



Religious Communities serving in Diocese of Metuchen

Part 3: Discalced Carmelites

Prayer, liturgy, daily tasks at heart of cloistered, contemplative order

On March 28, members of the Carmelite Order will celebrate the 500th birthday of their foundress, St. Teresa of Avila. This great saint and Doctor of the Church was inspired with an ardent spirit of contemplative prayer and apostolic zeal. She traveled throughout Spain, establishing communities of cloistered nuns who were to uphold the Church and the world by their hidden lives of sacrificial love. Her spirit lives on.

Since there were no women religious in the 13 colonies before the Revolutionary War, several American women went to Europe to be formed as Carmelites. In 1790, three of them returned to America to bring the spirit of St. Teresa to a new land.

Beginning at Port Tobacco in Maryland, Carmel has now spread to more than 60 locations in the United States. From this first Foundation in Port Tobacco, the community has descended through Wheeling, W.Va., (1913) to Morristown (1926) to New Brunswick (1949) and to Flemington (1972).

Frances Potts, daughter of Admiral and Mrs. Robert Potts of Maryland, desired to enter Carmel but was unable because of incipient tuberculosis. She made a pilgrimage to Lourdes to ask Our Blessed Mother to cure her so that she would be able to follow her calling. Her prayer was answered and thereupon Frances entered the Carmel of Baltimore.

Receiving the religious name Mary Magdalen, she was one in the group of nuns who accompanied Mother Joanne Sneeringer to found the Carmel of Wheeling. Later on, as a prioress, Mother Mary Magdalen founded the Carmel of Morristown. In answer to Our Lady of Fatima's request for prayer and penance, she set out again to a temporary house on

Landing Lane in New Brunswick until the monastery on Britton Drive in Flemington

Then followed the years of the Second Vatican Council, which encouraged religious to consider the size of their buildings in view of their real needs. That monastery proved to be too large and the order became aware it should do something about it. In a spirit of obedience to the directives of the Church, the order built a monastery.

In 1969, the order's prioress, Mother Mary Joseph, suggested the bold undertaking and the community was unanimous in accepting the challenge with all the detachment and all the work involved.

Florence Green had a property available at 26 Harmony School Rd. (the other side of Flemington), which was inviting to the Carmelite Desert spirit of Silence and Solitude. With the always-available help of St. Joseph, Mrs. Green graciously agreed to a suitable business transaction. May God reward her goodness to us!

What a special joy it was for us to meet several Little Sisters of the Poor during our time of transition. God's Providence arranged it was to them we would sell the monastery. Now we had the certainty that it would be used to its full potential through the superb apostolate with the elderly. The Little Sisters of the Poor happily renamed the monastery "Divine Providence!"

It was with grateful hearts and tearful eyes that we bid goodbye to our home on Britton Drive on Aug. 9, 1972, and made our way to our new "Mt. Carmel" on Harmony School Road, Monastery of Mary Immaculate and St. Mary Magdalen.

To celebrate this new location, a devoted friend, Dean Iorio (whose family boasts the well-achieved re-

wards for professional pyro-technicians), put on a magnificent fireworks display. It was to honor Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and proved to be a great success for the nuns and for as many people as could fit in the field outside our enclosure.

St. Teresa of Avila assures us that,

"God is never outdone in generosity," and it would take another 500 years to recount how very true this is!

For more information, contact: Carmelite Monastery, 26 Harmony School Rd., Flemington NJ 08822-2606. Also, the website <http://www.flemingtoncarmel.org/>



**Bishop Paul G. Bootoski
blesses a Carmelite**

Editor's Note: Because of their charism, the Carmelites requested that the name of the Sister who wrote the reflection be withheld.

"This monastery is a paradise for anyone who finds her sole happiness in pleasing God."

These words of St. Teresa of Jesus, painted above our enclosure door, greet every new postulant who enters the loving embrace of God which is our Carmel.

Though silent and hidden from the world, Carmelites converse ceaselessly with God and live under His gaze. Though poor in spirit, they possess treasure in heaven and experience the blessings of true joy and interior freedom even now.

My first acquaintance with Carmel came from Story of a Soul, the autobiography of St. Therese. I was captivated by her "little way" of love and trust which has all the simplicity — and challenge — of the Gospel. I thought God might be calling me to this way of life. My spiritual director knew the Carmelites in Flemington and suggested I contact the Mother Prioress for a visit.

The moment I stepped into the monastery's public chapel, I found

Reflection by a Discalced Carmelite

a peace that was not of this world. It seemed to reveal the preeminence of prayer. Carmelites have two hours of contemplative prayer each day and a rich liturgical life including Mass, Divine Office, spiritual reading, Rosary, and Eucharistic adoration.

But our prayer is not limited to thoughts and words!

All our daily tasks, however ordinary, and every interaction with our sisters, however small, are offered to God as a litany of praise and thanksgiving. For it is not in the accomplishment of great works but in doing even little things with great love that has value in God's eyes.

This is the apostolate of a Carmelite nun. In fidelity to God's will, she develops her own intimate relationship with Him and becomes a channel of His grace for the whole world. She carries in her heart the needs of the Church, the intentions of priests, and the desire to bring Christ's healing power to all souls.

I encourage young people discerning a vocation to consider the words of Jesus: "He who loses his life for My sake will find it" (Mt 10:39). Our Lord is never outdone in generosity!

When we give ourselves completely to Him, we will find the love, security, and meaning we seek.

To young ladies who may be intrigued by the Carmelite life, I invite you to come pray in our chapel. Speak to Our Lord in the tabernacle and listen to what He says deep within you.

Perhaps you, too, will experience the peace that I discovered and the happiness that comes from pleasing God alone.

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