraternity was the family of St. Therese of Lisieux..

Where God Hides

Between the inhale and the exhale
lies a house where God dwells.

He rests in the lull after
the prayer and before the amen,

and curls up in the darkness
between the match strike and the flame.

He reclines in the crevice
made by gently-held hands

as well as in the instant
between eye-close and kiss.

Sometimes He hides in the furrows
among ripples on a pond

or in the head of a candle snuffer—
yellow glow turned to smoke.

Even a ubiquitous God
has His favorite hiding places

where He prefers to spend time
while he's also everywhere else.

Tim Bete, OCDS, has two collections of poetry, *The Raw Stillness of Heaven* and *Wanderings of an Ordinary Pilgrim*, both of which are available on Amazon.com. He is a member of the Our Mother of Good Counsel Secular Discalced Carmelite Community in Dayton, Ohio. You can read more about him at GrayRising.com.



Both Pauline Martin (Mother Agnes) and Celine Martin (Sr. Geneviève of the Holy Face) testified at her beautification that St. Thérèse had told them that this Work of Reparation through Devotion to the Holy Face “was the foundation of all my piety.”

I read both books I originally ordered through “coincidence,” then later, *The Whole World Will Love Me* about St. Thérèse’s participation in the Work. I had taken St. Thérèse as a patron and sister when, at 17 years old, I read her autobiography. I joined the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face. What a joy to see my name on the list of members with hers in the Archconfraternity of the Holy Face. I felt that now St. Thérèse was passing it on to me and I had something else in common with her.

For 25 years now, I have worked to continue the work of the Archconfraternity. This journey of “coincidences” came full circle from St. Martins of Tours whose books I purchased originally, to books about a Discalced Carmelite nun in Tours, a holy layman, a devotion, and archconfraternity that originated in Tours. It is a long and blessed journey that has brought me to Carmel and the Secular Order.

Belinda Terro Mooney is an Aspirant in the Most Holy Trinity Secular Discalced Carmelite Group at St. Simon and Jude Catholic Church in The Woodlands, TX. She loves the Carmelite saints and actively promotes the Work of Reparation Through Devotion to the Holy Face of Jesus. She is an Adjunct Professor at Lone Star College teaching and working in her field of social work while continuing to homeschool the last two of her seven children. She is so grateful to God for all His “coincidences.”



*Jesus! Thy dear and holy Face
Is the bright star that guides my way;
Thy gentle glance, so full of grace,
Is my true heaven on earth, today.*



- Taken from
St. Thérèse’s
Canticle to the Holy Face



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*Those called to the specifically contemplative life are acknowledged as
one of the most precious treasures of the Church.*

Pope John Paul II, 1980