



Flos Carmeli

Flower of Carmel

Fall 2020

Carmelite Sisters of the Divine Heart of Jesus
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Responding to Eternal Love

By: Sr. M. Grace Augustine

As I was preparing for Final Vows this year, I was asked by someone, “How can a young woman make vows “Forever?” I think I responded with something short and sweet, like “Grace!” I wish I had said, “God is Love. Love is eternal.”

Recently, the professed community was reading Man’s Search for Meaning during spiritual reading. In it, Dr. Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist and expert in theoretical and clinical psychology who survived horrific experiences in various concentration camps during World War II, makes the argument that the key to human survival is the person’s conviction that his life has a purpose beyond himself. At one point, he recalls in stirring terms how the love of his wife literally saved his life one day:

And as we stumbled on for miles, slipping on icy spots, supporting each other time and again, dragging one another up and onward, nothing was said, but we both knew: each of us was thinking about his wife... A thought transfixed me: for the first time in

my life I saw the truth as it is set into songs by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth – that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire. (p.37)

Frankl’s wife was not physically present. He did not know if she was still alive. But his love for her was the daily bread which reenergized his vigor for life. I appreciated this insight and recount of lived experience, because it heightened my awareness that love is binding and supersedes temporal and spatial structures; in other words, “Love is eternal.”

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Investiture and First Profession Snap Shots



Above: Congratulations to Sr. M. Magdalene Therese (Left) and Sr. Mariana Joy (Right) who were invested in the holy habit of Our Lady of Mount Carmel on July 1!

Congratulations to Sr. Mary Teresita who professed her First Vows on July 1! Right: Sr. M. Teresita beams after receiving the signs of Religious Profession.



Left: Sr. M. Benedicta presents Sr. Mary Teresita with her profession Rosary.

Responding to Eternal Love *(continued)*

We all desire this eternal love. Through God's grace, we are all capable of participating and sharing in this love, this binding and total exchange of selves. In his apostolic letter, *Vita Consecrata*, St. John Paul II highlights this mystery of eternal love as revealed in Religious Life when he proclaims:

This is the meaning of the call to the consecrated life: it is an initiative coming wholly from the Father (cf. Jn 15:16), who asks those whom he has chosen to respond with complete and exclusive devotion. The experience of this gracious love of God is so deep and so powerful that the person called senses the need to respond by unconditionally dedicating his or her life to God, consecrating to him all things present and future, and placing them in his hands. (17)

I recalled this excerpt frequently as I was preparing for Final Vows. The Religious Sister's impetus for vowing

her life to God must always be the reception of the deep, powerful and gracious love of God. As she receives this gift, her free response is to love as deeply, powerfully and graciously as a creature can: giving everything back to the One who gives everything. When Final Vows are understood as a young woman's response to Eternal Love, the suggestion of a temporary commitment conditioned by temporal satisfaction is recognized as a skewed response. God's being is love, and He is eternal. The question is whether our response to Love is grounded in love. If it is, the vows are eternal.

So, great question and please pray that my life becomes an adequate reply. After receiving the love of God, I hope my utterance of "Forever" is only natural - or, should I say, supernatural: "God is Love. Love is eternal."

"Give me a Drink"... *(continued)*

The program is geared toward forming college-age young women or recent college graduates specifically in receptivity to the Gift of God and in authentic feminine self-gift through three pillars: Interior Prayer, Authentic Femininity, and Mission & Evangelization. Participants will live at St. Agnes Home and have the opportunity to 'give back' and to seek to win souls for Christ while being formed in their spiritual lives through drawing near the Sacred Heart and receiving from our

charism and the gifts God gave to our Dear Mother, Bl. Maria Teresa of St. Joseph.



The Sisters welcome Abbey into the year of formation and service.

Save the Date

VIRTUAL
HOLINESS
RETREAT

JANUARY 9,
2021

Register now on our website (see *Vocation* tab).

Surprised by the Impossible

By: Sr. M. John Paul

One March evening, as the moon shone through the window, I stood at the ironing board with a foreign contraption in my hand: fabric and string. “Never,” I thought to myself, “would I have guessed that ironing a mask would be part of my everyday life... and here I am... Lord, what do you want of me?” (1 Sam 3:4). As necessary as it is to find fun variations of masks to wear, we need to get creative about how to spread the Gospel, too! Evangelization is NECESSARY in these times, and here at St. Agnes Home apostolic activity has been moving along in spite of all the ways COVID inhibits the normal routine. From the residents’ perspective we Carmelites have made them into Carmelites, and this is not without its perks...

For the feast of Our Lady of Fatima, May 13th, there was a solemn visitation of our Blessed Mother to each of the residents. Mary, accompanied by a multi-cultural choir of Sisters (singing in both English and Spanish), greeted each resident as they remained isolated in their rooms. For Corpus Christi, the residents experienced a similar occurrence, each one receiving their own Benediction as Father passed through the whole Home with the Blessed Sacrament. While outside visits remain limited and closely monitored, our residents and staff are grateful to still have their own visits with God in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and even the opportunity to receive Him in the Eucharist on Sundays!



Our Lady of Fatima travels through St. Agnes Home to visit the residents in their rooms.



Father and the Sisters process through St. Agnes Home for the Feast of Corpus Christi.

Also in the Home we have witnessed a group effort to build up community amongst our employees. Some of these efforts include an Alpha group—a guided faith formation and evangelization program particularly designed for those with little to no faith life, a table with spiritual resources next to the screening station (to henceforth eliminate boredom), and many one-on-one conversations about just what God is asking of us in these challenging times of illness and violence. As focused as we are on remaining COVID-free, we are still reaching out to many via Zoom by hosting and benefiting from catechism classes, a Bible study and assisting those suffering from lack of food.

Our daycare is currently closed, but we have continued to proclaim the Gospel to the little ones via Facebook videos of prayer and song to Jesus, hoping the children will be able to return soon.

While writing this article I stumbled upon a remarkable quote from St. Francis of Assisi that accurately describes how God has led us through COVID: “Start by doing what is necessary, then do what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.” So all in all, we are still unprofitable servants (Lk 17:7), but we keep our eyes and ears open for the little whisperings of the Holy Spirit, because love transforms all obstacles into welcome opportunity.



Sr. M. John Paul records Morning Prayer for the children while the daycare remains closed.



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"To see God in all, to serve
God in all, to love God in all."

"Give me a Drink"...

"Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour" (Jn 4:6).

The heat at that hour was blaring and the cool shade of the trees surrounding the well welcomed the woman as she came, water jar in hand, to collect her daily ration. A menial task, though, carefully planned to avoid unexpected company. As she approached the well however, she could see seated there a man about thirty years old peering at her intently. She was alone and so was he. She continued her task as customary, silent in the presence of the stranger. However, He had something on His mind: "Give me a drink." He said. And thus the silence was broken with a rich voice and a simple request.

Yet, Jesus' request contained an ever deeper desire, a desire for her very self... The apostles were gone, He was alone with the woman. It was only in this solitude that her heart encountered the Heart of the Eternal One.

Every soul has heard this request in one form or another... It is an invitation to receive the One who is Gift into oneself and in turn to proclaim the Gift to others. To assist young women in listening ever more deeply to this invitation of Christ's to deep personal relationship and to respond with the soul's utterly unique gift of self, we are beginning a year of formation and service this fall.



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