

CONTEMPLATIVES IN ACTION

CONGREGATION OF OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL
UNITED STATES AND PHILIPPINES

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Among the milestones of the Congregation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is its 125 year history in St. Augustine Parish in New Orleans. Coinciding with this year's 170th year celebration of the founding of St. Augustine, the sisters reflect on "le don de Dieu" of their original motherhouse and girls' academy in the Treme neighborhood.

Si Tu Savais Le Don De Dieu

"If you only knew the gift of God..." The words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman, inscribed on the arch above the sanctuary of St. Augustine Church in New Orleans, have inspired many generations of parishioners, including the Sisters of Mount Carmel.

When I was assigned to the St. Augustine parish school in 1949, my mother recalled having been inspired in her childhood by those words. Her parents had been married at St. Augustine church, she had been baptized there and over the years that scripture passage remained dear to her.

This new parish church was itself a "gift from God" to the people of the area. Until its construction, residents of the Treme neighborhood had

belonged to St. Louis Cathedral parish. Some of them assisted at Mass, from 1836-1838, in the chapel of the Ursuline convent, located on the city block bounded by St. Claude, Bayou Road, Treme and Ursuline Streets. The Ursulines donated property on that same block for construction of a parish church. When our Sisters moved to the convent in 1838, Father Etienne Rousellon continued to celebrate Mass there until the consecration of St. Augustine Church in 1842.

This convent, the first house of our Community in New Orleans, was the old (1765 or earlier) Monrand plantation house, which later became part of the Claude Treme plantation, then part of the College d'Orleans. A school for free black girls, opened in 1826, was in the convent building when Mother Therese Chevrel, Sister Augustin Clerc and five postulants arrived in New Orleans from Plattenville. For the next 88 years, our Motherhouse and novitiate were located there. The school, for boarding and day students, remained there until



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1897, when the last few students transferred to St. Mary's Academy, and the school area became a teacher-training school for our Sisters.

In August, 1840, we began a school for white girls, first in a rented house, and eventually in a new building on the same block as our convent, on property Mother Therese bought at the corner of Treme Street and Bayou Road. This building, completed in 1869, housed the school for elementary and high-school students, rooms for boarding students, a chapel and an infirmary.

A 1925 newspaper article describing plans for remodeling the church noted that "The church will lose an old neighbor soon, for the Sisters of Mount Carmel are erecting a fine building in Lakeview and their property adjoining the church has been bought by the church... In less than a year they hope to move the motherhouse, novitiate and academy to... Lakeview."

In 1926, after our move to the new Motherhouse, our Sisters returned to St. Augustine to teach in the parish elementary school, in the building built under Mother Therese's leadership in 1869. Our old convent had been demolished, and the sisters lived in a house at 1126 Treme Street, on parish property. When dwindling enrollment prompted closing of the school in 1963, the Sisters of Mount Carmel had been in their Treme convents for a total of 125 years.

Thus, of all our community's foundations during the 187 years since our beginning in Tours in 1824, our ministry in Treme was the longest-lasting. St. Augustine Church, the fourth oldest in New Orleans, continues to serve the people of that neighborhood and beyond, and on October 2, 2011, its 170th anniversary was celebrated.

Sister Frances Therese Meyers, O. Carm. is history consultant for archival projects and mission effectiveness representative at St. Augustine, New Orleans, LA.



News of Note



Holy Family Sisters and Sisters of Mt. Carmel join parishioners in the 170 year jubilee of St. Augustine Parish on October 2, 2011. Rev. Quentin Moody, pastor, celebrates the liturgy with spirited choir, parishioners and guests.

Message from the

New Year, New Life

New Year's resolutions give us the feeling that we are starting off new, as if we can shed the old self and become a new person by working faithfully on our good intentions. And to some extent, we can. But, the newness of life in Christ is different from resolutions to do things differently; it is a resolution to be the person we have been created to be through the grace of Jesus Christ. Several times Jesus used the seed to understand life. In the parable, the sower scattered his seeds all over the



ground – in good soil, rocky soil and by the wayside. Some seeds were able to sprout and to grow. Some withered and died. Some did not even sprout. Two essentials are present in this parable: the life potential inherent in the seed, and the soil in which the seed is planted. Both elements are needed: the seed must have in it the potential to grow into a plant; the soil must be conducive to nourishing and bringing to life the plant contained within.

God has created us "in God's likeness" which means to share life with God. We, as the seed, have contained within us as human beings the potential for a deeply personal relationship with God, not only in eternity, but here on earth in our life time. Baptism is the planting of our seed of God-likeness in the soil of grace, the life of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us. Reconciliation trims off the unhealthy aspects of our life and cleans us, while the Eucharist nourishes us so that we might grow strong and beautiful in God's eyes and in the eyes of our family and co-workers.

What is our job in this growth? What does the seed do? It remains embedded in the soil, open to the action of the soil, sun, and water that enable it to grow. In that openness, it is transformed into the beautiful and healthy plant it was created to be. When we are open to the life of the Holy Spirit within us, and receive in gratitude the sacraments, the action of the Holy Spirit within us, we are transformed. We become the person in Christ we are called to be – loving, compassionate, self-sacrificing and grateful. Our resolution is not to do, but to be – open in love to the Spirit of the God who loves us. Today is a new year, a new life, a new way of living in our world in union with God, a new openness renewed each year that God gifts us with life – God's own and ours. Happy New Year! Happy New Life in Christ!



Sister Barbara Nell Laperouse, O. Carm. serves on the Executive Council and is Assistant to the Motherhouse Administrator, New Orleans, LA.



FIRST MT. CARMEL SCHOOL
Gov. Nicholls St., New Orleans



School Days Remembered

Sonja Mistretta, sparked by memories of her school days while visiting the archives of the Sisters of Mt. Carmel at the motherhouse, shared with Sister Andrée Bindewald some of those memories as a student at St. Augustine Elementary School through the 1950's.

"The sisters who taught me at St. Augustine school laid the foundation for my moral, ethical, and spiritual development. They were qualified and taught us well. Sister Alexander, my kindergarten teacher, taught me among the many children and their relatives in the Treme neighborhood," remembers Sonja. Sister Alexander taught for 37 years at St. Augustine. "The Sisters of Mount Carmel influenced my behavior and guided my belief in God and my understanding of the teachings of the Church. They held me and my nine all-girl eighth grade graduating classmates of 1957 to high standards. The eighth grade boys had transferred to nearby St. Aloysius."

Sonja referred to a classmate's recent writings that were a reminder of how mothers helped clean the school for opening day as well as helped to cook and serve the lunches. May Festivals were fundraisers for the school to supplement the \$3.00 per month tuition. Sonja recalled a 4th grade performance at the festival in which Sister Laurentia wanted her to lead the costumed "Indians" on stage. Without the means to purchase the costume, Sonja remembered how Sister Laurentia made one for her.

"The pastor, Father Basty, somehow obtained for me a four year scholarship to Mount Carmel Academy for high school. The expense of Catholic education would not have been possible for me. A two-bus transfer from Treme to Mount Carmel was part of my daily routine throughout high school. There, too, I got an excellent education that built character, imparted principals of life, taught life skills, and influenced my religious beliefs to today. There I became a self-sufficient individual determined to succeed in life."

"Into my life work in the insurance industry, I brought what I was taught...to be responsible, honest, ethical, and to place the interest of the other party first," mused Sonja.



Naming of the Bells

The Bells of St. Augustine were dedicated in 1842. An article, probably from the French language newspaper of the day (*L'Abeille*) later translated by Sister Hyacinth Breaux, O.Carm., describes the naming of the bells.

The largest of the bells was given to the church by Rev. Father Subileau's (the pastor's) father and mother who had celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in France the previous year and who wanted to offer in memory of this celebration this magnificent present to St. Augustine. This bell for which they are godfather and godmother was named after them "Jeannne-Marie"... The second bell was given by the parish and is named "Joseph-Augustina" from the pastor's name as godfather and from the parish name as godmother...The third bell bears the name of "Theresa-Louis" after the godmother, the Superior General of the Third Order of Mount Carmel and one of the ancient parishioners of St. Augustine as godfather,



After obtaining her degree from UNO through night classes, Sonja acquired four designations in insurance during her 48 years in the insurance industry leading to her position in risk management at the time of her retirement. Sonja currently resides in Metairie, LA and is an ardent fan of the opera.

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Sellers, O.Carm. Sister Stella Marie by Mr. and Mrs. Lester Gonzales

Semar, Mr and Mrs. Raymond by Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Semar
Shelley, Mr. Jess Bernard by Sisters of Mount Carmel
Sigua, Mrs. Leota Orsot by Mrs. Theresa B. Guidry, Norris and Patsy Rader
Simpson, T.O. Carm., Bill by Mrs. Jeanne F. White
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Southerland, Sr., Mr. Oscar R. by Mr. and Mrs. Errol J. Delahoussaye, John W, Goetz, Shari Goetz and Aniston Goetz
Stall, Mr. Gasper “Buddy” by Mr. and Mrs. Cordell Dartez
Stutes, Mr. Benjamin by Ms. Lois Bennett, Ms. Theresa Doucet, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Gossen, Sr., Mrs. Wenzel Habetz, St. Joseph Lay Carmelite Community, Mr. and Mrs. Nason Leger
Stutes, Mrs. Debbie by Ms. Betty C. Perrodin, Sue Stutes

Talbot, Mrs. Eleanor by Mr. and Mrs. Peter Strawitz
Taylor, Mr. Howard James by Mrs. Wenzel Habetz, Mrs. Dotsy Rodrigue

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Thews, Doug by Mrs. Nona Robichaux
Thibodeaux, Aline Privat by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Gossen, Sr.
Thibodeaux, Francis “Gale” by Mrs. Judy Habetz
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Trahan, Nanette by Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Comeaux, Mrs. Nason Leger
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Truxillo, Ms. Vivian by Saint Elizabeth Lay Carmelites

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Waldrop, Mrs. Martha N. T. by Danna Asaro
Whitman, Mr. Robert by Mrs. Joyce Cambias
Wilson, Mrs. Norma by Mrs. Julie Borne, Ms. Stella Z. Doucet
Wyatt, Ms. Shirley Jean by Mr. and Mrs. Michael Maloney
Wyble, Margaret Ann by Mrs. Dana Morvant

In Honor Of

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Allis, Courtney and Brady by Mrs. Rose Mary Broussard
Antoine, Mrs. Martha by Mrs. Andy Delaune
Arceneaux, Paul and Maude by Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Landry
Arockiam, SVD, Reverend Arockiam by Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Vincent

Belanger, Mr and Mrs Richard by Mrs. Betty Matherne, T.O. Carm.
Blue, Shelton and Adele by Norris and Patsy Rader
Bodin, Lindsey by Mr. and Mrs. Gary and Katie Delaune
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Cortese, Judy by Cathedral Carmel School Faculty and Staff, Donna Boullion

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Hannie, Mrs. Evelyn by John Tanory

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Hebert, Sister Madeline Sophie by Mr. and Mrs. David Landgrave
Hebert, Zula M. by Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Landry

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Kimball, Ms. Caliste by Mrs. Lorraine Rock
Knight, Mrs. Lisa by Mrs. Maisie Rodrigue

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LeBlanc, Mr. Ricky by Mr. and Mrs. Keith Borne
Leleux, Ms. Amy by Mrs. Alice Hebert
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Longwell, Mr. and Mrs. Harry by Mr. and Mrs. Gary Labat, Sr.
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Vinson, Justin by Mr. and Mrs. Gary and Katie Delaune

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Sister Kathy Farrelly, second from left, joined representatives from over 20 religious communities including 40 brothers, sisters, seminarians and priests as well as 34 participants for the “Life Awareness Retreat (LAR)” at the St. Charles Retreat Center in Moss Bluff, LA. The theme selected for the retreat, sponsored by the Dioceses of Lafayette, Baton Rouge and Lake Charles, was (Jn 15:16): “It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you.” The LAR is designed for those who are discerning a vocation to the priesthood or religious life.



The Leadership Conference of Women Religious--held its bi-annual meeting of Region 5 at St. Mary of the Pines Retreat Center in Chatawa, MS. **Sister Elizabeth Fitzpatrick**, left, chaired the proceedings of the meeting. Leaders representing religious women ministering in Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama and Georgia gathered in September to address issues of religious life.

Sisters Celebrate 50 years in the Philippines



Bishop John Du and members of the local clergy gathered with the members of the Philippine Region on Oct. 15, 2011 for the beginning (launching) of the celebration of the congregation’s 50 year presence in the Philippines.



The ceremony took place at Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish in Balugo, Dumaguete City, Philippines. A reception followed at the nearby Carmel Center.

Sisters in the United States Gathered--at the Motherhouse on October 15 in solidarity with the sisters in the Philippines to celebrate the fifty year jubilee of the mission of the Sisters of Mount Carmel in the Philippines.

Rev. Robert Cruz and **Sister Gwen Monahan** receive the offertory gifts from **Sisters Valerie Gros**, left, and **Blaise Fernando**.



News of Note

The School Leadership Formation Program is conducted annually by the Sisters of Mount Carmel to share the charism of the congregation with leaders of the schools currently owned or served in the past. The participants gather to share ways of imparting Carmelite Spirituality in their ministry of Catholic education. Pictured at right are participants from Mount Carmel Elementary School in Abbeville, Cathedral-Carmel Elementary School in Lafayette, Catholic High School in New Iberia, Mount Carmel Academy and Cub Corner in New Orleans.



Sisters Alice Abate and Angele Sadlier planned a "Come and See" weekend of prayer, sharing, discussion, informal events, recreation, and discernment for women interested in learning more about a religious life vocation in the spirit of Carmel. The weekend was held on Nov. 4-6 at the Motherhouse. Many of the Sisters of Mount Carmel gathered to host the event.

The Sisters of Mount Carmel assembled on Nov. 19th in Lacombe to organize study focus groups on issues regarding Vocations, Leadership, Building Relationships with Laity for Mission and Ministry, and Expansion in Asia. Participants included sisters from left, front row: Sisters Libby Dahlstrom, Catherine Martin, Clare Cramer, and Rose Penouilh. Back row: Sisters Mary Martin, Donna Girard, and Maggie Williams.



News of Note

The Generalate Staff met for reflection and business in retreat at St. Adele Villa, Bay St. Louis, MS.



Pictured left: Sister Andree Bindewald, Assistant to the President and Development Director; Sister Beth Fitzpatrick, Congregation President; Stephanie Johnson, administrative assistant; Vicky Shelley, bookkeeper, Sister Donna Girard, executive councilor; Gail Lasalle, medical secretary; Sister Therese Gregoire, treasurer, and Carole Chermie, assistant to the Development Director. Pictured right: Stephanie Johnson, Sister Donna Girard, Gail Lassalle,



At their Motherhouse Chapel on November 20, 2011, the Sisters of Mount Carmel celebrated the lives of four jubilarians residing in the U.S. (from left to right) Sisters Mary Martin and Jane Remson celebrated fifty years; Sisters Odile Theriot and Fatima Mouton celebrated sixty years of vowed life.



Rev. David Simpson, O.Carm. of Darien, Illinois (left) was the celebrant for the Eucharistic celebration. He receives the offertory gifts from Gerry Theriot and her son Donald Theriot, sister-in-law and nephew of Sister Odile Theriot.

The Bonn Conference

Members of the Coordinating Team of the Carmelite NGO attended the 64th Annual United Nations Department of Public Information / Non-Governmental Organizations Conference, “Sustainable Societies: Responsive Citizens” held in Bonn, Germany September 3-5, 2011. Over 2,000 delegates representing all corners of the world attended the Conference. The program provided a stepping-stone in preparation for the Earth Summit, “Rio + 20” scheduled for Rio de Janeiro in June of 2012. Topics presented in Bonn included: Shaping Sustainable Lifestyles and Livelihoods, Sustainable Consumption and Production Aspects of a Globalizing World, Green Economy and Poverty Eradication: Climate Justice as a Bridge to a New Global Economic Paradigm and Sustainable Development Governance Issues from Local to Global: The Role of Citizen Participation.

Responsive citizens play a key role in supporting food sovereignty as the overall framework for food and agricultural policies. Food sovereignty puts the right to sufficient, healthy and culturally appropriate food for all individuals, peoples and communities at the center of food, agriculture, livestock and fisheries policies, rather than at the demands of markets and corporations that prioritize internationally tradable

commodities. It localizes food systems, values the knowledge and skills of small-scale food providers, and works in harmony with nature through using smaller-scale, ecological forms of food provision – see www.uncsd2012.org for more information.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provided an international toolkit designed to “engage the public and preserve the planet.” The toolkit is organized to provide basic information and ideas as well as useful links to more content on the web see www.epa.gov/international/toolkit/.

The International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE) supports sustainable development as a curriculum area bringing together theory and practice, academic knowledge and everyday life skills. It puts the knowledge into its everyday life environment and encourages students to think creatively. For information go to www.ifhe.org.

The Conference brought together many diverse organizations, but all had the same message – we have the knowledge, now it’s time to be responsible and act.



From left to right: Arie Kuil, O.Carm., Annah Theresa Nyadombo, HOLMC, Jane Remson, O.Carm., William Harry, O.Carm., and Helen Ojario, O.Carm.

Visit the Sisters of Mount Carmel at their new website:
www.sistersofmountcarmel.org

Let the Sound of the Trumpet Blast

Theresa of Avila says that a prayer is a matter of the heart. Recently I heard Barbara Fiand speaking of finding the divine within us. She said that rituals and worship that fail to create an inner burning for the Holy and of all creation, are simply ritualistic without meaning.

My participation in the annual mass of celebration as part of the “Satchmo Festival” in honor of Louis Armstrong certainly gave meaning to both of these thoughts. Just entering Saint Augustine Church gave me a deep sense of our history there and how comfortable our sisters must have felt in this environment so simple, so colorful, so at home, so filled with the “jolie de vivre.”

The people came to celebrate, to praise a God they know intimately and praise they did. One cannot help but enter into praising God in body, mind and spirit. There were also people from all over the world. A gentleman comes from Japan each year to play his instrument at this Mass as well as to participate in all the activities so integrated in both music, culture and joyful faith. Surely one could feel the presence of God in this place. A profound spirit was expressed through New Orleans musical tradition as well as the culture of the people. This modest little church continues to be a beacon of humanity and spirituality. It has played a tremendous role in the religious and cultural lives of many New Orleans Catholics.

Long before integration was even spoken of, all were welcome in this Church. Many New Orleanians who are still living today attended, were baptized, or married in this Church. I have no doubt that we as a congregation were influenced during our 125 years in St. Augustine Parish. I like to believe that we made a profound difference in lives there also.

Sister Joan Broussard, O. Carm. is Principal at St. Gerard Majella Alternative School, “Come, Lord Jesus” leader at Mount Carmel Academy and Spanish teacher at Cub Corner Preschool, New Orleans, LA.



Beginning with this first issue, No.1 of Volume 23: January, 2012, *Contemplatives in Action*, which has been published quarterly, will now come to you three times a year in January, May, and September. The news articles about the ministries and activities of the Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, reflections by the sisters, and listings of those persons remembered by our donors will continue to be included in our publication. It can also be found online at the website of the Sisters of Mount Carmel at www.sistersofmountcarmel.org. If you prefer to get the publication online and cancel postal delivery of your issue, please respond by email to development@sistersofmountcarmel.org otherwise you will continue to receive *Contemplatives in Action* three times a year by postal delivery. We thank you for your supportive interest in the lives and ministries of the Sisters of Mount Carmel.

CONTEMPLATIVES IN ACTION

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The **Congregation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel** is a community whose prophetic call moves the sisters to be in active ministries that help bring about a more peaceful, just and loving world. They are nourished by contemplative prayer, community and devotion to Mary, a woman of simplicity and faith.

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Share the vision; be a *Contemplative in Action*

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