



Carmelite Communities Associated

Baltimore, MD

Barrington, RI

Beacon, NY

Boston, MA

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Danville, PA

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Oldenburg, IN

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San Rafael, CA

CCA Notes to our Donors

Spring 2021

Dear Friends,

We are happy to present the spring edition of our CCA donor newsletter. In this edition you will find information about key initiatives that are either currently underway or will be starting soon. These are the implementation of the CCA Shared Services Plan through the establishment of a Shared Services Collaborative, and the planned revitalization of the CCA website. A spotlight feature on Sr. Celia Ashton, OCD, of the Baltimore Carmel will give you an opportunity to meet an engaged contributor to CCA, especially through her involvement in the on-going formation program, *Women at the Well Dialogues*, which is now being held virtually via Zoom. Additionally, you will meet a CCA member community, the Carmel of Reno and Sr. Rosalind Forrest, OCD, who is currently serving as a member of the CCA Leadership Team. We hope that this information provides insight into the important role that CCA plays in assisting its members and how your support is making it possible to offer programs that meet the needs of the sisters.

May your celebration of the death and resurrection of our Lord be a blessed one.

Carmel and St. Joseph

Pope Francis has proclaimed 2021 as the Year of St. Joseph, and we will celebrate his feast in a special way on March 19. This custom began in the western church in the early 14th century, but it was adopted and promoted in a special way by St. Teresa of Jesus (Avila), our founder. She was so certain that since St. Joseph was chosen to care for the Holy Family, then surely, he could watch over and care for her first foundation. Thus, it was named San Jose. Many monasteries named San Jose were soon to follow.

Even when a monastery is not directly named after St Joseph, every monastery has his statue in a special place of honor. Since our monasteries rely so heavily on alms for their support, in the early days of Carmel the sisters developed a method for bringing their special needs to St. Joseph's attention. When a need arose that wasn't being met, the nuns would lay a paper at the feet of his statue describing their request. Tradition holds that the saint never failed us.

Because of that, our special benefactors became known as *St. Josephs*. Or we would say that St. Joseph brought it.

The special need that CCA is laying at the feet of St. Joseph now is our fundraising efforts for the Shared Services Collaborative Common Fund.

In these times, you are our St. Josephs, and we are forever grateful for your support and care. May our Lord bless you on his and your feast day! Thank you so much for all that you do for us. And, oh yes, it's ok to celebrate St. Patrick too. We understand that they are friends.

Every Tuesday can be a Giving Tuesday!

Donations can be made via the Donate button on our web site. Or checks can be made out to CCA, Inc. or credit card information can be sent to

Sr. Marjorie Robinson, OCD
Carmelite Monastery
89 Hiddenbrook Drive
Beacon, NY 12508

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask them of Sr. Judy Murray,
judymurray@baltimorecarmel.org

Shared Services Update - by Kate Asselin, GHR

Grant Project Manager

We are profoundly grateful to the GHR Foundation (<http://www.ghrfoundation.org/>) which has awarded CCA a three-year \$150,000 grant for the implementation of the Shared Services Collaborative (SSC). This award follows the Foundation's initial \$80,000 grant to develop an SSC Plan to support commitment to contemplative life by outsourcing and sharing the costs of administrative services. The majority of grant funds provide for the services of the project manager. In December 2020, all CCA members signed an agreement to formally establish the Shared Services Collaborative which was based on the previously approved plan.

Implementation began in 2021 with an independent professional review of each monastery's administrative operations. A key finding was that all of the CCA communities that were reviewed demonstrated excellence in the stewardship of financial resources. The Collaborative is now in the process of contracting a range of services to meet identified community needs including benefits management; accounting; technology and website services; archival management and others. Future plans for the Collaborative include educational programming and expanding membership to include other Carmelite associations. Additional funds are being sought to establish a common fund which can be accessed to subsidize the cost of the actual services making it more affordable for the communities to contract for them.

The Spotlight

This is a series meant to introduce our donors to the sisters they are supporting.



Sister Celia

Sr. Celia Ashton of Baltimore Carmel made her final vows in 2019. She describes herself as “energetic, passionate about the charism, excited about the future, and hopeful.”

Reflecting specifically on what the *Women at the Well* program means to her. She said:

It is an opportunity not only to deepen relationships that have been formed over CCA’s 51-year history, but also to share our spirituality more deeply with one another. Clearly there are friendships that have existed for a long time, but those also are deepening. I certainly think it is a way to understand one another better. *W@W* supports not only our charism and Carmelite life, but also the needs of the sisters in their communities.

For the first two years *W@W* focused on discernment and provided resources that the communities could use in their individual discernment processes. It assisted the communities that were making significant decisions about their future. The participants often wrote to say that they were using the input and found it very helpful for their decision-making discussions.

Since some communities have now made those decisions and are living into their new realities, *W@W* is focusing on deepening our life of prayer and our contemplative identity. The planning team asks for feedback to guide subsequent sessions. It is an iterative experience that seeks the guidance of the Spirit through the voice of the membership to put together a program that will be helpful.

Regarding our future together, deeper relationships are only going to continue to serve us well. We gather as sisters around the well bringing our water jugs. The participation that we have had is incredible. From the beginning about two-thirds of the membership have been able to participate in any given session. When we form small groups, we try to have sisters from different monasteries relating to one another. This virtual platform enables the entire membership to attend, even enabling sisters to participate from assisted living facilities. In the past this was not possible. It also facilitates the integration of newer members helping to build stronger structures and friendships promoting the mindset of CCA as a community of communities. Every time the sisters log in to the Zoom meeting there is such a burst of energy. Our care for one another is very evident. Engaging the voices of the newer members will only continue to serve CCA well.

Part of the Shared Services Collaborative empowers and enables the communities to obtain the technologies that they need to more efficiently and effectively participate in programs using Zoom. More and more of what we will do will be using a virtual platform. While this doesn’t take the place of in-person meetings, it certainly is very effective in helping us to stay connected with one another and deepen these relationships.

CCA will no doubt utilize the virtual platform to the fullest extent possible in the future. Hopefully donors will be excited to support this and all of our on-going formation programs.

The CCA Website is being updated!

The current CCA Website www.ccacarmels.org was designed and developed six years ago. A website team, made up of sisters from four of our monasteries has been formed to review the current website. Our desire is to increase its functionality and usefulness for the public, our Association, and its member

communities. Brief summaries of ideas expressed at the team's first meeting, besides the obvious need to update content, include:

- Provide a platform for our members to share information and links to their public outreach efforts. This would encourage and allow the public to participate in our Carmelite prayer and tradition.
- Provide a daily thought or quote from notable Carmelites for private reflection. This would be a means for sharing our rich Carmelite heritage and nourishing the spirituality of visitors to our site.
- Provide additional links to Internet resources on Carmelite Spirituality.
- Provide a search function to make archival material more accessible to members. This would improve navigation in our Members Only Section of the website.
- Provide, again in our Members Only Section, a platform for our member Carmels to share information, ideas, and resources.
- Provide a plan to keep the website current and relevant.

Implementation of these hopes and desires will require funding to pay for technical assistance in both planning and developing these improvements for the benefit of CCA's members and visitors to our website.

A Visit with Sr. Rosalind

In 2018 I was elected to CCA Leadership at our biennial General Assembly. Our responsibility is to implement the aims and goals which were established at that meeting. Some of my duties as a member of the Leadership Team are to act as: liaison for communication with four of our communities; secretary for our Leadership Meetings; administrator of chronicles to be sent to our archives; and one of several planners for our 2020 General Assembly (which was cancelled/postponed because of Covid and the fact that we are currently required to have an "in-person" Assembly).

Within a month after our election, a new document for world-wide contemplative religious communities of women was promulgated by Rome.



Sister Rosalind
(*St. Joseph painting done*
by Reno's Sr. Celeste)

As a result, we needed to revise and update our previously approved CCA Statutes according to the instructions of *Cor orans*, which added to our responsibilities as a Leadership Team. This is an ongoing process of seeking input from our members, consultation with other Carmelites and canon lawyers, and typing several drafts (including reasons for changes) before we vote to submit the final update for approval.

During 2019 it was my privilege to visit three different CCA communities as part of our goal to provide active and mutual support of each member community, both by listening to and learning from the members as well as offering possible resources to assist them. I was so enriched by our common charism and by the diversity of ways we live our Carmelite contemplative vocations. Meeting sisters in their own environments and getting to know them a little more personally was a special treat.

The challenges of leadership have stretched me, and made me even more grateful for the cooperative, creative, and joyful spirit of the many sisters with whom I have been working. Because of a new CCA

education project back in December 2018 many of us learned how to navigate Zoom. Little did we realize, pre-Covid, that this would be a necessary and wonderful way to connect with each other both formally and informally.



*Sr. Claire
composes music
at the keyboard.*

Serving on CCA Leadership would not be possible without the support of my own community (Carmel of Reno, Nevada). As in other monasteries, in addition to our hours of prayer, each of us has ordinary daily tasks such as cleaning, cooking, shopping, maintenance, writing thank you notes to those who so generously support us, etc. In addition, we are blessed with both artistic and musical talents, and have been working to support ourselves as best we can by designing, printing, packaging, and selling our own greeting cards, as well as composing music for prayer, and making several of our own CDs.



*Srs. Maria and Ann in Reno's
print shop.*

Prior to Covid restrictions we welcomed people to our chapel for Mass, prayer services, and occasional mornings of recollection with talks by the sisters and/or guest speakers. Last fall, when we had to cancel even outdoor Masses (weather), we began to develop short talks, prayer services, and musical reflections for our new YouTube channel so that we could continue to share the riches of our spiritual heritage with others.

Sister Rosalind Forrest, OCD

Pope Francis' Prayer to St. Joseph

Remembering all our donors, we pray:

*Holy Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became human.*

*Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father,
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.*