It really was a typical morning in a Pre-K classroom: the children were gathering on the platform after putting on their coats so that we could head over to the Social Hall to practice our Christmas Pageant. Amidst the hustle and bustle of thirty coats to zip and sixty mittens to find and lose again, one boy jumped off the platform, came up to my rocking chair and asked, “Is Jesus God?” I answered in the affirmative as my eyes were locked on the frustrating teeth of a winter coat. Janie quickly piped in, “But my Mom and Dad say that Jesus is not God.” OK, this girl successfully got my full attention, and I had all the other children’s attention as they sat bewildered, “I thought Sister and our Moms and Dads always agreed!” Meanwhile, I was thinking that a lesson on the hypostatic union seemed a bit advanced, but somehow we were going to reconcile this dogma with the Fourth Commandment in a developmentally appropriate way. I needed some time to brainstorm an action plan, so I quickly began rehearsing the song, “Angels We Have Heard on High,” with the children - complete with hand motions. The Holy Spirit led the discussion from there...

“Gloria in Excelsis Deo.” The children finished the song with perfect Latin pronunciation and their right and left pointer and thumb fingers forming an equilateral triangle. “What are your hands doing?” I asked. The children were quick to explain that they were forming a triangle, and they all agreed that a triangle has three corners. Being the intelligent children they are, they remembered that there is One God and Three Persons and that their names are Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A triangle was quickly drawn on the chalkboard to allow fingers to rest. I pulled a book off the shelf and asked Johnny to show me the beginning of the story. Being the intelligent child he is, he found it at the beginning. I explained that we all had a beginning, but God (Continued on page 2)
never had a beginning. Mind boggling, I know, but those kids got it - with the help of “forever” hand motions. We pointed to each corner of the triangle and agreed that the Father is God; the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Through pure logic, we also agreed that the Father always was, is and will be; the Son always was, is and will be, and the Holy Spirit always was, is and will be.

“Holy Spirit, come,” I prayed. “How am I supposed to get them to understand divine and human nature?” I told the children, albeit sheepishly, “God didn’t have a body. I know that’s hard to imagine. He didn’t have eyes, toes, or fingers. But, you know Adam?” The children all nodded. “Well, remember? He made the first bad choice. That was a big problem, because the gates of Heaven were closed. God needed eyes, toes, and fingers to open them.” Ah! Ha! One child shouted out, “So, He became a baby!” “Yes,” I whispered (for fear that the hypostatic union excitement would begin a chain reaction of hyper-static chaos in the classroom). “But which Person do you think became the baby?” “The Son!” they shouted. “Yes!” I whispered, “One day, God decided that it was time to begin to open the gates, so he became a tiny baby, named Jesus, in Mary’s belly. God had never had eyes, toes or fingers, but on Christmas He showed the whole world his body.” You could hear a pin drop, and I had tears in my eyes as I watched their eyes marvel at the mystery of God made Man.

We toured the Trinity triangle again to make sure there were no more heretics in the room. They all agreed that each Person was God and that each Person always was, is and will be. They all agreed that the Son was the only Person to get eyes, fingers, and toes to open Heaven. The stickler teacher that I am, I tested them through a newly phrased thought process at the end: “Is the Son God?” “Yes.” “Did the Son have a beginning?” “No.” “Is Jesus God?” “Yes.” “Did Jesus as a baby have a beginning?” “Yes!” They got it!

I returned to the normal hustle and bustle of coat zipping, but the triangle drawn out of chalk and the baby doll that served as the Baby Jesus prop had transformed the classroom into a Council of Chalcedon for ten minutes and had transformed my heart with a greater dosage of gratitude to the God who “so loved the world that He gave us His only Son” (Jn 3:16).
A Journey in Faith

By: Sr. Anna Maria

How can I reap from Mary, the Mediatrix of all graces, the graces she wants to give me when my journey is different from hers and I have my sins that hold me back? I want to take you on a journey of my past year, a journey in which my relationship with Our Lord, Mary, and the saints has grown and deepened by entering into the mystery of our faith.

As I approached my birthday last year, I wanted to prepare myself. God answered my prayer by leading me to the passage in 1 Kings in which St. Elijah travels to Mount Horeb. It took Elijah forty days to reach the Mount, and, interestingly enough, it was forty days before my birthday. Taking the passage as my guide, I journeyed in expectation toward my birthday. I experienced many graces during these next forty days. I was so excited for my birthday!

The day came and went, and, at the close of the day, I pondered over the ordinariness of the day. I then realized that the forty days of preparation were not to stop, but were to be practiced day in and day out. My journey was to become a way of life. Elijah didn’t reach the mountain and say, “Ok, it is completed. The journey is over.” No, he continued his journey until he was taken up to Heaven by a fiery chariot.

Thus, I decided to take Elijah as my guide for the next year. I took notice of the readings at Mass and in the breviary that centered on Elijah, and I found Elijah pointing me towards Our Lady. In particular, I found Elijah leading me towards Mary in the passage in which Elijah sends his servant to look over the sea after all of the servants of Baal have been slain. After looking over the sea seven times, the servant reported that he saw a small cloud. I took this passage to mean that I needed to turn to Our Lady and build my relationship with her in my life. In particular, I felt called to turn to Mary under her title “Mary, Undoer of Knots.”

I received a novena to “Mary, Undoer of Knots.” I was told to place the “knots” in my life (visible and invisible) into her maternal hands and allow her to undo the knot the way she saw best. It was a call to abandon myself to Mary. This novena led me towards Mary’s Son, giving me a new way to experience His mercy and show forth His mercy to others.

This experience of His mercy grew even deeper when I soon after heard a talk on unilateral forgiveness. I had never thought of unilateral forgiveness before. Unilateral forgiveness means that if I have been deeply wounded by another, it is important for me to forgive that person, or, if I am too weak, to begin with forgiving them with Jesus’s forgiveness. Then, I am called to place that person in the center of the Trinity, praying for the good of the person. Why? First, it releases me from the snares of the Evil One. Second, it allows the other to be released from the chains which bind them, opening the possibility of their repentance and conversion. Third, I am praying for the person’s good. This is what I, and all of us, want for ourselves, and should, therefore, desire for others. Additionally, this completely destroys the Evil One’s ability to divide, and it heals relationships that have been torn. It frees both myself and the other.

As this year comes to an end, my thoughts turn back to Elijah. Elijah desired that the people turn back to God. God heard Elijah’s prayer and used Elijah as His instrument. God desires to use me as His instrument, too. I have to be open, docile, and attentive to the promptings to the Holy Spirit. However, this is not just a call for me. He desires to use all of us as His instruments, so as to call us and others into a deeper union with Himself.

Sequela Christi
Friday, December 28, 2018
Spend an afternoon and evening with the Sisters joining in our apostolate, prayers, and recreation.
For girls age 15 and up.
RSVP now by emailing vocations@carmelitedcj.org.

Retreats
Holiness Retreat
February 15-17, 2019
Vocation Retreat
May 23-26, 2019
Register now on our website (see Vocation tab).
“To see God in all, to serve
God in all, to love God in all.”

Shepherds of Souls

Just a few months ago I had the pleasure of renewing an old friendship with a priest who had been a transitional deacon at my home parish. Being so excited to see each other again, we exchanged a big hug and caught up for a short while. I have always admired this priest for his honesty and enthusiasm, and as he described the overwhelming responsibilities of his first assignment as pastor, I was struck very deeply. He said that he felt that Jesus had just tossed him into the deep waters and told him: “Swim!” With so many souls under his care and so many temporal needs to meet, it amazed me how much he would be accountable to God for at the end of his life—how much depended on his cooperation with grace. Though overwhelmed, he was so excited and joyful as he began this big step in being a shepherd of souls.

As Carmelites, we have an ancient tradition to pray for priests, but this is really an obligation for all the Church. As we see the priesthood so attacked today, I hope it has made us all more aware that we must pray for our priests. I had an employee tell me once: “They [priests and religious] are no different from us. They have emotions, too.” The laity has a right to expect her clergy to be trustworthy and Christ-like, but we can’t leave our priests alone because they need to be supported by us too, primarily by our prayer. But how can we pray for them? One way that the Gospels suggest to us is intercessory prayer by simply stating the need. Instead of telling God how to fix the problem, we just tell Him what it is and trust that He knows how to take care of it. After all, He is God. The Roman Centurion is an example for us...He said: “Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress.” (Mt 8:6) Jesus responded by saying that He would go to heal him, but the Centurion refused even this external assurance Jesus extended to show that Jesus really would heal his servant. Jesus exclaimed: “Not even in Israel have I found such faith.” Mary is the model of all Christians and her only plea recorded to Jesus was: “They have no more wine.” (Jn 2:3) In other words: “You take care of it.” So as we pray for our priests, instead of telling God how He should help them, let us humbly intercede for them, trusting that God will provide for their needs.

By: Sr. M. John Paul

Mary, Mother of Priests, pray for them!