



CONTEMPLATIVES IN ACTION

CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL
UNITED STATES AND PHILIPPINES

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Sisters of Mount Carmel--Creating the Future

The theme of this issue is Creating the Future. We now have two sisters in Timor-Leste. As directed by our General Chapter, our Extended Council includes the presence of the Philippine Regional Coordinator at Executive Council meetings. In addition, we have a Filipina sister as a member of our Executive Council.

When I taught at Mount Carmel Academy I introduced a program called "Integrated Studies." Selected seniors studied: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? It was in preparing this program that I discovered "The Futurist" magazine. It was clear from reading about the future that the future does not just happen, but that we create the future. So, I was excited to be asked to write about the Sisters of Mount Carmel creating our future.

Our Thirty-fifth General Chapter directed us to form an Extended Council which includes the Philippine Regional Coordinator to be present at an Executive Council meeting to discuss areas of international concerns. We had our first meeting Aug. 21-22 with Sister Gloria Ibalio, the newly elected Regional Coordinator, joining us. In addition to drafting an Extended Council policy, we discussed our new foundation in Timor-Leste and other topics which will help facilitate communication as well as insure a deepening of Carmelite Spirituality and dedication to ministry of each of our sisters. Through email and Skype we will be able to stay in close contact.

Additionally, our Thirty-fifth General Chapter elected Sister Sheila Undang to the Executive Council. Sister Sheila is the first Filipina sister to serve on the Executive council. She has been a great asset to the council. She has expanded our knowledge of the Third World. I selected Sister Sheila as my assistant. Since we have twelve young sisters in the Formation program in the Philippines, the future of the Congregation truly lies in the Philippines. This action by the Chapter confirms preparation for, and a step toward creating the future of the Sisters of Mount Carmel.

We ask your prayer for our Sisters here in the USA and in the Philippines, especially for the perseverance of those in Formation, for they are our future. We also ask that you continue your prayers and support for our two Filipina Sisters, Mailyn Batocabe and Remedios Natonton who are now serving in Timor-Leste, our newest mission. There the sisters will initially help with Evangelization through Christian formation, pastoral care, healthcare, livelihood and economic development. The Timorese people have suffered greatly through many years of civil strife to maintain their independence. Establishing our new mission expands our Carmelite Spirituality in Asia. This has created a renewed hope for our future. Each action we take, each decision we make, creates our future.

In 1828 in France Sister St. Paul Bazire said to Sister Therese Chevrete, our future foundress, "Carmel will live in another country. God will use you; you will cross the sea and it (Carmel) will not perish." What an assurance of our future!

Sister Lawrence Habetz, O. Carm. serves as the president of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.



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Q & A with Sister Maria Sheila Undang, O. Carm.

Why did you leave your name on the ballot for leadership in the Congregation?

For years we had been talking in the region about having a Filipina sister on the Executive Council to participate in the congregation governance. There were four of us Filipina sisters who were nominated and we had talked about the nomination. With the limitation of membership we had in the region and the priorities each one of us had to face, I end up leaving my name in. Before I made the decision of joining the discernment retreat for leadership I had asked few sisters in the region for their wisdom and guidance whether I accept the nomination or not. It was clear to me from the very beginning that I am doing this not for myself, not for the sisters in the region alone, not for the sisters in the USA, but rather for the whole congregation. I do believe that the main reason why I left my name in is, because of Love. I do not know what the future will bring us, but I have a great hope that God has a plan for us as a Congregation. In which we tried our best to respond to God's general call to holiness by living out our calling, by sharing our Carmelite Spirituality, our heritage and traditions to the people we ministered in the United States, in the Philippines and now to the people of Timor Leste.



What challenges will the Sisters in the Philippines face with your new responsibility?

With the important responsibilities the sisters in the region had entrusted to me it was not easy for them to just let me go. But I am very touched and so grateful for the sisters' generosity and great love for the Congregation. Despite the constraint of personnel we had, they were generous enough to let me face and respond to my responsibilities. Coming from a third world country, limited as we are, we always make use of whatever resources we have. The same is true in the Philippine Region; we are so limited in some aspects but we stretch out and we use all the resources we have to be able to respond to the challenges that we faced each day in our ministries and in our living out our Religious Life.

How will they handle the ministries you were involved in?

It was also timely that one of our junior sisters had finished her degree in accounting so it was not that difficult to look for a person who would take my place in doing the finances both in the region and in our school. Before I left, we hired another person to take care and to assist in the school finance office and to help Sr. Elma Calajatan as she is in the adjustment process. Sr. Lilibeth Espiritu took my other ministry in managing our school cafeteria with the assistance of some other sisters. On the other hand, Sr. Lourdes Calleja was generous enough to take my place in journeying with our junior sisters. Sr. Carlita Panaligan took my other responsibility as the physical plant and maintenance coordinator of our school. No matter how many and how important your responsibilities are, no one is indispensable in this world. As in Isaiah 40:11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." God takes care of everything by sending us the right person we need at the right time. I do believe that all the events and opportunities in our lives come not in coincidence but rather it is part of God's salvific plan for each one of us.

How does your family feel about your new role in the congregation?

From the very beginning of my decision of joining the Sisters of Mount Carmel, though I am the eldest among the eight siblings, both my parents and my other siblings had been so supportive of my choice in life. I can still remember clearly 16 years ago, during the time when I had asked permission and the blessing of my parents to enter the convent, my father told me, "Your mother and I have done our responsibilities to you by sending you to a good school. You are in the right age of making a decision for yourself and we are giving you your freedom. He then further told me, if you choose to look for a job for yourself, we are not going to dictate you. We just want you to take responsibility for yourself as long as we know you are in good hands and happy in your life. He then told me, your mother and I would appreciate and accept if you would help us in any way you can in raising your other siblings by sending them to schools,(since there were three of them in college at that time and some were in high school, and he

just stopped working in the Middle East). But remember this, your other siblings are not your responsibility, they are mine and your mother's responsibility. So even if it is painful for us to let you go, you have our love and blessings. We just hope and pray you will not regret your decision. And if you do and you are no longer happy inside the convent you know where to come home. We are just right here to support you and to accept your decision." These words of wisdom from my father keep on repeating on my memory especially in times when I am facing a challenging situation. Before coming here in April my parents had called me and all my brothers and sisters together with their families to be home for the Holy Week and Easter. It was just an appropriate time to get together before I left to assume my responsibilities in the congregation leadership.

Share some of the adjustments you are making as a result of crossing between two cultures.

Language is one of the most challenging factors of adjustment for me: Not able to speak the language I am used to; not able to express fully what I want to say and not be able to understand and capture what others are saying sometimes makes me feel frustrated and reminds me how limited I am. And knowing how limited I am sometimes is painful for me to accept. Another challenge that I had to face is the feeling of loneliness. Missing the place that I am used to and not having my family, the sisters in the Philippines and the friends I dearly love near me is hard. Another adjustment that I am aware of is the means of communication and the time. Furthermore, since I am the first Filipina sister elected to the executive council, it is both an adjustment to me and the American sisters in the executive council as well. Everything is new and everything is like a trial and error. Sometimes, I even ask myself why I have accepted such a great responsibility. Coming here is a grace and a blessing for me in terms of growing in self-knowledge, of knowing the sisters and most of all in my commitment to religious life, yet it is also a great challenge. God has been so generous to me by giving me the family and friends who are loving and generous to me, too. The sisters in the Philippines and the sisters here in the United States are so supportive and understanding of me as well, so who am I not to respond to that generosity and love.

History Highlights

As we saw in a previous issue, our foundresses, Mothers Thérèse Chevrel and Augustine Clerc, enjoyed the peace and tranquility of Plattenville, LA for four years. In March, 1838, Bishop Blanc made a pastoral visit to the Sisters in Plattenville. He informed them that the school building was needed for a new seminary and that they were needed in New Orleans. By the end of March, they had already relocated.

Back in New Orleans, Mothers Thérèse and St. Augustine took charge of the St. Claude Street School. It had opened its doors in 1823 the education of free persons of color. The two Sisters had spent 52 days aboard ship and 4 years in Plattenville before arriving at their original destination. 1838-1846 would prove to be years of blessings for the new community.

The first blessing was being recognized by Bishop Blanc as a religious community. Next, he named Fr. Etienne Rousselon, a French priest, as their superior and confessor. Lastly, during these years, the small community began to grow. Battling yellow fever and poverty, the new community took on as additional task. A school for white girls. Located on the outskirts of the French Quarter, St. Augustine Parish would be the home of the Sisters for over a century.

Our next issue will showcase a period of war as well as growth and peace.

History Highlights

Mount Carmel Memories ??

As an alum of the Mount Carmel's class of '84, I have many memories of my time there; of course friends, classes, but looking back, it was the sounds, smells and rhythms of the old building that resonated with me most. The small annex where we would change our clothes for PE to the openness of the gymnasium with the golden-colored floorboards that always had the smell of varnish and the buzzing sounds when the tungsten lights in the gym would get turned on and the warm orange glow it gave the gym just like a setting sun. I remember the musty-smelling library only tolerable because of the cool air-conditioning – a welcome respite from the hot, humid-filled classrooms and the tempting proposition to get in trouble just so I could be sent to the library for detention. (Not really) I remember the chemistry/biology lab with the smell of formaldehyde and all the beakers lined up on the shelves and the cool, black granite countertops that was a welcome relief to lay my head on because it was so cool. It didn't matter that many a frog had been dissected there - it was the aim to stay cool.

I remember the smells wafting out of the cafeteria, in particular the bread rolls. Was it lasagna, Salisbury steak, or chicken today? Who knew but you could always count on the vegetable medley that contained green beans, carrots and peas that I could never seem to eat. Thinking I was smart, I would mush them in my milk container only to find out that I was told to return back to my seat and eat it because there were people in Africa starving and I should not waste food. I remember when it was announced we would have religion class in the beautiful chapel, the highest point in the building, and the feeling of the large room was very peaceful and quiet. Also, being told "we're going into the chapel – you must be silent" and walking in feeling the coat of coolness from the air conditioner, sitting on the red carpet and getting light-headed from the smell of burning candles. I remember walking the long, wide hallways lined with picture frames of the former graduates and always pausing for a second to look at the Class of '56 to see Mom's photo. I remember the high ceilings along this hallway, which were reminiscent of an old house, and the sound of what our brown, leather Bass shoes (that we bought from Abdalas), made as they hit the linoleum floor, especially when the bell rang at 3:01 p.m. I remember walking into the front office from the hall and seeing the trophy case filled with the wins of the mighty Mt. Carmel Cubs to the left and to the right seeing the parents dropping off and picking up kids for doctor's appointment or because they were going home sick. I remember the first time I walked behind the glass window and was fascinated to see the little room where the announcements were made from - I was always so tempted to go in there and play music, but I knew that would lead me to the next office - Sister Rose Marie's office - a place I'm happy to say that I rarely frequented. I remember the Home Economics room that was a few steps down from the office and remember the recipes we would make and where we would hold 4-H monthly meetings. I remember when we got a computer lab and learned FORTRAN and inputted six lines of code only to produce a dog barking sound. I especially remember the heat. I remember my legs always sticking to the seat of the chair from the heat and sweat bubbles from my nose dripping on all of my papers. I remember the day that they installed ceiling fans and how happy everyone was. I remember the wonderful nuns who taught various subjects and how they could always discipline these rowdy girls, of course in a Godly manner. I remember all the involvement my family, especially my Mother had at the school, helping and volunteering on so many things and her close relationship with the nuns. I remember the struggle I had in school not excelling like my older sisters (both honorees of the "Most Considerate" contest) but somehow managing to get through and graduating.

What a relief, what memories, what a time, and to know that this was only a moment, a treasured moment, that made an impact on my life and the lives of the young women who also experienced it. We were a part of something special and if we didn't know it then, we most certainly realize it now. The mansion, the nuns, the teachers, the studies, the playground, the uniforms, all of it collectively, was unlike anything I have ever experienced.

Cecelia Schellstede, Class of 1984... ??

??

In 2013, Sr. Ann Carmel Segura celebrates two milestones. Sister was born in November, 1913 and she professed first vows in 1933. 100 years old and 80 years professed! Below are excerpts from an interview conducted in early summer, 2013.

SAA (Sister Alice Abate) : Sr. Ann Carmel, where were you born?

SAC (Sister Ann Carmel) : *I was born in New Iberia, LA. Well, it really wasn't New Iberia. It was called Segura, on Spanish Lake. The king of France had given that part of the country to the Seguras. So my family owned it.*

SAA: When were you born?

SAC: *I was born in November of 1913. So, I'll be 100 years old in November.*

SAA: When did you enter the convent?

SAC: *I entered when I finished high school, at the end of that summer, 1930.*

SAA: Tell us about your ministry? When you entered, all the sisters taught. How many years did you teach?

SAC: *I don't remember how long I taught.*

SAA: Well, what subjects did you teach?

SAC: *I taught just about everything! I taught singing. I remember teaching singing but I don't remember if I enjoyed it or not.*

SAA: What did you like most about teaching?

SAC: *Art. I enjoyed teaching art the most.*

SAA: What led you to art?

SAC: *I could always draw. From my earliest childhood.*

SAA: So as a child you remember trying to draw things?

SAC: *I didn't try, I drew.*

SAA: What did you draw? Scenery? Landscapes, Water?

SAC: *I drew people. I liked to draw people. Faces. I really didn't do hands, I drew faces.*

SAA: Did you prefer to draw faces as you saw them or caricatures, for example?

SAC: *As I saw them. (She points out one of her paintings on the wall in the community room.)*

SAA: Where did you study art?

SAC: *I went to the University of Notre Dame in South Bend to get my MFA.*

SAA: How has art made a difference in your life?

SAC: *It's what I did. What I taught. I taught it wherever I went. I don't remember teaching elementary but I taught high school art and adults too, I think.*



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Harrington, Mr. Daton by Ms. Jeanne deValcourt
Hartfield, Mr. Mike by Mr. and Mrs. Richard Borne
Hatt, Mrs. Lillian by Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Lakey
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Hebert, Mr. James P. by Ms. Nelwyn Hebert
Hebert, Mr. Tim by Ms. JoyLove Touns
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Landry, Dr. Henry Broussard by Ms. Jeanne deValcourt, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sonnier, Sr., Mr. Joseph G. Vallee
Landry, Gregory by Mrs. Theresa B. Guidry
Landry, Mr. Mike by Mr. and Mrs. Art Merryman
Landry, Mrs. Elizabeth by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Braud
Landry, Mrs. Florence by Mr. and Mrs. Sam Vedros
Landry, Mrs. Mary by Ms. Lily Landry
Landry, Ruth by Mr. and Mrs. Gary Delaune
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Lantier, Mrs. Edna by Ms. Ella Breaux
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LeBlanc, Sr., Mr. Rene by Mr. and Mrs. Brent Duet
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LeMaire, Lilly Mae by Wilda and Gleada Broussard
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Picone, Mr. John by Sister Lawrence Habetz, O. Carm.

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Touns, Mrs. Nell C. Beary by Ms. Phoebe Arceneaux, Mr. and Mrs. Edward R. Bouterie, Mrs. Elaine Morvant

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Venabale, Ms. Elida by Ms. Stella Z. Doucet

Verdigets, Mr. Bertel N. by Mr. and Mrs. Roger Fullmer

Viator, Mr. Mike by Mrs. Regina G. Viator

Vidrine, Mr. Dennis J. by Mr. and Mrs. David Landgrave

Villien, Dionne by Ms. Edna P. Landry

Vincent, Freddie by Ms. Janelle V. Landry

Waguespack, Dr. Gerald by Glenda Thibodeaux

Waguespack, Sr., Deacon Kenneth P. by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Spedale

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Arceneaux, Mrs. Patty by Mrs. Madeline White

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Bienvenu, Mr. and Mrs. Marty by Mrs. Darlene Robinson
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Upton, Ms. Sandra by Mr. and Mrs. Art Merryman

Van Cleve, Nona by Mr. and Mrs. Norris Rader

Wattigny, Father Patrick by Mr. Michael B. Stueve
Wehrer, Mr. and Mrs. John J. by Mrs. Georgia Young Moore

News of Note



Sydney Landry, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Chad Landry, received the Sisters of Mount Carmel Charism Award at E.D. White Highschool, Thibodaux, LA, ngraduation ceremony. This award recognizes the graduate who exhibits a faith life that encourages her to give of herself to other students and to those in her civic and church parishes. **Sister Denis Rodrigue** (left) and **Sister Barbara Nell Laperouse** presented the award.



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News of Note

On May 31 we welcome three new postulants: **Madelaine Antoque**, **Marisol Margaret Delatado** and **Gellian May Segismar**. **Juniza Vismano** is extending her postulancy. **Sisters Glaiza Granaderos** and **Christilyn Rubio** became canonical novices. **Sisters Jenielyn Basadre**, **Juliet Naga**, and **Elsie Villason** began their second Apostolic Novitiate year.



Sister Schielden Torreda became a second year junior professed. **Sisters Elma Calajatan** and **Lilibeth Espiritu** have begun their year of Intensification, preparing for final vows.



Preschool students from ? showing off their homemade kites.

This was a part of the festivities...

News of Note



Cub Corner clown day??



Father Harry Adjis...



Feast and Missioning



Sister Catherine Riggs, Director of Pastoral Care at Our Lady of Wisdom Healthcare Center, received the Leading Age Gulf States "Distinguished Service Award" for 2013. The award recognizes someone who has made an outstanding contribution towards the welfare of older persons. She is pictured with **Cindy Ladnier**, awards committee chairperson, and **Bob Laster**, administrator.

Sister Denis Rodrigue, O.Carm. who was selected by the Louisiana Ladies Auxiliary Association as Nun of the Year. Sister was honored at a Mass and banquet at Visitation of Our Lady Catholic Church in Marrero on July 27. Sister Denis is the co-coordinator of the Come, Lord Jesus! program at Mount Carmel Academy, New Orleans, LA.



Centering... A Way into the Silent Presence of God

Writing this article on Centering Prayer has been a difficult task, not because the “how to” is difficult, but because there is more to it than just following these few steps or simple guidelines:

- Choose a sacred word, sit comfortable, yet with backs straight.
- Silently introduce the sacred word as a symbol of your desire to be open to and consent to God’s silent, yet transforming presence and action within.
- When you become aware of thoughts, gently return to your sacred word.
- After 20 minutes, spend a couple of minutes slowly becoming present to your surroundings around you.

What is meant by a “sacred word”? Why backs straight? God’s silent, transforming action? What might occur if I do this twice daily as recommended by practitioners? Why not pay attention to ones thoughts? Are there any thoughts or feelings that it would be good to give attention to? During workshops or retreats the questions go on and on; I myself have asked them. Given the required brevity of this article, I will by-pass some of the many questions and focus in on three points, then at the end of the article I will recommend several works among the many available to assist those interested in practicing centering prayer.

First, it is important to recall that true prayer means being in relationship with the God who loves us, and it is Jesus’ Spirit who enables us to pray and to respond with openness to God’s promptings. All is gift and we are not “working” to “achieve” salvation. However, receptivity on our part is essential.

Second, so many people constantly live in the past and in the future, and seldom are really aware of the present moment. Yet God is in the present moment, as is our holiness; in fact, we only have the present moment. When we can be totally present to and aware of the “now,” to what is exterior to us and what is going on within us, only then can we live fully as human beings. God says in Psalm 46, “Be still and know that I am God.” I am not saying that we cannot also recall the past with thankfulness, nor that we cannot plan for the future. I am stating that being aware of what is being experienced now is vital for spiritually and physically healthy living. Many years ago at a workshop Br. David Steindleradst, OSB, stated, “Everything is word of God,” that is, if we live in awareness with eyes that truly see, ears that hear, and a heart that is open to God’s desire to communicate with us. (Of course, God’s primary Word, is Jesus, and thus the importance of daily praying with Scripture and frequent Eucharist.)

Third, St. John of the Cross in Maxims on Love reminds us, “The Father spoke one Word, which is his Son, and this Word he speaks always in eternal silence, and in silence must be heard by the soul.” In “Letter Seven” he states, “Our greatest need is to be silent before this great God...for the only language he hears is the silent language of love.” Silence, both interior and exterior, is often difficult to experience; yet it is so necessary for all who desire not to live on the periphery of life. In Into the Silent Land Martin Laird says that we are being drawn toward God as by a magnet or gravity. However, unconsciously we often respond to illusions that seem to offer happiness. Thus the need for prayer and contemplation, to be present to God in the silence of surrender.

Centering Prayer, an ancient prayer form, is one way to foster silence within, to “let go and let God” reveal who God is and who we are. We are invited into deeper levels of consciousness so that we can respond out of awareness and free hearts. Then we become aware of the motives and compulsions that are so often behind the choices we make—both those that are loving and unloving. In the silence we come to know our oneness with all of God’s creation. Centering Prayer is simply a prayer of

surrendering to God's presence and action within us. It is one way to foster the contemplative experience. We do not need to "work at it," but rather to gently let go while using what Fr. Thomas Keating calls a "sacred word."

A few recommended readings: Into the Silent Land by Martin Laird, O.S.A.; The Ascent of Mt. Carmel, Maxims of Love, "Letter Seven," by St. John of the Cross (The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross); Open Mind, Open Heart and Intimacy with God by Thomas Keating; Will and Spirit and The Dark Night by Gerald May; Too Deep for Words by Thelma Hall; Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening by Cynthia Bourgeault; Jesus the Teacher Within by Lawrence Freeman.



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News of Note



Departure ceremony for Mai and Remi to Timor-Leste...

Could also give an update of their arrival...

CONTEMPLATIVES IN ACTION

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