



# CCA Newsletter

Carmelite Communities Associated

Volume 32, Issue 1, JANUARY 2010

## FROM THE CCA LEADERSHIP TEAM



Greetings for a blessed 2010 from each of us on the leadership team!

I am eager to share with you the unforgettable experience that Sr. Judy Long (Baltimore Carmel) and I shared this past October. Soon after CCA's national meeting, the leadership team received a gracious invitation from Mother Maria Gabriela to attend the Mexican federation's ongoing formation course. Judy and I were privileged to travel to Mexico to attend the course and to meet many of our Mexican sisters. Sisters from each of the three Carmels in Venezuela were also invited guests.

Over 70 nuns gathered at Yermo y Parres Spiritual Center in Puebla for the course on "Faith in Consecrated Life—Teresian Pedagogy" given by Fr. Julio Rincón, OCD. Delia, our translator, was a lovely woman who was constantly by our side. Srs. Isabel (Chalco Carmel) and Marisela (Durango Carmel), who both spoke English, answered questions about the life, history, growth and experience of Carmel in Mexico. Sisters reached out to us in light-hearted, caring ways, speaking enough words of English to make for lively conversation. We gathered each afternoon and evening for recreation. I'm sure our Holy Mother would have approved of the joy and laughter, of which there was plenty!

Following the course we found ourselves on a whirlwind four-day tour with the federation council (M. Maria Gabriela and Srs. Gema, Luz and Lucy), the three Venezuelan sisters, Fr. Julio and Br. Tomas. We saw much of the countryside as we drove from place to place in the areas around Puebla, Mexico City and Toluca. We visited the nuns' Carmels in Puebla, Valle de Bravo, Toluca and Cerrito; and we visited the friars' monasteries in Puebla, Valle de Bravo, Toluca and the desert house ("the gem of the province"), located high in the hills near Tenancingo. The buildings at the desert date back to the early 1800's. We made a quick stop at the provincial house in Mexico City. Unfortunately, Father Provincial was away on business. At each community, we were received warmly and enjoyed the delicious, festive meals that had been specially prepared for our visit.

Unfortunately, there isn't space here to elaborate on our trip, but I do want to note a few details. We spent one night at Gabriela's Carmel in old Puebla City, the first monastery of Carmelite nuns in the Americas, founded in 1604. The Carmel has paintings, statues and other treasures that came from Spain in the early days of the foundation as well as letters dating from the 16th century.

I was very interested to see the federation house, located not far from Toluca. It is a small town house, part of a modern complex of condominiums, and can be seen on the excellent DVD that the sisters prepared for our CCA meeting.

On our last full day in Mexico, we enjoyed breakfast with our nuns at the Cerrito Carmel on Tepeyac (Sr. Gema's Carmel) and then a memorable visit to the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Cerrito Carmel is built into the hill, attached to the original church on Tepeyac, and overlooks the modern basilica and plaza. Words cannot describe the experience of being at Guadalupe and of gazing on the image of Our Lady. The love and affection that the Mexican people have for her is evident wherever you turn. In every Carmel her image is prominently placed, very near to the statue of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Our final afternoon was spent at the Teotihuacan pyramids, walking and climbing the small territory of an ancient civilization.

The Venezuelan nuns had the advantage of speaking Spanish, but for Judy and me the language was a barrier to deeper communication. However, in spite of language and cultural differences, we knew instantly that we were among sisters who share a common way of life and spirituality.

Carmel in Mexico has a rich and interesting history. The Carmelites experienced times of expansion and growth as well as periods of persecution and suppression. We found the Carmelite spirit to be vibrant and exciting among the nuns and friars. Although there are differences, having only one federation in Mexico has allowed the sisters to face their diversity with respect,

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openness and acceptance. Fr. Camilo is held in great esteem, and his influence is



Srs. Marjorie and Judy with Mexican Sisters in Puebla.

obvious in the life and spirit among the nuns and friars. There is an ease and familiarity among the sisters, much as we experience in CCA when we come together.

This brief account tells only a tiny part of the story of our visit to Mexico. Judy and I will always be grateful for that special time and look forward to CCA's continued exchanges and encounters with our sisters in the Mexican federation.

We now turn our attention to the months ahead. As you read in Sr. Carolyn's letter of December 8, CCA warmly welcomes San Rafael Carmel as its newest member. In February Srs. Claire Sokol, representing the leadership team, and Joan Williams, a member of CCA since its beginning, will visit San Rafael to personally welcome the sisters and to share with them a bit of CCA's history, background, goals and programs. Claire and Joan will proudly share with Sr. Anna Marie and the community CCA's Statutes and *Charter of Life*, which continues to nourish and inspire us.

March 12-14 Srs. Carolyn and Marjorie will attend the annual Carmelite Institute Meeting at Whitefriars Hall in Washington, DC. Carolyn represents CCA and is a member of the Board of Directors, and Marjorie represents the OCD nuns on the Executive Committee and also serves as secretary for the Carmelite Institute.

April 26-30 is the next meeting of association and provincial councils. Fr. Gregory Ross, provincial of the Oklahoma province, is the host for this year's meeting. We will be meeting at the

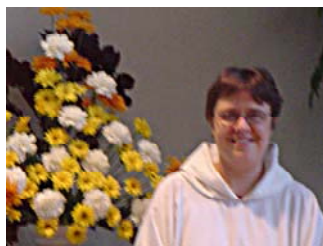
Archdiocesan Pastoral Center in Oklahoma City. Fr. John Grennan, OCD, the English-speaking definator, will be present. Piedmont Carmel has graciously invited CCA's leadership team to stay at the monastery for an extra day for a team meeting. We are most grateful to Sr. Donna for this offer. Having time with our sisters in Piedmont is an extra bonus!

The Center for Spirituality, in cooperation with the Carmelite Institute and the Carmelite Forum, is sponsoring *Carmel's Quest for the Living God* June 16-20 at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. Fr. Camilo Macisse, OCD, Dolores Leckey and Fr. Fernando Millan Romeral, O.Carm. (prior general of the Carmelites) will be the keynote speakers.

As we move into 2010, may we find God in our midst as peace, hope and kindness.

With love,

**CARMEL OF THE SACRED HEART  
Baltimore, Maryland  
Sr. Monika Bies, OCD**



**LEARNING FESTIVAL**

In November we traditionally set time apart for our Learning Festival. This year we had a variety of topics that came together well as they all focused on relationships with each other and with God, yet approaching it from very different angles.

We started off with Sr. Lynn M. Levo, CSJ, the Director of Education at St. Luke's Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her insightful presentation on the topic of "Humanness, Relationships, Sexuality and Addictions," with a special emphasis on healthy relating through personal and ministerial boundaries consisted of morning and afternoon sessions that included input as well as a role play.

Our friend and scripture scholar Joe Jensen gave us the talk that he had given at the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, June 30-July 4, 2009. He based his paper extensively on the book of Ben Sira on whom he had written his dissertation. Here is an abstract of the talk:

Ben Sira, an accomplished scribe and wisdom teacher, flourished in the politically and religiously turbulent atmosphere of Jerusalem in the forty years leading up to the Maccabean revolt that began about 166 B.C.E. While his poetic pericopes on justice for the poor and marginalized contain some of the strongest social justice language to be found in biblical literature, Ben Sira would have his students work for such justice within the system. In a lecture about service in the Jerusalem assembly, the Gerousia (Sir 7:1-17), Ben Sira offers guidelines for negotiating and surviving the treacherous infighting and intrigues of political life. Ben Sira focuses on preservation of one's personal integrity and righteousness while actively participating in a political system that by implication is manifestly cor-

rupt and unjust. Ben Sira is particularly concerned with the ever present temptations to sin driven by personal ambition, potential for easy financial gain, presumption, and arrogance. The poem suggests that the secretive practices of trade-offs, influence pedaling, extortion, bribery, kickbacks, fraud, slander, and perjury that undermine the practice of justice in today's political and legal systems were just as prevalent in Ben Sira's time.

Another presenter was Mette Lebech, a Danish Edith Stein scholar, who is working at the University of Dresden, Germany. She lectured on "Edith Stein's Value Theory" and on "The Constitutions of the Human Body According to Edith Stein." Mette Lebech gave us her book, *On the Problem of Human Dignity—A Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Investigation*, published by Verlag Königshausen & Neumann GmbH, Würzburg (Germany), 2009.

We had also invited Father Brian McDermott, SJ, for two days on spiritual direction, a course he teaches at Loyola College. His time with us served as a refresher for the nuns who have been involved in this ministry and for those who are just starting it.

On November 16 some of us went to Washington to follow Father Quinn Connors' kind invitation to celebrate All Saints/All Souls of the Order with the community at Whitefriars. It was a great way to commemorate all the great Carmelite women and men who have gone before us.

## YOUNG ADULT PRAYER GROUPS

### Young Adult Prayer III

We are now in our third year of working with our young adult prayer group (YAP). Some members of this year's YAP are new, while others have participated in the first two years. As this poses challenges concerning the input, we have decided to build on some of the material that we have already developed, as well as adding other dimensions or putting them in a different context for the benefit

of the "old-timers." In our last session for this year, we felt that it would be important to send everybody off with some concrete tools on how to foster a contemplative attitude. We picked up an idea about a prayer exercise that Father Brian McDermott had given us in his input on spiritual direction during our Learning Festival. It consists of placing an object in front of you and contemplating it for a certain amount of time, without trying to "come up" with any associations. In order to make that exercise more accessible for everybody—even for "the thinkers" in the group—we had three stations in the chapel for the time of silent prayer. They included a little artificial fountain near the Great Cross, a miniature desert landscape at John of the Cross' inscription of the first stanza of the *Spiritual Canticle* and some grasses in front of our Advent tapestry.

During the sharing in the mediation chapel, we realized that this prayer proved to be a very helpful exercise for them as they openly shared the struggles they encountered while focusing on the object that was placed right in front of them. It was very touching to hear how they related this experience to their awareness of God's presence in their lives and to an openness to see God in all things.

### Senior YAP

In addition to regular YAP, we have offered two weekends this term for the seven women of the senior group. They arrive on Friday evening and can use their time for socializing among themselves or for quiet. The different components of the Saturday program include a guided *lectio* in the meditation chapel, an input in the conference room, and a time for art prayer (see picture). The two inputs were given by Sr. Connie on *The Spiritual Canticle* of St. John of the Cross. We feel that a combination of praying, teaching and expressing prayer creatively through art is needed so that their time with us is truly whole and blessed.

In addition to these program components the participants of these weekends



*A time for art prayer.*

join us for our prayer and meals. Sunday after Mass the weekend comes to a close with a brunch in our refectory.

## NEW VOCATION TEAM

Srs. Judy Long, Monika Bies and Fran Horner are the members of our new vocation team. They are working with one woman who has now visited us a couple of times and is returning in January.

**CARMEL OF OUR LADY OF THE MOUNTAINS**  
**Reno, Nevada**  
**Sr. Rosalind Bliss Forrest, OCD**



October brought us visitors from Washington, Oregon and California as we hosted the fifth West Coast Gathering of Carmelite Nuns. We began with lunch, informal tours of our monastery and grounds and then Mass in our chapel before going to the Presbyterian Conference Center at Zephyr Cove (South Lake Tahoe). Our times of prayer, discussion and sharing were enhanced by the presence and participation of our brothers, Frs. Gerald Werner and Adam Gregory Gonzales, as well as the beauty of the lakefront setting. With humor, insight and reframing skills, Susanne Terry offered us ways to embrace conflict in a spirit of community building. She was also a great resource for many who signed up for one-on-one consults with her. There was such a wonderful spirit of openness, mutual respect and deep trust among us all. “How good it is when sisters and brothers live in harmony!”



*Participants at fifth West Coast Gathering of Carmelite Nuns.*

It was shortly after the West Coast Gathering and our annual Open House/Card & Art Sale in early November that we said goodbye to Sr. Melanie—a bittersweet event for her and for us. Melanie both loved our community and deeply missed her native country and culture. With the support of her community at Wood Hall in England, Melanie has applied for and was offered a position in two different nursing programs in En-



gland. She accepted the position at Aylesbury and will begin a degree program in pediatric nursing in March. With email it is easy to stay in touch and to exchange photos of early winter snows in Yorkshire and Reno. We wish her well and hold her in our hearts and prayers.

Christmas season this year is a special time of celebrations. One of our founding sisters, Sr. Rose, celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on Sunday, December 27, this year the Feast of the Holy Family. She entered Indianapolis Carmel at age 17 and came to Reno when she was 35. A native of Minnesota, she laughingly says: “I’ve spent most of my life in Reno, so Nevada claims me as its

own.” She is the only remaining foundress on our community. Although she has slowed down physically somewhat, she still baked well over 40 dozen Christmas cookies and ten loaves of bread for benefactors during Advent. Her mind is sharp, her spirit vibrant, her laughter spontaneous and her love of Rahner noteworthy! Sr. Rose’s niece, Mary Ghera, her husband, Jerry, and their two sons joined us for Vespers and dinner on her birthday.

Another reason to celebrate: by the time you read this, Sr. Sa Ra of the Good News will have made her First Profession on January 6. It is with great joy that we share this news with you. Our retired Bishop is our weekday chaplain when he is in town, and he was

delighted that his schedule allows him to be with us that day.



*Srs. Claire and SaRa at Tahoe*

CARMEL OF THE RESURRECTION

**Oldenburg, Indiana**  
**Sr. Betty Meluch, OCD**



**W**e celebrate Rita's sixtieth year of profession on the feast

of the Assumption. A gifted seamstress, Rita continues to offer her sewing skills to the community.

In early September, having experienced a surfeit of change during the move to Oldenburg, the Holy Spirit and we made history by postulating Jean Alice for prioress, the first time our community has asked someone to serve for a third term. We also left every other sister in her current office. Susan Weber, an Indianapolis consultant, was our facilitator for this inspiring event.

Later in the month Terese, Marcie and Jean Alice attended the ACS Central Region meeting at Maria Stein, Ohio. Rev. Joseph Mitchell from the Earth and Spirit Center in Louisville gave the keynote talk on "Responding to the Ever-New Universe Story." This theme, along with prayer services modeled on excerpts from Judy Cannato's *Radical Amazement*, brought to mind much of what we had shared of the new universe story at CCA's meeting in Colombia.

Also in September, Betty celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of her profession with Walter Farrell as he celebrated seventy-five years as a Jesuit.

In October we hosted an ACS cluster meeting with a larger-than-usual number of women in attendance. Our spacious library made it possible for us to meet in one large circle that made for deep and intimate sharing that was based on the theme of the ACS Central Region meeting mentioned above. Jean Alice's take on this is that ACS and CCA seem to be on the same trajectory of transformation of consciousness.

With preparations for her 2015 celebration in the making, Saint Teresa took the spotlight in October as never before. Jean Alice has given three talks in her honor, and *Spiritual Life* was a fine source for readings for the Office. The Sisters of Saint Francis gave us full rein for the liturgy on the feast of St. Teresa, and we were lectors, homilist, cantor, servers and music planners as well as choir members. We felt right at home in their great church with a stained-glass window of Teresa above the main altar.

The CCA committee for the 2015 celebration has asked for suggestions for reading on Teresa. Rowan Williams' *Teresa of Avila* is a gem. The book is one in the group entitled *Outstanding Christian Thinkers Series* edited by Brian Davies, OP. Rowan Williams was Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford University when he wrote it. He was elected Archbishop of Canterbury in 2001. (Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg, PA & Wilton CT—1991.)



Sr. Jean Alice and Abby

As of November 14 we have a new black Labrador/Terrier mix that sometimes answers to Abby. She is about one-third of the size of our former dog, Lucy, and has about 300 percent more energy. Abby thinks

she can fly if she runs fast enough.

After a glorious liturgical celebration for Thanksgiving Day, the Sisters of Saint Francis ushered in Advent with the gentle sound of soft chimes for the entrance procession on the First Sunday of the Season. The transition invited the congregation to a time of quiet waiting.

Christmas lit up the chapel and environs with light, music and numerous crèche scenes. St. Francis' role in making the crèche a part of Christmas is stellar in the celebration here. Christmas—the hope that promises the best of times—our wish for you all in the New Year.

CARMEL OF OUR LADY AND ST. THÉRÈSE  
**Barrington, Rhode Island**  
**Sr. Roseann Gillice, OCD**



**A**mid the Christmas decorations, we celebrated again for us and for all the world the "Beauty, ever ancient, ever new." Each Christmas shines with its own new, mysterious splendor.

As we begin the New Year of 2010, it reminds me of resolutions, which remind me of a community project in which we participated these past months and continue to do so. We engaged the Shred It Co. to help clear the clutter in our lives. It protects the privacy and information of personal papers, letters, community files, etc., discarding what is no longer needed. (Staples need not be removed!) They shred on site and contribute to the recycle program. Well, maybe we are only one of a kind in this situation!

We are reading the parts of our Holy Mother's *Life* as suggested by the General Chapter's guidelines in preparation for the fifth centenary of her birth. Focusing together creates an enthusiasm for our life and a living guide for deepening our relationship with Christ.

Our Secular Order chapter is engaged in the five-year study also. Sr. Sue recently purchased the beautiful, bronze statue of Teresa which had been sculpted by Mother Mary Joseph of Port Tobacco Carmel. It is our Holy Mother journeying with staff in hand. Sue bought the same one as a Christmas gift for our Secular Order. They decided that during their five-year study each member would keep the statue for a month and then pass it on. As Wendy, their chairperson, said: "That way Teresa will be traveling again."

At the November Secular Order meeting, one person made final promises and two persons made first. At present there are six observers.

On October 11 Fr. Bonaventure was our celebrant and homilist for the public celebration of our Holy Mother Teresa. He was accompanied by the new candidate, Peter Land from Plymouth Meeting, PA, who now resides at Brighton. We all hope and pray for Peter's perseverance. After a delicious brunch, Bonaventure showed slides of the Holy Land. He had lived for a year with the friars at Muhra, the mountain of sacrifice where Elijah and the prophets of Baal held their contest.

One of our diocesan priests, Fr. Robert Caul, gave the first days of our community retreat. Father is well grounded in Ignatius' Exercises and breathes the enthusiasm of Vatican II's spirit. I was reminded of Ilia Delio's conferences at our CCA meeting last June.

What a shock to hear of the death of Sr. Anna Maria from Tübingen Carmel on October 28. Our Sr. Mary Margaret, who died on October 19, 2008, and Anna Maria were good friends. They were in contact with each other as chairpersons of CCA and the German Federation as well as beyond their times of leadership. They must be exulting forever in the surprise and joy of reunion.

Sr. Eileen Mary retreated to Barrington from Boston Carmel for her annual time of prayer in solitude and silence. It is always a blessing to have someone in retreat.

The Diocesan Gregorian Choir performed their annual fund-raiser for us on

November 15. This year they included some Christmas songs at the request of Sr. Genevieve. One of the tenors sang "Mary Did You Know?" the song made popular by the country singer Kenny Rogers. It is so beautiful and scriptural. Another song presented was a rocking spiritual, "The Virgin Mary Had A Baby Boy." Helen used to sing it in Cameroon!

Speaking of Helen Diyla Mengnjo who came to us last August for a live-in and who is now a candidate. We gladly accepted her and celebrated her return at a ritual during Evening Prayer of All Saints. It wasn't too long a time before she experienced the thrill of a blizzard! The size of the snow-ball is rather uncommon, but that is one of the "cultural things" one learns gradually! Helen made her first snow-woman with Sr. Beth.



*Helen makes a snow ball.*



*Sr. Beth and the snow-woman.*

In November and December we had the joy of workshops and visits with Frs. Kevin, Kieran and our provincial, John Sullivan. Our being together was enriched by their studies and sharing news of the Order.

For some reason, this fall has been full of falls. At close hand, two of our own ended up with bruised eyes and faces. Others were friends. This reminded one of our sisters of a humorous true story. In a community of aging sisters, many had accidents and landed on the floor. The superior finally announced at supper one evening: "We will not have anymore fallen women in this house"!

### **SICK AND DECEASED**

Prayer is requested for Sr. Patricia's sister-in-law, Pat, who is very ill and for her husband Jack, who suffers with her in her illness.

Sr. Vilma's brother Jim will have a pacemaker implanted in the near future.

Sr. Roseann's brother Joe died on November 17 after suffering a severe stroke. He was in a coma for ten days, not able to communicate, though his wife, Nancy, said a smile seemed to be on his lips. She stayed with him all that time at Hospice; their children were with him when he died peacefully. Nancy said she thinks of Joe constantly.

Your prayer for everyone is greatly appreciated.



*Helen and the snow-woman.*

CARMEL OF THE HOLY FAMILY  
Cleveland, Ohio  
Sr. Barbara Losh, OCD



Greetings to all in this new year!

Autumn is the most active season for our Carmelite Guild. Some thirty-five to forty women attended the Guild's September meeting at the monastery. Following Vespers of Our Lady in the chapel, we hosted a guided tour of the first floor of the monastery, the garden and our hermitage. The ladies frequently remarked how clean and peaceful everything seemed. Occasionally it is good to see one's familiar surroundings through the eyes of others! A display of our archival materials was a big attraction, and one member was thrilled to see her mother as a young woman in one of the photos. Most of all, the event provided an opportunity for sisters and Guild ladies to know one another better.



Sr. Mary K. chats with two Guild members on our front porch

The Guild's annual fall luncheon and boutique in November was a big success, due to many hours of loyal labor. At their yearly Mass of installation of new members on December 8, these generous friends presented us with a large check to be used as needed.

On October 1 we celebrated the liturgy for the feast of St. Thérèse with Bishop Roger Gries, OSB. The chapel was full, the singing vibrant, and one could sense the presence of Thérèse in the faith of the people assembled. Bishop Roger has a warm, down-to-earth manner that both commands attention and invites reflection, and he spoke of St. Thérèse in a way that seemed to touch many hearts.



Sr. Vera Lea and Sr. Pat O'Brien prepare roses to be distributed at Mass on October 1.

We were so pleased to welcome Quinn Connors, O.Carm. on the feast of St. Teresa to begin our community retreat. For several days Quinn reflected with us on the scripture texts concerning the prophet Elijah, exploring both their biblical meaning and their place in the Carmelite charism. The retreat was a rich experience of grounding ourselves once again in the vision of the hermits of

Mount Carmel. At the same time Quinn posed questions which challenged us to live our prophetic vocation today, as individuals and together. We enjoyed an additional quiet week of retreat after Quinn left us.

In November we were again privileged to have Sr. Sherryl White, CSJ for two days of community reflection and planning. Working with a facilitator who knows us can make the work both more challenging and more fruitful! Sherryl's gentleness and insight helped us to set necessary and realistic goals for the coming year. On the practical level, we will be carrying out several costly maintenance and repair projects this year, and we ask your prayers for their successful completion.

Our Advent was quiet and beautiful, and winter did not come blowing in with cold and snow until very late in December, a rarity in Cleveland. On some of the ordinary days of Advent, we like to begin our morning liturgy in darkness, with only candlelight, thus adding to our sense of silent waiting. Fr. Michael Woost came to preside on the feast of St. John of the Cross and preached a magnificent homily on the centrality of Christ's love for each of us, as this theme is found in John's writings. Mike is a diocesan priest and a professor at our seminary. He has had a special interest in Carmelite spirituality for many years and is a gifted preacher. He recently gave a weekend retreat for the Secular Order group in Cleveland on Teresa's *Interior Castle*.

As we move into 2010, we joyfully anticipate beginning our reading of Saint Teresa's *Life* and reflecting upon it together. May this new year bring us all closer together in her spirit!

**Latrobe, Pennsylvania**

**Sr. Shirley Marie Ahern, OCD**

**W**e here in western Pennsylvania would like to wish you all many blessings throughout the New Year. It has been a very busy fall and early winter for us here in Latrobe, and we are hoping things will quiet down a little in the New Year.



We have begun our preparation for the fifth centenary of our Holy Mother Teresa's birth. After reading the materials sent by the Generalate, community discussions led us to decide to commit an hour to discussion on her *Life* every Tuesday morning following our regularly scheduled community meetings. We decided to read and discuss the whole text as a community rather than picking out only some key readings. The book was divided into sections and each sister signed up to be the facilitator for the discussion of one or more of the sections. Each facilitator would be free to do whatever she was comfortable with for preparation. While this process was being set up, we spent two sessions re-watching the first three segments of the Spanish films on Holy Mother, which helped us in visualizing some of the things she experienced. Sr. Marie Elizabeth was the facilitator for the first discussion covering the Prologue and first three chapters. A week before, she provided us with some key points from Fr. Kieran's Introduction that we need to keep in mind while reading, some questions on how Holy Mother's childhood and adolescence influenced her discernment and entrance into Carmel, and asked us to compare it to our own process. We have now had two sessions and our discussions have been very interesting, productive and enlightening. We feel the graces coming from the whole community and Order concurrently reading and discussing the same text.

Srs. Mary and Marie Elizabeth were off to the annual Vocation Day on September 18 at Steubenville in Ohio. There they found sisters from Piedmont and Salt Lake Carmels, Fr. Adam Gonzalez from the California Province and Fr. Michael Berry from the Washington Province. The Carmelites were well represented. We are hoping that some of those who expressed an interest in Carmel may continue to listen to and respond to God's call in their lives.

Frs. Adam and Michael came to stay with us for a few days after the meeting. They joined the community for dinner, met with some of the sisters individually,



*Sr. Anne, Fr Michael, Sr Anne Marya and Fr. Adam in our refectory.*

and had several meetings with Srs. Mary and Marie Elizabeth to discuss vocation issues. It was nice to have them here. The day they left, Sr. Josette Carter from Little Rock came for a visit, and she will be here until after Christmas. Fr. Jude Peters was in town for a family wedding and celebrated Mass for us on September 26 and then came back on the feast of St. Thérèse to concelebrate with Fr. Michael Berry, who preached for our public Eucharistic celebration. In December Fr. Gerald Werner from the California province visited for a few days. While he was here he gave us two conferences, one on "John of the Cross in the Catechism" and the other on "Reading John of the Cross as an Interactive Exercise." The OCDS community celebrated their annual Christmas party here on December 13. It is a custom that the sisters join them in singing Christmas carols (Sr. Marie Elizabeth provides the music) and partake of the wonderful food they bring to share. We also get any leftovers, which this year

provided three full community meals. The cooks were very pleased.

We put in a larger garden this year to try to help with the food bills, but we had to compete with the groundhogs and rabbits to get our share. The things they didn't eat (pumpkins, pole-beans, Swiss chard, beets, blueberries, currants, eggplants, and basil) produced very well, and we enjoyed the fresh vegetables very much. Our tomatoes succumbed to the blight, although we did manage to get a few meals. Our benefactors inundated us with home-grown potatoes, carrots, turnips, cabbage, canning tomatoes, squashes and fresh fruit of all kinds,

which we have not only enjoyed fresh but have also frozen and canned. The bees gave us a good amount of early honey, which was taken off in July, but there was only enough honey in September to hopefully see them through the winter.

Our Sr. Anne Marya has had a difficult fall. In September she was having severe pain in her shoulder and knee, which made it difficult for her to use the walker. She managed to get some relief from having shots in both joints. Then one day in October she did not come to Mass. Sr. Theodora, our infirmarian, went out to find her and ended up calling 911 to take her to the ER. They thought she might have had a slight stroke but all the tests came back negative. They kept her for two days for observation and more tests. It was decided she could be sent home but needed some physical and occupational therapy to get her strength back. As we were trying to get this set up, her strength continued to decline and five days later, on the first morning of our community retreat, she woke up having trouble vocalizing her thoughts. Again fearing a stroke the ambulance was called and she made another trip to the hospital. It was determined that she had a severe infection and needed IV antibiotics. During this set-



back sister became bedridden, and she was signed up for three turns visiting Sr. Anne Marya in the hospital.

We came out of retreat on Halloween, and it was obvious from the costumes this year that everyone had more time to plan. We had a Russian Pilgrim, the Queen of Hearts, a thankful cured leper, Holy Mother Teresa, a dogcatcher and distraught dog owner, Bl. Kateri, a Guamanian dancer in grass skirt, Queen Ester, Zaccheus, a recycle nun, and the Seven Last Plagues.



*Sr. Maria decorating the Christmas tree.*

Advent went by very fast this year. It is really interesting to have people, whom we see during Advent, asking us if we are all ready and decorated for Christmas. We have to explain that we see Advent as a time of waiting and therefore do not decorate until one or two days before Christmas; but then we continue to celebrate until Epiphany while most people take their decorations down on New Year's or before. This Advent saw a lot of cooking going on. Sr. Marie Elizabeth made her usual 100 dozen cookies to give to some of our benefactors (they tell us they wait all year to get that container) and several of the sisters made various kinds of breads to be eaten during the feast days. The house smelled wonderful and of course, we were all fasting.



*Sr. Joanne examining the tree that fell in our front yard.*

Our weather this fall was somewhat unusual. One night after Christmas we again had very severe winds (the building occasionally shook and there were periods of very strange whistling sounds). We lost a tree in the front yard but were blessed to have it fall away from the house. If it had fallen in the opposite direction, we would have had major damage, as you can see in the photo.

On December 31, we had our usual retreat day with a holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament from 11:00 p.m. to midnight when we greeted each other with sisterly affection as the New Year begins.

Know that all our Carmelite family will be in our thoughts and prayers, as will all the needs of our country and the world.

### **CARMEL OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN Eldridge, Iowa**

**Sr. Miriam Hogan, OCD**



**A**s we make our way to the chapel these days, we find ourselves looking out the window and seeing wide fields now shorn of their abundance. This enables us to see our neighbors once again. In addition, there is that first eagle of the season bringing God's blessings for the coming winter.

One day while having a conversation with our farmer friend concerning the amount of rain this season, we heard him say: "I never worry about something I have no control over." Later, we put that quote in our collection of quotes. Truly, we never grow tired of inspirational

quotes or giving thanks for the fields of our land or our friendly neighbors.

We also need to give honorable mention to the intense red color of our *Burning Bush*. It was in this kind of setting that God spoke to Moses. Unlike Moses, we refrain from taking off our shoes. In all of this, it is easy to see why God addressed the spot as "holy ground." (Exodus 3:4)

On October 15, Bishop Martin Amos came to celebrate Mass for the feast of St. Teresa. We have grown to appreciate his homilies so much that we put his notes up this time on our website. Just to give an example, we include his ending remarks:

"But I am suggesting you go to the well with true humility and ask what it is the Lord wishes you to take up or what is it that God wishes you to put away.

It may be something very little and very simple.

It may be something very important and necessary. How thirsty are you?

Where there is water, there is life. Where there is no water, there is no life. I am the living water come down from heaven."

As usual, we had our special Christmas processions for nine days before Christmas, singing a song to "Our Lady of O" each evening. Our Sr. Mary Anne Schuman, O.C.D. of joyful memory, composed the music to a poem written by Rev. James Galvin, C.Ss.R. Mary Anne also composed music for the Christmas Office



and for the Office of most of the major feast days. Her music and her joyful spirit are especially remembered this time of year.

Finally in closing, we dedicate a special Christmas prayer to all of the sisters that are so much a part of our life of prayer. We pray that you will experience the nearness of God and the fulfillment of your deepest desire. Wishing you the deep peace of our new born Prince of Peace and the loving presence of Our Lady during the coming New Year.

Sr. Miriam Hogan, O.C.D. and  
Sr. Mary Jo Loebig, O.C.D.

**CARMEL OF THE SACRED HEART  
AND OF THE HOLY FACE**  
**Danville, Pennsylvania**  
**Sr. Angela Pikus, OCD**



The program proposed by the Generalate as preparation for our Holy Mother's fifth centenary was begun here with enthusiasm. We formed a committee to guide the monthly meetings, included a day of recollection preceding each meeting and created a discussion plan. Our Holy Mother's *Life* will be read during the year and the monthly discussions will be about the *Life*. The meetings are bringing forth new insights, shared graces and a sense of deepening the spirit of our life. We're grateful for this Order-wide program and are committed to it.

Along with this study and reflection we are having in community, a CD series on "Christian Mystics," which includes John of the Cross, Thérèse, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, Simone Weil, and seven others. The talks seem to give the heart of the experience and teaching of each mystic along with a brief sketch of his/her life.

In the fall we worked on our durable power of attorney and living will papers, reviewing and renewing them. A sister friend from the Sisters of SS. Cyril and Methodius motherhouse who is a notary came to notarized the papers, while a couple from Elysburg, friends for many years, served as witnesses.

Another important business item was the work on our corporation papers. The Articles of Incorporation were amended to provide for the change in our name and location, along with two other necessary changes. The By-laws were modified with small but important changes, based on the amendments. Our attorney and financial advisor served us well in this matter.

Three of our sisters, Joan, Joan and Pat, enjoyed the Labor Day picnic hosted by our sisters in Baltimore. It was a wonderful visit with all of them and a sharing in liturgy, good picnic fare and good conversation!

In early October Srs. Joan and Joan went to the ACS regional meeting held in the nearby Passionist Monastery at Clarks Summit. Sr. Joan was elected regional coordinator for a term of two years.

On the feast of our Holy Mother, our Sr. Pat arrived in Buea Carmel in Cameroon; she has a three year transfer there, which will be renewed each year. The challenge will be the climate! Mother Rosa and two others met her at the airport in Douala and then drove the five hours by jeep to Carmel in Buea. At Carmel, the sisters welcomed her warmly, happy to have her back. En route to Cameroon Pat had permission to stop at Kilmacud Carmel in Ireland to visit a sister friend and the community. The sisters offered great kindness and hospitality; it was a refreshing break in the long flight and Pat reveled in the green sod and the cheery wit of Eire!

Families and friends visited through the fall, including three of our Beacon sisters (Rita, Jeannie and Michaelene) who drove down for an afternoon's visit. And, four of oursisters made their retreats at Beacon Carmel, so conducive to prayer with the silence and solitude of the new

wing and the woods. Srs. Anna and Pat made their retreats in September and Srs. Joan and Angela went in late November.

The Elysburg Community Choir came to Maria Hall early in December to present their Christmas concert. The LARC covenant (Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic) held their annual prayer service with gift giving for foster children at the Basilica, the Church of the SSCM Sisters, on the usual day, first Sunday of Advent.

A string ensemble of local high school and college students with their director came shortly before Christmas to give a carol program for us. It was a treat to see the young people so well trained, young men and women playing violins and a young woman playing a bass viol about 12 inches taller than she! On the third Sunday of Advent, our Secular Carmelites gathered in the large parlor here at Maria Hall to provide a Christmas party for us, bringing cookies, beverages and a small gift for each sister, along with Christmas billets and a spiritual offering from each Secular Carmelite.

And a special visitor: the pilgrim icon of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 19. The beautiful replica of the painting/tilma was brought from Harrisburg to Maria Hall for veneration. The time was short—only 24 hours—but the visit was a real grace.

To all our sisters and brothers in the Order a blessed New Year!

*Stepping high, alert,  
so keen on moving forward,  
the pup is led home.*

—Rosemary Kluepfel

**CARMEL OF OUR LADY AND ST. JOSEPH**  
**Concord, New Hampshire**  
**Sr. Hilary Case, OCD**



**L**it from within by the mystery of the Incarnation, Christmas and the New Year are indeed feasts of celebration and reflection. We pray for the gifts of wonder and gratitude, and we celebrate the gift of Christ in each other. Up here, the snow and the wind blow and make us remember the Holy Family's exclusion from the inn and the many who are homeless and suffering now. The peace of Christmas would be hollow if our spirits failed to go out to others. We pray, we seek social justice, and at the same time, we rejoice. We reflect on all of it. So, as we celebrate the many solemnities and feasts of Christmas, we are happy to take this time to reflect on the blessings God has given us since summer and to share them with you.

If you were to visit us, you would notice some home improvements of our buildings and grounds. Last summer we dug out our old dilapidated wooden sign, and it has been replaced with a spiffy granite sign in two colors, light gray for the pillars and deep rose with black lettering for the sign itself. Having the right sign to mark our driveway really does lift our spirits as we pass in and out on our daily errands. This fall Sr. Miryam had access to a borrowed Excavator. She gleefully used it to dig up dead trees and to transplant misplaced bushes we had long forgotten. The Excavator became part of our lives to the point where it revealed that it is a girl and its name is Bessie. We were sorry to see "her" return to her home in early November. Yet work remained. On foot, Sr. Miryam and Sr. Hilary sawed dead branches and pruned almost everything in sight. If you are able to visit us, you

will no longer be snagged by overgrown bushes, and you will find several new walkways for prayer.

In September, Sr. Ruth Boyle from Oldenburg Carmel did just that, making her retreat with us. We enjoyed catching up with her news and sharing ours. In late October, Sr. Joan Bourne from Danville Carmel joined us for three weeks, two of retreat and one of fellowship. She helped Srs. Miryam and Hilary with the garden and baked us some delicious bread and was open to do just about anything. Sr. Joan was also able to be part of our community retreat, which this year was led by Fr. Daniel Chowning, OCD. Fr. Daniel reflected on Elizabeth of the Trinity, opening up parts of her writings not yet published which he has translated himself.

On October 30, Mary Frances Mure arrived at our monastery, and on December 28 she entered the postulancy at Vespers. Using the symbol of lit candles, one for Sr. Theresa, our formator, and one for Mary Frances, Sr. Claudette reminded us what John of the Cross once said, that the Holy Spirit is "the chief agent, guide, and mover of souls" and the Living Flame of Love to whom we surrender ourselves all the way through our Carmelite lives. Later in the evening the sisters processed from the oratory holding votive candles as Sr. Claudette formally introduced Mary Frances to her cell. The reading from Kees Waaijman's *The Mystical Space of Carmel* invited all of us to ponder why we are here and how we may better integrate the full meaning of the cell in our lives.

Mary Frances brings a gift for music and a love of liturgy. In addition, she has worked with animals, both wild and domestic, as a "vet tech." When our beloved Bunny (a.k.a. Cottontail) developed enteritis, Mary Frances supervised her treatment and brought her through. We are delighted to welcome Mary Frances. We now have four sisters in initial formation. Sr. Marie continues her novitiate, Sr. Hilary is scheduled for first profession January 10—details in the next issue—



and Sr. Miryam has begun her second year of the juniorate.

Sr. Theresa is up and almost running after undergoing a knee replacement on December 2. She was able to come home after only two days in the hospital. Therapists visit her regularly here at the monastery. In between visits, Sr. Miryam keeps her on track with the exercises that the therapists assign. Sr. Theresa has recovered very fast. She discarded her walker within a few days, though she keeps it for carrying supplies. She has a cane, though she can walk without it. Most impressive, during the third week she discovered that she can do stairs. As her exercises become more difficult in order to challenge new muscles, Sr. Theresa's spirit just gets more determined. Watching her make progress, we rejoice.

At Halloween, we were pleased to be visited by the families who come to Mass with us. Costumes varied from the scary—an 11-year-old executioner with ax—to the humorous—Dad in the morning. We provided sacks of treats, and the kids supplied the atmosphere. Costumes are a great way to alter your accustomed perspective on life!

Last but not least, Fr. Kevin Culligan drove all the way from Brighton to celebrate our Christmas Vigil Mass (7:00 p.m. "Midnight Mass"). Thanks so much, Fr. Kevin!

We wish you all much joy and many graces between now and the next issue and for the whole year.

## Beacon, New York

Sr. Rita Donahue, OCD



We had a full chapel on October 1 when we celebrated the feast of St. Thérèse

with Mass and the Blessing of the Roses. Our celebrant and homilist was Fr. David Nolan, pastor of St. Joachim–St. John the Evangelist parish in Beacon. His homily interestingly developed the theme of *St. Thérèse and the Priesthood*.

We welcomed Sr. Barbara Jean from Baltimore Carmel to make her retreat here in October. Then in November we welcomed Srs. Joan Lundy and Angela from Danville for their retreats. It was a joy and a grace to have our sisters make their retreats here.

Several of us attended a day held at Graymoor in November sponsored by the Metropolitan Association of Contemplative Communities (MACC). Sr. Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ spoke on “The Quest for the Living God: Ecological Considerations.” Her presentation was a dynamic and instructive immersion into ecological theology.

Sr. Chris Partisano, CSJ was with us in December to continue as facilitator for items remaining from our previous meetings. One of the topics we discussed was our spiritual life. Chris had us list elements which comprise and contribute to our spiritual life. The full newsprint revealed how tremendously blessed we are in all that contributes to this aspect of our Carmelite life and vitality. We then considered the following questions: 1.) Am I

able to partake of these elements? 2.) If not, what needs to be done so that I can? 3.) What might we do to provide for each other? Realizing that some needs interface with our prayer life, this last question stimulated some creative thinking.

President Obama’s helicopters flew over our monastery on the evening of December 2 when he addressed the nation from nearby West Point Military Academy. We had heard that he would fly into Stewart Airport in Newburgh on Air Force One, and then be flown by helicopter to West Point. We knew that the contingent would include more than one helicopter for security reasons. Some of us heard helicopters overhead just before recreation but did not actually see them. However, a few of the nuns did both hear and see three helicopters after his speech which they assumed were flying him back to Stewart for his return trip.



*Mariachis playing at wedding in Puebla. Srs. Judy and Marjorie in background.*

Sr. Marjorie was ecstatic to see an article on Puebla City in Mexico featured in the December 2009 issue of *Smithsonian* magazine. The article seemed a companion piece to Marjorie’s own “travelogue” of her and Sr. Judy Long’s trip to Mexico which she had related to us in detail, along with pictures. The mariachis pictured in the article resembled those in a picture that Marjorie took as they passed a similar group in Puebla City. The article also mentions religious sites, including the cathedral and Rosary chapel, which Marjorie and Judy visited.

Welcome aboard to our sisters of San

Rafael Carmel! We are pleased to hear that you are now members of CCA.

Our vocation directors, Srs. Michaelene and Marita, belong to Region II of the National Religious Vocation Conference. The group held an Advent Day of Prayer at our monastery on December 7. A presentation was given by Br. Michael Laratonda, FMS on “Waiting with Mary: In the Cave of the Heart.” The day also included prayer and quiet time.

Using the guidelines from the Generalate, we have begun the five-year preparation for the fifth centenary of the birth of our Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus as proposed by Fr. Luis Arostegui, OCD at the 2009 General Chapter. Wednesday is our usual house meeting day. One Wednesday each month we are replacing the meeting with discussion of one of the designated texts from Holy Mother’s *Book of Her Life*. Each sister has read and reflected on the text beforehand and is invited to share her reflections. We are finding this study, reflection and sharing together uplifting and energizing. It touches the deeper level of our Carmelite life.

When our Sr. Mary Josephine Nesser died last January, her family were unable to come from Rochester, NY for her funeral. One day in December Sr. Sadie Nesser, RC, one of Mary Jo’s blood sisters, came for a visit. After dinner several sisters accompanied her to Mary Jo’s grave in nearby St. Joachim’s Cemetery. Sr. Sadie brought a lovely Christmas wreath from the Nesser family, which she laid at the grave.

May God’s Love enfold you from beginning to end in this new year of twenty-ten.

**CARMEL OF OUR LADY AND ST. JOSEPH**  
**Boston, Massachusetts**  
**Sr. Mary Clare Doherty, OCD**



**AMONG OUR VISITORS**

In September we had a visit from our vicar for religious, Marian Batho, CSJ who joined us for lunch. She returned in November to preside at our elections, and we shared lunch once more.

We also were happy to welcome Sr. Marie's parents and her sister Christine in September. They had traveled down from Canada for a few days' visit.

The Christmas season brought a number of visitors. This year our friend Sallyanne McColgan was able to come by. Sallyanne, a clinical psychologist, who had two doctorates while just out of her teens, is also a former mountain climber and has scaled just about every peak in the world. Now she has no feeling in her legs and wears special braces that help her to locate them. She is on a stomach tube, has just finished chemo, lives with constant nerve pain and has an absolutely marvelous disposition and sense of humor.

**SOME OF OUR CELEBRATIONS**

In September Philip Dabney, CSSR from Mission Church, celebrated with us the Mass in honor of St. Thérèse. He, we and Taras (the cantor) sang the Eucharistic prayers. Both the Mass and homily were very moving.

We had another celebration in October but this one was mingled with sadness. Sr. Anne, the prioress at Danvers Carmel, died unexpectedly one morning when going to help their infirm sister. Sr. Anne was very much loved and with very good reason. We were all able to get to the wake or the funeral.

In November, Roberta Nobleman and Janet Beddoe performed their play on Edith Stein, "Little Esther," here at the monastery. We had not seen Janet act before and were quite impressed with her depiction of Erna. Those in attendance were very enthusiastic about the experience.

On December 8, the students from a parish school in the area came to Mass and did a liturgical dance meditation after Communion. A few times each year there is a different group of girls who come.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of December we celebrated Mary Clare's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of religious vows and 25<sup>th</sup> year in Carmel with some first-class acts from the resident entertainers.

And the grandest celebration of this trimester was, of course, our Midnight Mass on Christmas. Fr. Matt Allman, a Redemptorist, came up from Maryland to celebrate it with us.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH**

We had our retreat at the end of September into October with Barbara Metz, SND giving the input.

Fr. Sal Sciarba, OCD came in October for visitation in preparation for our elections. These took place in November with Bernadette Therese becoming our prioress, Srs. Mary Teresa, first counselor, and Eileen Mary, second counselor.

Back to September. Sr. Vilma gave our ICFP year an excellent start with input on "Interior Peace in Our Holy Mother." We had two new members come to the program for the first time; Peter had just entered with the friars in Brighton and Helen who had joined the Barrington community. In October our speaker was Fr. Richard Lennan, an Australian teaching at BC. He spoke on "A Theology of Church," a topic he'll continue in January. Also in October we went up to Concord Carmel where Bonaventure, OCD spoke on "Elijah, Mt. Carmel, Prayer and the Rule." In November, Fr. Robert Congdon's topic was "The Sacrament of Reconciliation." Father, who had been at St. John's seminary but is presently in a parish, is also a concert pianist, and dur-

ing lunch he played for us (we let him finish his!). The second November class was in Brighton where Kevin Culligan, OCD spoke on the "Prayer of Recollection and Our Holy Mother." Tom Stegman, SJ from BC's School of Ministry and Theology gave us input on Luke's Gospel. The Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, of which he had been a part, has merged with BC.

We have been following the suggestions sent from the Generalate, using works of our Holy Mother for theological reflection every other week.

**OF OTHER THINGS**

Jean-Marie took a wild ride one day in November that thankfully ended with no one hurt. A friend had been asking to drive some of the sisters to appointments, but had had no takers due in part to her driving. Jeanne-Marie took her offer. However, our friend was on a prescribed medicine that, unbeknownst to her, was having some ill side-effects, and she became confused at a busy intersection, speeding up when approaching a red light, running into a car from California and splitting the bumper, knocking down a small tree, going up on the sidewalk, running into a hurricane fence and taking it down before coming to an enforced stop.

**PRAYERS**

Sr. Agnes' brother is awaiting eye surgery in order to regain his sight. We ask that you would keep Anthony Ahn in your prayers.

The priests here in our diocese have a great need to be remembered in prayer at this time.