



Carmelite Newsletter

Australia, New Zealand & Oceania

Solemnity of St. John of the Cross 14 December 2022

A Christmas Meditation on Innocence



Innocence isn't much prized these days but at Christmas it's impossible to escape: The splendour of the music, the warm visions of hearth and home, the whole wonder of the season: all rest on the joy brought a weary world by innocence made flesh.

Even those of us who lost our innocence long ago sometimes look back wistfully on Christmases past, when as

children we believed not only in Santa but in the loving world that went with him: safe, caring, kind. For most of us, this never rises above sentiment or nostalgia. But what if someone decided innocence was worth holding onto and built a whole way of life around it?

It might look something like the lives led by a small group of contemplative nuns in the French countryside just outside Le Blanc. These are the Little Sisters Disciples of the Lamb, and among religious orders they enjoy a singular distinction: They exist so that "those who are in last place in the world" - women with Down syndrome - can "hold in the church the exceptional role of spouses of Christ."

In practice this means that able-bodied sisters devote their lives to ensuring their fellow sisters with Down syndrome can live their vocation. Living with Down syndrome is not all sweetness and light, even among nuns. The difference is that these women take this innocence, leaven the difficult and imperfect parts with love, and gift it back to the world in more sublime form through both prayer and example.

"The smiling faces of our little sisters with Down syndrome are a great message of hope for many injured families," Mother Line tells me. "Our smallness will also say that we are made for very great things: to love and to be loved." She particularly asks for prayers that able-bodied "young American girls" might consider life among her flock.

A Christmas confession: I'm a sucker for those Facebook videos showing some basketball team letting the boy with Down syndrome shoot until he sinks a basket, or photos of a high-school senior with Down syndrome beaming because her classmates have elected her prom queen. Even the most jaded - maybe especially the most jaded - recognises, and perhaps even envies, the special joy reserved for the pure of heart.

Then you pull back and look at the faces of those cheering these things on - the fans at the basketball game, the other couples at the prom. Is their happiness any less? Not to mention the inner rejoicing of a tired mum who has just watched a crowd of people look at her child and see what she sees: a beautiful and unique human being who is a source of delight.



This is the everyday witness of the Little Sisters Disciples of the Lamb. In the world outside their walls, innocence can be dismissed as childish ignorance or dangerous naiveté. Inside, the nuns choose to cherish and exalt innocence - and the unconditional love and trust that comes with it - as an example of how we are meant to live with one another.

In Morris West's novel *The Clowns of God*, Christ returns to earth, where people have trouble recognising him. At one point he goes to a school for children with Down syndrome, and picks up a little girl. "I know what you are thinking," he says. "You need a sign. What better one could I give but to make this little one whole and

new? I could do it, but I will not ... I gave this mite a gift I denied to all of you - eternal innocence. To you she looks imperfect - but to me she is flawless."

He goes on: "She is necessary to you. She will evoke the kindness that will keep you human. Her infirmity will prompt you to gratitude for your own good fortune ... This little one is my sign to you. Treasure her!"

So it is in Le Blanc. The Little Sisters Disciples of the Lamb will welcome the birth of the Saviour. Whatever there may be in the way of presents will be modest and mostly homemade. But for those hoping for a glimmer of the light that burst into the skies over Bethlehem that first Christmas, nowhere will it shine more brilliantly than in this nondescript little convent in the centre of France.

<https://fr.aleteia.org/2018/03/20/ce-couvent-ou-cohabitant-des-religieuses-valides-et-dautres-atteintes-par-la-trisomie-21/>
William McGurn.



Launceston Carmelite Seculars' October Retreat



Our Carmelite weekend retreat was held at the Emmanuel Centre in October.

There were 17 people who attended the retreat which was near capacity for the retreat centre. Some had travelled to Launceston from as far away as Dover down south and west from Wynyard. They were not put off by the terrible weather conditions which caused lengthy delays and road closures.

The population in Tasmania is just over 500,000 for the whole state and so even, though our community has been meeting regularly for around 19 years, we are

still a small group and have not grown in numbers enough to be canonically erected as a community. To ensure that we are able to have our weekend retreat and that the Retreat Centre will still allow us the space to have it, we invite people from all over the State to attend. This year we actually had two new converts wishing to attend because they were both drawn to the Catholic Church through St Therese. Both of them and many others found this weekend was a wonderful spiritual experience for them.

Father Aloysius Rego, our Spiritual Director, who flew down from Sydney to talk to us about, as he calls her, his favourite saint, St Therese of the Child Jesus.

He brought to us many insights into her life, struggles and her frailties, even within her own prayer life. However, even in her darkest times, she gave herself entirely to God in trust. As Father Aloysius pointed out, for St Therese prayer was speaking as a child to a loving Father and she knew He understood her. He also talked about how we could adopt the examples set by St Therese, in our own lives, by allowing ourselves to let God into our own messiness in trust and humility and to allow God to be in control of whatever concerns us, just as a little child relies on a loving parent for guidance.



Sr Lauren of the Cross receives the habit.

On 15 October 2022, in a private ceremony following Morning Prayer, Lauren Butler received the Carmelite Habit as an Extern Sister in the Carmel of Christ the King, Christchurch, and became Sr Lauren of the Cross. At 8:30 am she joined with Bishop Michael Gielen and priests, family and friends for the Mass of the Solemnity of St Teresa of Jesus, followed by morning tea.

Carmelite Extern Sisters are rather rare, there being only about 300 of them throughout the world, as compared to about 11,500 Carmelite Nuns. They combine a Teresian contemplative life with attention to the external needs of a Carmelite monastery, allowing the nuns to maintain an entirely contemplative way of life. Along with greeting people who visit, taking us to appointments and doing any shopping we cannot do online, Sr Lauren hopes to occasionally give some times of reflection on Scripture and Carmelite Spirituality during the year.

Following on from a year of Aspirancy before she entered our monastery, and a year of Postulancy within the monastery, she now begins a two-year Novitiate where she will study Carmelite Spirituality and Religious Life in depth. We are delighted to have Sr Lauren as a member of our community.

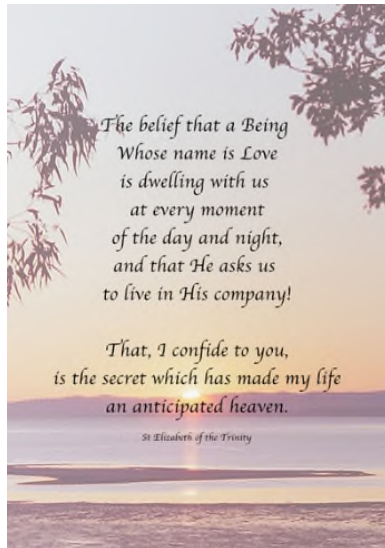
Please keep her in your prayers.



**News from the Carmel in Ormiston, Queensland.
Sister Maria Tania's Silver Jubilee of Profession**



Sister Marcella Mary Raphael of Christ the King OCD, RIP



On Wednesday 20 July 2022, our dear Sister Marcella Mary Raphael of Christ the King OCD passed from this life to enter her eternal home. Because of Covid-19 restrictions, the funeral Mass was celebrated privately. Unfortunately, the audio quality during the Mass was very poor. We have since tried to enhance this as much as possible. The full clip of the live-streaming, plus footage of the procession to the cemetery and Rite of Committal are available here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_VtZANJOWI along with lovely photos of Sr Marcella, some which are shown above.



Sister Gabriella of the Holy Family OCD, RIP

Sister Gabriella of the Holy Family was one of the four remaining Sisters in the Carmel of Bomana PNG when it closed in 2018. Due to age and infirmity, she was unable to travel, but was canonically transferred to our community. Before entering Carmel she had been Superior General of the local Diocesan Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth in Bougainville, PNG. The Sisters offered to take her back and care for her among her people. We sent funds for the Sisters to build her a little house in their grounds where she could live her Carmelite life for as long as possible. Communication has been very difficult, but during the year, we heard that Sr Gabriella had a slight stroke and her health was deteriorating. She had a nurse, one of the Sisters, looking after her until she went home to God on 4 October. May our lovely gentle Sister rest in peace.



Particular charisms of the Teresian Carmel



“The little sisters follow the Lamb wherever He goes” Apocalypse, 14, 4

Little Sisters Disciples of the Lamb

Many and varied are the ways in which our saintly forefathers laid down how everyone, whatever his station or the kind of religious observance he has chosen, should live a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ - how, pure in heart and stout in conscience, he must be unswerving in the service of the Master. Carmelite Rule [2].

In addition to the First (friars), Second (nuns) and Third (seculars) branches of the Disalced Carmelite Order, there are other expressions of the Teresian Carmel lived in various other canonically erected communities of sisters, in secular institutes or in new ecclesial movements. Each newsletter now features one of these, showing the richness and dynamism of the Teresian Carmelite charism as the Holy Spirit calls forth new forms drawing from the inspired vision of our Holy Mother, St Teresa of Jesus. This newsletter presents an overview of one of these recent, new and unique expressions of the Carmelite charism: the Little Sisters Disciples of the Lamb.

A LIFE OF CONTEMPLATION

Our life of contemplation at the service of the Little Sisters, regulated and disciplined by prayer and mutual activities has been modelled and nourished by the wisdom of our patron saints: St Therese of the Child Jesus & St Benedict.

ABLE & HANDICAPPED

In our eyes and to echo the first words of St John Paul II, it is to risk saying Be not afraid to a world where each is afraid, afraid of the inherent fragility of human nature or the human condition, such as handicap and illness



Weaving

The community has many wooden looms. Each sister has the possibility of creating various items : carpets, scarves, material, textile objects etc...



Pottery

A pottery workshop has also been created on the site that houses the community. The Little Sisters, design and make various ceramic objects : pots, vases, crosses...



Gardening & Vegetable gardens

The community possesses a garden with medicinal plants and vegetables. The Little Sisters also help with the maintenance of the park.

The **Little Sisters Disciples of the Lamb** (French: *Les Petites Soeurs Disciples de l'Agneau*) is a religious institute for women based in France. It is the world's first contemplative community to welcome those with Down syndrome into the consecrated life.

The Little Sisters were founded in 1985 by now-Mother Prioress Line when she befriended Véronique, a girl with Down Syndrome. The group was assisted by Jerome Lejeune, a French pediatrician and geneticist, best known for discovering the chromosome abnormality that causes Down Syndrome. Véronique wanted to join a religious community but was denied because those she approached could not accommodate her needs. Line and Véronique moved into a small apartment in a council house in the village of Buxeuil to begin their community. By 1990, another girl with Down Syndrome joined them and they asked Archbishop Jean Honoré to recognize the group as a public association of the Christ's faithful. He would later promote the association before Vatican officials.



In 1995, the group had outgrown their space and so moved to Le Blanc where they were welcomed by Archbishop Pierre Plateau. With his support, the group obtained the status of a contemplative religious institute in 1999. With the intervention of Archbishop Armand Maillard, they obtained the definitive recognition of their statutes in 2011.



As of 2019, there are 10 Little Sisters Disciples of the Lamb, eight of whom have Down Syndrome. The group follows the Little Way of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. Before being admitted to the community, all women, with Down Syndrome or not, must undergo a period of discernment. Following that is one year postulancy and three years of

novitiate. Temporary vows are then taken for three years and are followed by a final profession.

The sisters daily lives consist of prayer, work and sacrifice. Mass is held every Tuesday in their chapel, and the sisters engage in weaving, pottery, and tending to a garden of medicinal plants. Their convent is near Fontgombault Abbey and a monk from the Abbey serves as their chaplain. They have a special relationship with the monks of Clear Creek Abbey.

We follow the path of Thérèse: 'Great actions are beyond us'. We will never be great theologians. Our life is very simple and without a doubt similar to the hidden life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph at Nazareth. Year after year, our community has adapted itself to Down's syndrome and to the experience of religious life with a handicap.

Servant of God, Sr. Maria Lucia of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (Sr. Lucia of Fatima)

On 13 October 2022, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, His Eminence, the Most Rev. Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, was officially delivered the *Positio* on the "life, virtues, reputation for holiness and signs" of the Servant of God, Maria Lucia of the Immaculate Heart OCD, better known as Lucia of Fatima.

In a letter dated 14 February 2005, addressed to Mgr. Albino Mamede Cleto, the bishop of Coimbra, John Paul II recalled his meetings with Sister Lucy. "It was with emotion that I heard that Sister Mary Lucy of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary had been called by Our Heavenly Father to her final resting place in Heaven, at the age of 97."



"I remember with emotion the meetings I had with Sister Lucy and the ties of spiritual friendship which intensified with the passage of time." "I have always felt supported by the daily gift of her prayers, especially during difficult times of ordeals and suffering, ... May the Lord reward her generously for the great hidden service she has rendered to the Church." "The visit of Our Lady, which little Lucy received with her cousins Francisco and Jacinta in 1917, was for her the beginning of a remarkable mission, to which she remained faithful to her last day." Sister Lucy "leaves us an example of great fidelity to Our Lord and joyful adherence to His Holy

will."



At the time of delivery, the Postulator General of the Order of Disalced Carmelites, Fr. Marco Chiesa, the Vice-Postulator Sr. Angela Coelho and the Relator of the cause, Mons. Maurizio Tagliaferri were present.



Flanking their photos, reliquaries display relics of: St Thérèse of Lisieux and her parents, saints Louis and Zélie Martin. The relics were displayed for veneration at St Thérèse's church in Denistone on Saturday 25 June 2022 as part of Sydney's celebration of the World Meeting of Families. Photo: Alphonsus Fok.

St Mary's Cathedral, 26 June 2022 – Homily 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Archbishop Anthony Fisher op

The Martin family story has all the ingredients for a binge-worthy *Netflix* series. Ambition, success and failure, heartaches and joys, fateful encounters and divine blessings, a family of heroes, it even had the valleys of Normandy as a beautiful backdrop! Yet ironically, neither Louis nor Zélie thought much about romance or family growing up. Both wanted to be consecrated religious. Louis tried to join some Swiss monks, only to find his ignorance of Latin was a dealbreaker, and so was forced to return to his trade as a watchmaker. Zélie tried the sisters of St Vincent de Paul only to get a very clear No, and so, like Louis, she dusted herself off and established herself as a lace-maker.

Their paths fatefully crossed one day on a bridge when Zélie heard an inner voice whisper: "This is the one I have prepared for you!" Three months later, but only after stalking the nineteenth century equivalents of Louis' social media accounts, Zélie married him at the Basilica of Notre Dame in Alençon. And so, whatever their plans for God, God had plans for them: they had a family to raise! There would be nine children in total. Of the five girls who survived infancy, all entered the convent, and one was destined to be perhaps the most popular saint of modernity - if the number of statues raised in her honour or crowds that reverence her relics are anything to go by. Though her self-designation was as a nobody, this "little flower of Jesus", Thérèse from Lisieux, ended up a saint, patron of the missions and doctor of the Church! Her older sister Léonie is a Servant of God awaiting canonisation, and the parents have now been raised to the altar as saints also. So it was quite a family!

What was their secret? Some say: "We've done all we could to build a Christian home and pass on the faith. We took the kids to church and put them through Catholic schools. But they don't practice anymore. It was easier in the old days." Maybe. But the Martin family had no easy ride. Four children died in infancy which, even if it was common then, was still a terrible grief. Zélie succumbed to breast cancer aged 45, forcing Louis to sell the business, relocate his daughters to a farm at Lisieux, and be both father and mother. St Thérèse was tormented by awareness of her own shortcomings, by doubts about God's existence, by misunderstanding within the convent, and by tuberculosis which slowly devoured her flesh and bones till she died at 24. On her death-bed she said, "I've reached the point of not being able to suffer any more: all suffering is now sweet to me."

Yet for all the suffering in the Martin family, they never wavered in faith. They lived after the pattern of Paul's charge to us today, to "Serve one another in works of love, since the whole of God's law can be summed up as love" (*Gal* 5:1,13-18). Their home was 'a domestic church', a home church, where prayer was normal, where the Word of God and sacraments were treasured, where attentiveness to God's love commandments was daily life. It's been said that those who live with a saint are martyrs: it's not easy living with someone whose almost perfect. Even in the Holy Family, there are tensions. What the Martins grasped was that the family is part of God's plan for creation, not something to be idealised but a crucible for learning virtues, as much by rubbing up against each other as by imitation, and a place for learning love by experiencing it or yearning for it when it is deficient. They believed that if God is love (cf. *1Jn* 4:8), to be a godly family is to be one always striving to be animated by love.

When he inaugurated the World Meeting of Families back in 1994, Pope St John Paul II said that families are a living image of the love of the Trinity. The outpouring of love between the persons of God and the creative-redemptive love-acts of those persons in our world, is proper also to human relationships, beginning with our families. Not that Karol Wojtyła had an easy family life: his mother Emilia died when he was only eight; his sister Olga died before he was born; and his beloved older brother Edmund succumbed to scarlet fever. He was a teenager when the Nazis came and he lost his father before they were replaced by communists. So his love for



the family was as much a love of what was missing as for what he experienced, but something his faith told him we must aspire to and share where we can.

John Paul called the family a *school in charity*, but the word might also be translated *gymnasium*. It's a place for training our emotional and spiritual muscles, and like all muscle-building that requires stretching, even little rips, before new muscle and skills are developed. It's the place for small daily acts of love, Thérèse's "little way". If we learn at home to be generous, forgiving and compassionate, we've learnt life lessons upon which our own moral-spiritual health and the health of our relationships will depend, but also the health of our whole community and Church. Families, in their gifts and challenges, are a constant reminder that we are fundamentally *relational* creatures. We need others, to love and be loved, if we are to thrive.

Of course the family as a domestic *church* is about more than ordinary human virtues. It is also the place where we encounter God through faith, where we learn about Jesus and following His way - as commanded in today's Gospel (Lk 9:51-62) - and where we learn to pray and cultivate an inner life. The seeds of God's word are first planted in our families, and parents are called to be the first teachers in the faith.

Modernity expects less of families. They are places of co-habitation, shared resources, occasional interaction. Governments and institutions gradually strip away their functions, incentives and protections. A hyper-individualistic culture says we don't really need them, and discourages the self-sacrifice, compromise, piety and sense of duty upon which families are premised. The best antidote to this, according to Pope Francis, is the Holy Family of Nazareth.

On this World Day for the Family we commend all our families, with their gifts and wounds, to the Holy Family's protection and to God's creative and healing love.

	<p>The brown section represents the colour of the Carmelite habit and the white section the Carmelite mantle. The central cross was added by various reforms, including the Teresian discalced reform, to represent Mount Carmel.</p> <p>The motto <i>Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo Exercituum</i> (With zeal, I have been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts) is Elijah's cry in 1 Kings 19:10.</p> <p>Elijah's fiery sword recalls "the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God" (Carmelite Rule).</p> <p>The Crown of Gold represents the sovereignty of the Jesus & Mary over all Carmelites.</p> <p>These are the twelve stars of the woman of the Apocalypse "a woman clothed with the sun... on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12:1) a figure of both Mary and the Church.</p>
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Advents Masses with Bishop Greg Homeming, OCD.



Online mass continues every Sunday with Bishop Greg Homeming OCD from St Carthage's Cathedral in Lismore. These Masses streamed at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYxOjNyku4JCI08vfeTq-fQ>



The Launceston Carmel of the Immaculate Heart of Mary goes to the USA

In 2019, following the publication of new documents on women’s contemplative life from Rome and after a long process of prayerful discernment, our Carmel joined the St Joseph’s Association of Disalced Carmelite nuns in the USA. We have thus entered into a stronger bond of communion with the member monasteries of St Joseph’s Association, several of whom we have had warm sisterly contact for some years, as well as maintaining our cherished bonds with the Carmels in our own Australasia/Oceania Region of the Order.



This year has seen two of the most significant moments of communion that form part of membership of an Association: the Association Assembly and our Canonical Visitation.

In July, Sr Therese-Marie and I travelled to the United States for the St Joseph’s Association Assembly. We celebrated the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in

the Flemington Carmel, New Jersey, after our recovery from jetlag. We then travelled with Flemington’s prioress and delegate and our Association President, who had joined us from Loretto, Pennsylvania, to the meeting in the beautiful setting of our friars’ retreat centre and the National Basilica of Our Lady Help of Christians at Holy Hill, Wisconsin on 17 July. The Association Assembly was richly blessed and many insights were gained to help us live our Carmelite vocation, especially in the light of the documents the Apostolic Constitution *Vultum Dei quaerere* (To seek the Face of God) and *Cor orans* (The Praying Heart). After the Assembly we spent some time with our Sisters in Loretto Carmel, Pennsylvania. The only ‘hick up’ on our trip was one of us contracting Covid, which although mild in terms of symptoms, meant a week’s delay while U.S. isolation regulations were observed before we could travel again.



On 29 September our Launceston Carmel welcomed with great joy and anticipation our St Joseph’s Association President, Sr Mary Elizabeth of the Trinity, and her 1st Counsellor, Sr Gabriela of the Incarnation, who came to take part in our first canonical Visitation under *Cor orans*. Fr. Bernard Hancock, OCD joined us from 3 to 7 October and I must say, the Co-Visitation arrangement worked extremely well and was very beneficial for us all. Fr Bernard and Sr Mary Elizabeth worked so well together we would have thought they had known each other for years rather than having just met. It was also very helpful to have the Sisters sharing all aspects of our life for the few days before the Visitation commenced, as well as a few



relaxed community days with them afterwards before their return home on 11 October. Our experience at the Association Assembly and now our Visitation have been so rich and a powerful encouragement for us to continue on the path of deeper communion and new ways of supporting each other as the Church is inviting her contemplative communities to do.

Not long after our Sr. Teresa, who is 90 hospital with what infections that would Father’s House ... moment. Prayer and Sr. Teresa rally in a possible following Vincent’s on 11 we rejoice in this Sister and take each your prayers for us and also our only remaining foundation Sister, Sr Mary of the Holy Ghost, who is 93. As we look ahead to celebrating 75 years of Carmel in Tasmania in 2023, we give thanks to God for the gentle presence of our treasured older Sisters in our midst. Mother Teresa Benedicta, OCD, Prioress.



return from the U.S., our years old, was admitted to looked like a series of take her home to the but only He knows the a strong Sister have seen way no one thought her discharge from St September. So, for now, extra time with our dear day as it comes. We ask as we care for Sr. Teresa





Fr Gerard's Talks to the Varroville OCDS community.



Fr. Gerard Moran OCD gave two talks at the November OCDS Day of Reflection at Varroville on the document (from the 2021 General Chapter) entitled *Being Discalced Carmelite Friars Today ~ Declaration on the Carmelite-Teresian Charism*. He stressed that while the Declaration was directed towards the friars, most of it was applicable to our nuns and the OCDS. Fr. Gerard focused on Paragraphs 11 to 20, which outline the core of our charism. His talks were delivered to us under the apt title: *The 'Treasure' of our Charism* [cf. Matthew 13:44].

Father Gerard's understanding of Carmelite spirituality, expertly informed by his knowledge of Sacred Scripture and the translation into the English language, was of great help to us. Father Ferdie de la Cruz video recorded both sessions and these may be seen at the following YouTube link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTYsLmWI6PADsoxypFzeBig/streams> by going to Google or another search engine and searching for "OLMC Varroville OCDS Reflection Day with Fr. Gerard".

These presentations are particularly valuable for anyone wanting to explore our charism in more depth. The full document can be sourced at:

<https://www.carmelitaniscalzi.com/en/documents/declaration-on-the-carmelite-teresian-charism/>

or enter "Declaration on the Carmelite-Teresian Charism" into your preferred Internet search engine.

Thank you, Fr. Gerard for your clear and uplifting exposition of this important document. We pray and trust that many may access these presentations and be encouraged by the richness of what it means to be Teresian Carmelites.



GENERAL
CHAPTER
2021 | DISCALCED
CARMELITES

Being Discalced Carmelite Friars Today Declaration on the Carmelite-Teresian Charism

III. Charism and the Teresian Vision of the Human Person

11. The Carmelite way of being human and Christian Being a Discalced Carmelite is a concrete way of living the human condition and Christian identity. The Teresian charism contains an anthropology, a particular vision of what it means to be a man or woman, which is no different from that proposed by the Gospel, seen from a specific perspective. We are convinced that the Teresian vision of the human person demonstrates its relevance in the face of humanity's search for meaning and happiness today.

12. True human dignity [C 10] In our cultural context, the anthropological proposal of Teresa of Jesus, based upon her personal experience of the extraordinary dignity of the human person, is enlightening: "I don't find anything comparable to the magnificent beauty of a soul and its marvellous capacity." (1M 1:1). Human dignity depends neither on physical beauty nor on social prestige, based on wealth, power, or aristocratic origin. All this is part of the *negra honra*, one of the idols of her time to which Teresa refused to pay homage. The incomparable greatness of the human person derives from the fact that we were created by God and chosen by him as his dwelling place.

13. Inhabited Interiority The intuition of Teresa of Jesus, which is the foundation of the Teresian charism, is that the answer to the deepest desires and needs of the human heart is found within us, in the "inner castle" of the soul, in our interiority, which is inhabited by the Triune God himself. In this respect, there is great similarity with Sacred Scripture, that proclaims: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor 3:16), and again, "If you love me, you will keep my word, and my Father will love you and we will come to you and make our dwelling in you." (Jn 14:23).

14. Entering into oneself [C 63] Unfortunately, it is possible, and even frequent, to spend one's life outside oneself in externality, appearance, and superficiality: "For there are many souls who are in the outer courtyards, and don't care at all about entering into the castle, nor do they know what lies within that most precious place, nor who is within, nor even how many rooms it has." (1M 1:5). We must return to ourselves to discover the riches that lie within us, first and foremost the guest who dwells with us, the otherness from which we come and towards which we are going. Returning to ourselves means learning to listen to the inner dialogue that takes place within



us, the fundamental relationship on which our being is grounded. It is by seeing ourselves in him that it is possible to enter fearlessly into ourselves and face the darkness, wounds, and conflicts that are part of our identity. “Well now, it is foolish to think that we will enter heaven without entering into ourselves, coming to know ourselves, reflecting on our misery and what we owe God, and begging Him often for mercy.” (2M 11).

15. Living and Witnessing to the New Man We Disalced Carmelites have the responsibility and the obligation to show humanity this treasure that has been transmitted to us and that we have received. However, to be able to do this, we must first have a profound experience of our interiority and union with God who transforms us into the image of Christ, the new man (cf. 2 Cor 3:18). An authentic experience of God present within us leads us to recognize the presence of his Spirit in the situations of the world and calls us to go out of ourselves to recognize the signs of God in history.

16. Living in Relationship What, therefore, do we need to relearn in the school of Teresa of Jesus, John of the Cross and the other Carmelite masters? In a few words, we could say: We must learn to “be in relationship,” a relationship with God, with ourselves, with others, with the Church and with the world. In fact, relationship is the weakest link in our way of life today. The culture that surrounds us and the lifestyle it produces tends to focus on the ego and to exclude relationships insofar as they are a potentially destabilizing element, the bearer of unforeseen novelties, uncontrollable and impossible to integrate into a system. In fact, it is precisely in relationships that the enduring mystery of the human person dwells.

17. Divine initiative The central element of the Teresian experience is relationship with God. It is first and foremost relationship that God desires to establish with each one of us, making us sharers in Trinitarian life and relationships. For Teresa and John, the first and decisive step in the development of a relationship with God is “to become aware” (*Canticle* B 1:1; cf. also *W* 6:3) of who the revealed God is, of his presence and of his working within us. This is not a matter of “knowing” on an intellectual level, but of an experiential knowledge that transforms our way of being in the world.

18. The God revealed in Jesus Christ This lofty and sublime reality comes close to us. It is experienced in the person of Jesus Christ, God the Son made man. In his humanity, he is the way that leads us to the knowledge of the Father (cf. *Jn* 14:6). The Teresian Carmel exists as a response to the discovery of Christ who is the way to the truth, beauty, and goodness of the mystery of communion between God and humanity and reflected in the communion of life within the Trinity. Teresa does not speak only of an article of faith, but of what she has heard, seen and contemplated (cf. *1 Jn* 1:1), of an experience that has radically changed her, becoming the center of her existence and the light that guides her path. The force that attracts and draws Teresa is God’s love revealed in Jesus Christ. “He loved me and gave himself up for me.” (*Gal* 2:20). Teresa is literally conquered by the “for me” inscribed in the whole being and activity of Jesus Christ. From him “all good blessings have come” to her (*L* 22:4) and for this reason her human and spiritual growth can only develop as a deepening of her relationship with him, as a penetration into the “depth” of his truth which is unfolding as the truth of God in his Trinitarian life, as the truth of the Church in need of reform, as the truth of the world awaiting salvation.

19. In obsequio Iesu Christi [C 3a, 15a] The Carmelite Rule reminds us that the purpose of every form of religious life is in *obsequio Iesu Christi vivere*, to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ. This formula is rooted in a Pauline text in which the apostle expresses his desire and his efforts to bring all men “to the obedience of Christ” (2Cor 10:5), that is, to a relationship of faith-filled obedience to Christ. The term used by Paul indicates an attitude of docile listening, which becomes total availability to him who offer us salvation and the love of God. *Obsequium* is joyful submission to Christ through faith. Paul himself lived his relationship with Christ as full communion with him: “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me.” (*Gal* 2:20). This is actually the invitation and call addressed to all Christians: “God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (*1 Cor* 1:9).

20. The intimate relationship with God [C 15c, 53-55] Teresa of Jesus, starting from her story of Carmelite life, and even more from her own intimate and spousal experience with Christ, translates the *obsequium Iesu Christi* in friendship with the Beloved. God is the one who dwells in the interior castle of the human person, and from there, from within, he makes his voice heard, offers his love and awaits a loving response. The Teresian charism consists essentially in a profound experience of relationship, which has at the same time the characteristics of friendship and love. It is an experience of friendship, which aspires to be perfect in its confidence and reciprocity. “It is a very important thing always to have a conscience so pure that nothing hinders you from asking our Lord for the perfect friendship the bride asks for.” (*Meditations on Song of Songs*, 2:21). We are created for love and destined to love, and for Saint Teresa friendship is nothing other than the fullness of a loving relationship with God and with others: “But we should grieve and be very sorry that through our own fault we do not reach this excellent friendship and that we are happy with little.” (*Meditation on Song of Songs*, 2:16), and it is an experience of love, which can be defined as spousal, because it leads the soul towards intimate union with God through a progressive journey of purification and recollection: “From this day forward you will be my bride. Until now you have not deserved it; from now on you will take care of my honor, not only because I am your Creator, your King, and your God, but also because you are my true spouse: my honor is now yours, and yours is mine” (*Relations* 35). “Perhaps this is what St. Paul means in saying He that is joined or united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him, and is referring to this sovereign marriage, presupposing that His Majesty has brought the soul to it through union.” (7M 2:5).



A warn Samoan Christmas greeting

As we all journey through Advent to Christmas, here in a very warm sunny Samoa we wish to say MARANATHA, to Frs Bernard, our Father Gerard & all of the Varroville Community, and to all the Friars of the different Communities in Australia: MARANATHA to all the Communities of Nuns of Australia, New Zealand, PNG, Wallis & Tonga. MARANATHA, JOY & PEACE to the OCDS National Council of Australia, Tonga & Samoa and to all the different Communities & Groups in Formation of our Region/ Province!

OCDS SAMOA on Saturday 19th November gathered for our Retreat at the Carmelite Nuns' Villa Maria property, adjacent to the Vailima Monastery. We thank Mother Maria Elisapeta OCD and the Community for their continuous love and support for us and our group activities. We are very grateful for the use of Villa Maria as private venue for our activities. Thank you!

Seven OCDS members attended. Two of our members are currently in New Zealand for medical treatment: May the Queen of Carmel protect and keep them. One member recently moved temporarily with his employer and fellow workers to American Samoa.

Our President, after preparing us for the retreat, and always being cautious about wearing masks and taking preventative measures to avoid catching the Covid-19 virus unfortunately tested positive just before start of our retreat. Though she could not be with us, those of us who were able to attend, were most grateful for the foresight and preparedness by which she handled the unforeseeable circumstances. We were able to gain spiritually from her alertness in living her call.

We acknowledge with gratitude the spirit of understanding and acceptance by which Luni, and our members readily took on the unexpected circumstances that came upon us. St Teresa's Famous Bookmark reminded us not to let anything disturb us as all things do pass and thought patience and endurance, we obtain all and God alone suffices! Thank you Luni!

Fr Sefo, a Marist Priest and the Marist Third Order Coordinator, was our guest speaker of the day, took us on a journey of the life and the living out of the call as a Marist Third Order member. He also shared on his contact experiences with the Carmelite Order whilst doing pastoral study in the Philippines. We are grateful for Fr Sefo's jovial and relaxed nature which helped guide us in our own spiritual searches in life. We came away with affirmation that the Spirit of God when invited and invoked to work in us, will bring the changes we search for.

After an enjoyable catered lunch organized by our President and the cleaning up of the premises, members agreed to gather and join in the Christ the King Procession with the Apia Cathedral Vicariate on the next day, 20th November. Six members were able to join the many Catholics of the Apia Vicariate in the Procession to celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King. It was a fitting way to be united and by action, proclaim our allegiance to CHRIST our GOD and KING! "COME LORD JESUS!"

May the Holy Spirit enlighten and guide us all in our journey in Carmel to the Summit, Christ Himself!

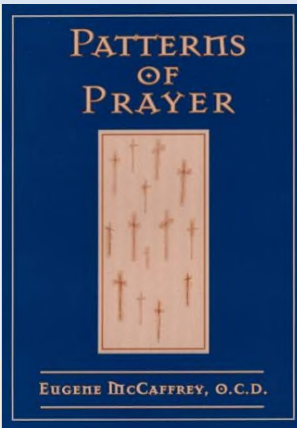
MARANATHA, MARANATHA, MARANATHA!

GOD BLESS MA IA MANUIA!!!



In **Sister Teresa & Father Jerome**, Fr John McGowan has written a highly readable and accessible depiction of a complex story through which he paints the spiritual benefit of friendship. John displays his knowledge of the subject, his love for Teresa and Jerome come through strongly. It is this combination of the intellectual and the affective that enables Fr John to write so engagingly and effectively. This is an excellent, imaginative introduction to the intricacies of Carmelite history and spirituality.

Available at: <https://carmelite.org.uk/products/saint-teresa-father-jerome>



Patterns of Prayer is available at: <https://carmelite.com/the-way-of-prayer/>

- I. Discovering Prayer
- II. Prayer and Presence
- III. Prayer as Listening
- IV. Contemplative Meditation
- V. Prayer and Awareness
- VI. Prayer and Life
- VII. Prayer and Friendship
- VIII. Prayer of Petition
- IX. Prayer and Compassion

The book can be bought at: <https://carmelite.org.uk/search?q=patterns+of+prayer>

It is a mistake to imagine that your prayer won't be answered unless you've something out of a book, some splendid formula of words, specially devised to meet this emergency. If that were so, I'm afraid I should be in a terribly bad

position...no, I just do what children have to do before they've learnt to read. I tell God what I want quite simply, without any splendid turn of phrase, and somehow he always manages to understand me. St Thérèse of Lisieux.

You cannot teach anyone to pray, just as you cannot teach anyone to love. Both must be discovered within. We don't learn to pray the way we learn a language, through grammars and textbooks. For prayer is knowledge not of a thing, but of a Person. It is not so much something we learn as something we become, something we already are. It is growth in relationship, in living, loving intimacy with a Friend. Prayer is more a discovery than a task, more an adventure than a duty. It is a wish tuned Godwards, an unveiling of ourselves before him. It makes a pilgrim out of a wanderer.

Learning about God

Learning to pray is first of all learning about God: who he is, what he has told us about himself and about his love for us. Prayer always starts with God: for us prayer is a response. How we approach God in prayer very much depends on our attitude to him. If God is for us a Father and a Friend, someone near to us, then our prayer will be childlike, warm and tender. If on the other hand he is for us a God of wrath and anger, a policeman and a judge, then our prayer can only be cold and distant, nothing but a burden and a duty.

Learning about ourselves

Learning to pray also means learning about ourselves: who we are, what we have received, what we can become. To pray is to release the infinite possibilities hidden within every human heart. To know ourselves as God knows us, to realise how we have been gifted by nature and grace is to break out automatically into prayer. If prayer is a gift, it is one we have already received. Hidden within the heart of every Christian, given along with the gift of faith is the power to pray. 'Prayer' wrote St Gregory of Sinai, 'is the manifestation of our baptism'. We don't pray just to become holy; we pray because we are holy. 'Become what you are' is a basic principle of prayer and the ideal in all our relationships with God.

If you want to read more by Fr Eugene, go to <https://carmelite.com/the-way-of-prayer/> or buy the book at <https://carmelite.org.uk/search?q=patterns+of+prayer>



In the poetry and prose words of St. John of the Cross we hear almost nothing about God's Eucharistic presence. This book mines the biographical evidence available, and systematically studies all of John's writings to find his answer. "This eternal spring I long for; I see with this living bread." (*La Fonte*, Stz. 13).

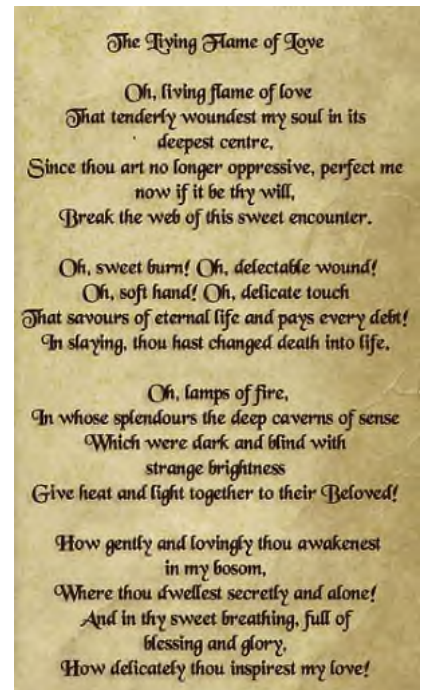
The Mystical Doctor comes to life in the stories his contemporaries told of him. Little known stories come to light, particularly his unflinching trust in Christ's eucharistic presence and power in the face of a fire that threatened to destroy the monastery he lived in. We see his tender words to the Lord in the Eucharist in his final hours on earth.

A review of John's writings show telling phrases and references that point towards the Eucharistic core of his spiritual life. Texts appear in several of his poems, in each of his treatises, his letters, and his "Saving of Light and Love." Dr. Love collects this body of evidence from St. John's life and writings and compares it with several recent papal writings on the Eucharist. Appearing in the midst of Eucharistic revival, this book invited the readers to participate fruitfully by reflecting on the words and example of St. John of the Cross. Edizioni Carmelitane – 2022. Printed Edition ISBN: 978-88-7288-208-5



The use of images and language in *The Living Flame of Love* – Part 1

The Living Flame of Love is the last of John's poems and commentaries to be written, the commentary being composed over a short period of fifteen days in 1585¹ but it is uncertain how much earlier he wrote the poem. Because it was written for Doña Ana de Peñalosa, the poem cannot have been composed earlier than 1582, when John moved to Granada.² John made changes to the commentary (*Flame B*), most probably at Peñuela in the months preceding his death, August-September 1591.³ They are not significant when the work is considered as a whole. Allison Peers calls them 'amplifications', which increased its length by one seventh.⁴ Despite the lateness of composition, it is generally recommended that *The Living Flame* be read as one of the first works, according to a 'wise Carmelite tradition, exemplified in St Therese of Lisieux', and not in the order in which they are conventionally published.⁵ One should begin with works that establish the 'goal and climate of love' essential to John's teaching.⁶ Brian Pitman agrees but is more thorough going. He recommends starting with the poetry, moving to the prologues (in the order *The Living Flame of Love*, *The Spiritual Canticle*, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Dark Night of the Soul*) then to the two commentaries, *The Living Flame of Love* and *The Spiritual Canticle*, followed by the other writings (letters and minor works).⁷ The advice for the remaining works is to begin by reading Chapter 14 of *The Ascent*, which takes up a suggestion of Thomas Moore, OCD.⁸ Lastly come the commentaries on *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night of the Soul*.



The poems and commentaries comprising *The Living Flame* and *The Spiritual Canticle* come first, because, it is argued, John knows from his own experience that these present what is in store for the soul whom God leads in the way of his love.⁹ Pitman recommends reading the poetry first because this is John's '*métier*', which Pitman contrasts with his 'clumsy prose' and the technical philosophical and theological language drawn from scholasticism.¹⁰ Here we must sound a note of caution: the poetry and prose ought not to be cast as necessary antagonists or ill-suited companions. Despite their obvious differences, there is an organic unity because, as Collings notes, John's 'whole work, poetry and prose, is an existential theology, immediately personal and experiential'.¹¹ This unity is reinforced because of the way that John uses symbols and images, which carry over from the poems to John's commentaries on them and from one work to another. What Pitman's itinerary implies and Collings suggests,¹² Lucien-Marie de Saint-Joseph says explicitly: one cannot over-emphasise the consistency of John's doctrine.¹³

The order in which the commentaries are published follows the sequence of the soul's progression along the path to union with God but John did not write them in this sequence. All but one of the forty stanzas (stanza 11) of 'The Spiritual Canticle' were composed and memorised, later being committed to paper, in the Toledo prison. The poem 'The Dark Night' was written later, despite continued misrepresentations that it is one of his prison compositions.¹⁴ The commentaries followed when John was asked to explain them. What is important to note is

- 1 Ross Collings, *St John of the Cross*, (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 153 but Kieran Kavanaugh, 'Introduction to *The Living Flame of Love*', *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, trans. & ed. Kieran Kavanaugh & Otilio Rodriguez (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1991), 634 says 'two weeks' in 1586 and Edgar Allison Peers, *Spirit of Flame: A Study of St. John of the Cross*, (London: SCM Press, 1979), 71 & 73 says a fortnight, which is probably more accurate given that the Spanish expression 'quincena', literally 'fifteen dinners', means 'fortnight', as does the French expression 'quinze jours', literally 'fifteen days'. Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen, *St John of the Cross*, 1946, in Norbert Cummins, *Freedom to Rejoice: Understanding St John of the Cross* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), 179 also says a fortnight.
- 2 Cummins, *Freedom to Rejoice*, 179.
- 3 Kieran Kavanaugh, 'Introduction to the *Living Flame of Love*', 636.
- 4 Allison Peers, *Spirit of Flame*, 75.
- 5 St Thérèse recommended to her novices to begin with *The Spiritual Canticle*. Collings, *St John of the Cross*, footnote 82.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Brian Pitman, 'How to Read the Works of St John of the Cross', *St John of the Cross: A Spirituality of Substance*, ed. Peter Slattery (Homebush, NSW: St Pauls, 1994), 52.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 54 citing Thomas Moore, OCD, *Carmelite Digest* 6, 1991, 57-64.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 52-53.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 53.
- 11 Ross Collings, *St John of the Cross*, 15.
- 12 '... the *Spiritual Canticle* (stanzas 13-40) and the *Living Flame* can in some way be taken as a sequel to the *Ascent* and *Dark Night*.' Collings, *St John of the Cross*, 82.
- 13 Literally: 'One will never underline enough the coherence of the Sanjanist doctrine.' On ne soulignera jamais assez la cohérence de la doctrine sanjaniste. Lucien-Marie de Saint-Joseph, 'Jean de la Croix (saint)' *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, Ascétique et Mystique* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1974), Vol. VIII, col. 423.
- 14 Keith Egan, 'A Mystic's Poetry, a lecture given at the Lumen Christi Institute, University of Chicago on 14 November, 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDeY8gw0Axw, accessed, 10 December 2018.



that these commentaries arose because John shared his poems and encouraged them to be sung, singing being a custom encouraged by St. Teresa amongst her nuns.¹⁵ We know that John himself sang psalms, hymns and songs on his journeys¹⁶ and presumably his own poems too. When lost amongst the detail of the commentaries, it is easy to forget that the three poems on which John wrote his commentaries are explicitly songs.

MYSTERIUM QUAERENS INTELLECTUM/MYSTERIUM QUAERENS LINGUAM

We can explore John's use of symbols and images in John's poetry and commentaries by adapting two definitions of theology: *fides quaerens intellectum* (St Anselm) and the more recent *fides quaerens linguam*, from missionary and inculturation studies.¹⁷ We can speak of John's poetry and his commentaries as *mysterium quaerens intellectum* and *mysterium quaerens linguam*. The first adaptation (seeking understanding) requires accommodating and explaining mystical experience cohesively within the horizons of faith and theology, which John does in his commentaries using, *inter alia*, the technical, rational terminology of scholastic philosophy and theology. John's treatment of understanding can be confusing. In the Prologue to *The Spiritual Canticle* and *The Living Flame*, John gives us valuable insights into the value and nature of the understanding to be gleaned from his poems and commentaries. Mystical experience delivers understanding, even if not 'fully explainable'¹⁸ but at the same time mystical wisdom does not deliver understanding in rational ways but 'according to the mode of faith ... without understanding'.¹⁹ He tells Ana de Jesús that 'divine truths' are understood through scholastic theology but can also be known through 'mystical theology', operating through love, which brings the added benefit of enjoyment.²⁰ John appears to say that mystical experience gives and does not give understanding and that he cannot 'explain their overflow' (that is, his verses) adequately and so doesn't propose to do so and will only shed 'some general light on them'.²¹ These complexities arise because John is dealing with understanding (*intellectus*) under different aspects: intellect as rationality/discursive thought and intellect as embracing other ways of knowing such as intuition (*simplex intuitus*) and mystical experience, which are equally valid ways of human knowing.²²



Mysterium quaerens linguam (seeking a voice) enjoins on us the task of 'translating' or 'transferring' (in the sense of carrying across – in Latin *trans* + *tollo/tollere*) transcendent, ineffable and mystical experiences into the worlds of time, sense and words, using 'figures, comparisons and similitudes ... rather than rational explanations'.²³ This task of translating engages *intellectum/intuitum*, the human capacity to look upon and to receive truth as a vision of a whole landscape. It is only by looking on the whole and appreciating it that one can hope to translate/transfer anything from one realm to another. Egan points out the complexity of this task when translating John's poetry: the more literal translations, such as Kavanaugh's, lose the lyrical beauty of the Spanish verses; and those that try to preserve the poetic qualities do so imprecisely and also introduce new ideas, skew John's meaning or change the associations and so the evocations of his symbols and images. As we will see below, John himself acknowledges this problem in explaining

his poems/songs by way of his prose commentaries.

In *The Living Flame of Love*, the divisions between these two registers of poetic and rational language become somewhat blurred. It will therefore be important to keep firmly and clearly in mind that in *The Living Flame of Love* the way that John uses 'the main symbol *flame* and any related images' is always to be understood in the context of his intention to express and to explain the 'secrets and mysteries'²⁴ (*mysterium*),²⁵ that is, the action of grace on the soul.²⁶

15 Kieran Kavanaugh, 'Introduction to the Poetry', *The Collected Works of St John of the Cross*, 42.

16 Ibid.

17 Antonio M. Pernia, 'Foreword' in Santiago Sia, *The Christian Message as Vision and Mission: Philosophical Considerations of its Significance* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), ix-xii.

18 *The Spiritual Canticle*, Prologue, 1.

19 *The Spiritual Canticle*, Prologue, 2.

20 *The Spiritual Canticle*, Prologue, 3.

21 *The Spiritual Canticle*, Prologue, 2.

22 'The medieval distinguished between the intellect as ratio and the intellect as intellectus. Ratio is the power of discursive thought, or searching and re-searching, abstracting, refining and concluding whereas intellectus refers to the ability of 'simply looking' (*simplex intuitus*), to which the truth presents itself as a landscape presents itself to the eye. The spiritual knowing power of the human mind, as the ancients understood it, is really two things | one: ratio and intellectus: all knowing involved both. The path of discursive reasoning is accompanied and penetrated by the intellectus' untiring vision, which is not active but passive, or better, receptive – a receptively operating power of the intellect.'

Joseph Pieper, *Leisure as the Basis of Culture* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2009), 11-13 in Tracey Rowland, *Catholic Theology* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2017), 13.

23 *The Spiritual Canticle*, Prologue, 1.

24 Ibid.



THE ORIGINS OF THE POEM AND COMMENTARY – *THE LIVING FLAME*

John wrote the poem 'The Living Flame of Love' for Doña Ana de Peñalosa who then asked him to explain it to her but he was 'reluctant' to do so.²⁷ He delayed lest he speak 'badly' for want of sufficient recollection.²⁸ John states that the poem and the commentary deal with 'matters so interior and spiritual, for which words are usually lacking – in that the spiritual surpasses sense'²⁹. He also wrote that because the 'stanzas ... treat of very intimate and elevated union and transformation of the soul in God' he needed to compose his commentary with a 'deeply recollected soul' in order for it to be worthwhile.³⁰ In *The Living Flame* John is treating of 'deeper ... and ... more ardent' experiences that carry on from *The Spiritual Canticle*.³¹ Because the soul grows in love, John will write 'of the highest degree of perfection one can reach in this life (transformation in God)'.³² These 'sublime and strange gifts'³³ flow from the indwelling of the Trinity, 'which the soul points out in these stanzas'³⁴. John's observations on his earlier poem, 'The Spiritual Canticle', remain relevant to 'The Living Flame' because, as already noted, in both poems, John's experience overflows 'in figures, comparisons and similitudes rather than rational explanations'.³⁵ Moreover, so as not to appear absurd, the poetry must be read with the 'simplicity of the spirit of knowledge and love' who inspired the verses. This then is the first point to note about John's use of symbols and images: they are used because they can convey meaning beyond the rational ways of human knowing.

John does not claim that his stanzas are divinely inspired - at least not in so many words - but he does contend that they share some of the characteristics of sacred scripture. He mentions specifically the *Song of Songs*, drawing a parallel with 'its strange figures and likenesses' because of the inability of ordinary words to 'express the fullness of meaning'.³⁶ For John, scripture and his verses are both clearly inspired by the Holy Spirit though his verses are not canonical or magisterially underwritten – at least when composed – though his canonisation and being declared a doctor of the Church clearly gives them authority and added lustre.

THE LIMITS OF LANGUAGE AND OF COMMUNICATION

In reflecting on his experience, John finds a voice (*linguam*) that gives us a window (an icon - *εἰκών*) onto another world and specifically onto the world of John's spiritual experience.³⁷ John gives us more than an account: the poetry draws us into the experience. But we must never forget that whatever the experience, that experience is not God but 'of God'; and the poetic expression of the experience is not the experience itself and the rational explication in the commentaries shifts the way in which the poems, and their symbols and images are appreciated by the reader. The mode goes from bodily (sense) and affective (heart) to rational (mind), from *intellectus/intuitus* to *intellectus/ratio* but always at least at one remove from the experience itself. The change from verse to prose is even more marked if the verses are sung and considered musically or spoken and so received aurally. Moreover, to a very large extent, the power of verses/songs is lost in translation, especially from a Romance language to English, which has a Germanic base.

It is worth noting carefully Allison Peers' evaluation of John's language in *The Living Flame*, the impact of which is lost on non-Spanish speakers and about which few English writers comment:

The music of the stanzas throughout is perfect - unmarred by a single harsh sound, inaccurate rhyme or halting phrase. The restrained use of alliteration, the echoing repetition of medial vowels, the melody of the feminine endings, the lavish employment of liquid consonants - all these are constituent elements of the poem's ethereal beauty. And all of them contribute to the perfection of the final line:

25 In Pauline terms, the *mysterium/μυστήριον* embraces the divine plan of salvation and how it is accomplished in Christ, as beautifully expressed in the Christological hymn of Ephesians 1:3-14. Verses 9-10 read: '... he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all thinking in him, things in heaven and things on earth.' (NRSV).

26 Cf: 'The Greek word *mysterion* was translated into Latin by two terms: *mysterium* and *sacramentum*. In later usage the term *sacramentum* emphasizes the visible sign of the hidden reality of salvation, which was indicated by the term *mysterium*. In this sense, Christ himself is the mystery of salvation: "For there is no other mystery of God, except Christ." (St. Augustine, Ep. 187,11,34:PL 33,846.) Catechism of the Catholic Church: §774.

27 *The Living Flame*, Prologue, 1.

28 *The Living Flame*, Prologue, 1.

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Ibid.*

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Ibid.*

33 *The Living Flame*, Prologue, 2.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *The Spiritual Canticle*, Prologue, 1.

36 *The Spiritual Canticle*, Prologue, 1.

37 Icons in the Orthodox tradition are not to be taken as art for art's sake, but rather, they are to be used as windows into the spiritual world. They play a significant role in conveying the theology and traditions of orthodoxy, and connect the believer with heaven by achieving a prayerful mindset which would lead into a life of prayer and contemplation. [Emphasis added.] Bishop Daniel, 'The Spirituality of Icons'. Symposium in Coptic Studies, Macquarie University, Saturday 29 November 2003.

<http://www.orthodoxebooks.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/The%20Spirituality%20of%20Icons%20-%20HG%20Bishop%20Daniel.pdf>, accessed 9 December 2018.



¡Cuán delicadamente me enamoras!

where the interlacing of cunningly arranged vowels with the frailest of consonant produces one of the most untranslatable musical phrases in Spanish literature.³⁸

The beauty of the poetry has a quasi-sacramental character in the sense that aurally it enacts what it signifies spiritually. A sacrament is a sensible sign that effects invisible grace. The verses are an overflow of this divine life into the created world of sense and of words, presenting images of those spiritual delights given to favoured souls. For our purposes, the definition of 'sacrament' proposed by the Council of Trent illustrates the relevance for 'The Living Flame': 'a **symbol** of a sacred thing and a visible form of invisible grace'.³⁹ [Emphasis added.] Because the poem deals with intimate communion between God and the soul, it must according to Allison Peers 'of necessity rely largely on symbols' making it John's 'most highly figured poem'.⁴⁰ What is seldom, if ever, said is that John's language (his sung verses) are his the first, immediate and primary image or icon. The beauty of the verses themselves reflects the beauty of the soul and the delicacy of the divine encounter.

We are given a window onto another spiritual realm, onto John's own, unique, personal experience and so we come up against a fundamental aspect of the mystery of the human person, that is, of the *alteri incommunicabilis*. In betrothed love, such as John treats of in *The Spiritual Canticle* and *The Living Flame*, there is a unification of persons - between John as the soul and the Beloved/God - and John seeks to proclaim this, explaining it as divinisation by participation, not in essence: 'Everything can be expressed in this statement: The soul becomes God from God through participation in him and in his attributes ...'⁴¹ But as between John and the reader of either the poem or his commentary, there remains that unbridgeable gulf so that John's experience remains that of the incommunicable other (*alteri incommunicabilis*).⁴² No matter how sublime his poetry or accomplished his commentary, John's experience cannot be exchanged for ours, be a substitute for ours or even be shared *per se* because in sharing it (transferring it), it becomes the experience of another subjective 'I', and so is conditioned differently. To put it another way, John's experience is incommunicable because it cannot be both shared (common) and unique (one/singular). The existential horizons of the mystic poet/commentator and his reader cannot be fused to become the same experience. We might empathetically engage with John's experience, that is, we might 'understand it' provided that we 'are not wanting in mystical theology', as he suggested to Ana de Jesús and by this he meant similar existential experience.⁴³ If this means of understanding is not available, we are forced back to gain insight by analogies and this underpins all the symbols, images, metaphors, extended metaphors, metonymy, comparisons and allegory that John uses in his literary works as well as the iconic aspect of his poetic, lyrical language. This is why the symbol *flame* and associated images (as well as other images) are unavoidable in both the poem/song and the commentary.



The divine awakening produces in the soul of the perfect a flame of love which is a participate of that living flame which is the Holy Spirit Himself...this is the operation of the Holy Spirit in the soul that is transformed in love.

John was keenly aware that since the Fall, our hearing of God's Word has been defective, our rationality dulled to the divine language, and that our words, unlike God's Word (Logos), are not the realities they signify but only point to them. All language including the language of religious experience inhabits a dappled world, a '*chiaroscuro* of [God's] presence and absence ... Whether in nature or scripture, these signs must be interpreted'.⁴⁴ Specifically with regard to his

commentary on 'The Living Flame', John acknowledges the limitations: 'everything I say is as far from the reality as is a painting from the living object represented'.⁴⁵

Part 2 will appear in the next newsletter.

This is an essay submitted as part of the course on St John of the Cross in the M.Th. (Carmelite Studies) program of the Carmelite Institute of Britain & Ireland by Brett Doyle OCDS.

38 Allison Peers, *Spirit of Flame*, 74.

39 DZ 1639: *symbolum esse rei sacrae et invisibilis gratiae formam visibilem*, referring to Gratian's *Decretum* and St Augustine's *De civitate* and *Questiones in Heptateuchum*.

40 Allison Peers, *Spirit of Flame*, 74.

41 *The Living Flame*, 3.8.

42 See the discussion of *alteri incommunicabilis* and betrothed love in Karol Wojtyła/St John Paul II, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H T Willetts, (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 95-100.

43 *The Spiritual Canticle*, Prologue, 3.

44 Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2000), 4.

45 *The Living Flame*, Prologue 1.



Lisieux (Francia): pilgrimage of the Carmelite family



Saturday October 1st, the entire Carmelite family of the Paris province held a reunion in Lisieux for the 10th consecutive year. In the context of the general pastoral visitation of the father General, fr. Miguel Marques Calle and fr. Roberto Maria Pirastu, definitor, participated in the meeting.

Around 160 persons, among friars, secular Carmelites and nuns of the Carmelite spirituality, reunited around Saint Therese and were welcomed by the Discalced Carmelite nuns of Lisieux. Father General spoke of the importance of the doctorate of Therese in "science of love": "The doctorate of Therese allows us to state that her doctrine contains a word about God and about the human being that is beautiful not only for the believers, but also for modern day society (...). The wisdom of Therese can help us to rediscover the Gospel, to overcome our situation of spiritual stagnation, to live the Word of Jesus like a liberating strength". Along with Sunday's holy mass presided by Mons. Habert, bishop of Bayeux-Lisieux, and the procession of the relics, the most important moments were the prayer time and the encounter with father General with the secular Carmelites and with all the friars.





Carmelite Retreats at Varroville



4 February	Being Still in the Presence of God - St. Thérèse of Lisieux - Fr. Paul Maunder, OCD.
3-5 March	Taizé Retreat: Caring for God's Creation - Ann Marie Nicol & Friends.
4 March	The Hospitality of God - St. John of the Cross – Lorraine Murphy, OCDS.
31 March - 2 April	Artists' Retreat - John Charadia.
1 April	The Three Stages on the Journey to God – Barry Monkel, OCDS.
6 May	Elizabeth of the Trinity & her sister Marguerite – Marcelle Droulers, OCDS.
3 June	Four Waters of Prayer – St Teresa of Jesus - Fr. Ferdinand de la Cruz, OCD.
16 - 18 June	Science of the Cross – St Edith Stein - Fr. Paul Maunder, OCD.
1 July	"Remain in Me, pray in Me" (St. Elizabeth of the Trinity) - Matthew Delasey, OCDS.
21 - 23 July	The Dark Night of the Soul - Fr. Ferdinand de la Cruz, OCD.
5 August	Pope Francis' Encyclical: <i>Fratelli Tutti</i> - Dr. Robert Gascoigne.
25 – 27 August	How do I pray? - Sr. Susan Ninfa Timbal, CM.
2 September	The Holy Spirit and Prayer – Barbara Stenning, OCDS.
10 - 17 September	Guided Retreat: A Week with St. Therese of Lisieux (weeklong) – Fr. Aloysius Rego, OCDS.
15 – 17 September	Icon Painting Retreat - Anna Prifti.
7 October	On Friendship in the light of St. Therese & St. Teresa – Lorraine Murphy, OCDS.
13 - 15 October	A Saint for the Weak and Sinful - Bishop Greg Homeming, OCD.
4 November	Finding joy in suffering - St. Elizabeth of the Trinity - Elizabeth Flynn and Fr. Gerard Moran, OCD.
2 December	Could you be "Messiah"? - Fr. Ransom Rapirap, OCD.



Bookings at: bookings@mtcarmel.com.au - 0435 857 690

