



Contemplatives in Action

Congregation of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
United States and Philippines

July, 2011

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From Tours, France to their founding in America in 1833, the Sisters of Mount Carmel are deeply rooted in the spirit of Carmel.

Their patroness, celebrated on July 16th, is Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Mary is their model, their mother, their sister, their queen.

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Plattenville: Cradle of the Congregation

Mother Thérèse Chevrel, together with her companion, Mother Augustin Clerc, arrived in New Orleans aboard the Olympia on November 2, 1833. They came fully expecting to take charge of the "School for Free Women of Color" directed by the Ursulines, but Divine Providence had other plans for them as Mother Thérèse herself explains in a letter written to Sister St. Ignace of the Sisters of St. Martin in France in June 1873, when she describes her journey to America:

"After a crossing of 52 days, we arrived in New Orleans, where we were expected. Bishop Blanc took upon himself to send us to the Assumption, 60 miles from New Orleans, to the parish where Father Boutelou worked. The large residence, which was to be our destination, belonged to the Bishop."

Sixty miles! As Sr. Germaine Lauzon and I drove to Plattenville recently, to retrace her journey and take pictures for our archives, we realized that the sleepy town of Plattenville, really off the beaten path, is not encountered by accident. As we drove, we imagined their sixty mile journey in a small boat 178 years ago and their arrival in the quiet farming village populated in large part by exiled Cajuns so far from the hustle and bustle of city life. Today the roads are paved and utility poles and TV antennas testify to the 21st century. But our foundresses would readily recognize the same welcoming warmth of the ordinary folks and the close-knit community of faith that keep the Church of the Assumption as alive now as it was when it began more than 200 years ago.

Mother Thérèse relied strongly on the guidance of Divine Providence on her journeys and in her enterprises; on that April 2011 outing we were touched by some of that same experience. At the precise moment when we arrived in the village, wondering how we would be able to enter the locked building to take pictures, a smiling villager passed us on her bicycle. We waved her over and asked how we could contact someone to open the church. She delightfully exclaimed, "Well, that's easy. I'm the keeper of the key. I'll go home and get it." Miss



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Cindy Marquette dropped what she was doing to take us on a mini-tour of the church and cemetery and proudly displayed for us a cross, made from remnants of the original 1793 church, revered by the parishioners as a symbol of their long-standing fidelity to their origins.

This was one of the pioneering parishes in Louisiana. The first church, a small wooden structure, was built by the Spanish in 1793 and is listed in old documents as *"The Parish of Assumption of Our Lady of La Fourche of the Chitimachas of Valenzuela"* ... a long name for a tiny place! In 1818, church wardens voted to build to meet the needs of the growing parish. The new edifice was a solid brick building 40 feet long, 38 feet wide, and 16 feet high. Mother Thérèse and Mother Augustine were parishioners in this second of 3 churches. In 1855, the seminary burned to the ground and shortly after, Bayou Lafourche swept away the church as well as the remains of the seminary. The third church was erected in 1856, in a slightly different location, a little further from the Bayou. This is the church which stands today. It has withstood fierce storms and devastating floods, and has undergone many renovations but it continues to play an active role in the life of the community. Two of the original stained glass windows above the entrance proclaim its heritage as *"Eglise de l'Assomption."*



Mother Thérèse and Mother Augustin arrived in Plattenville early in November of 1833. They quickly settled in and announced the opening of a boarding school for young women. The prospectus for the new *"Female Boarding School"* declared that *"the house is well-situated for health, exercise, and recreation. The nourishment is wholesome, varied and abundant."* The opening was delayed until May 1834 due to torrential fall and winter rains. *"So there were 8 of us to start our boarding and day school. [After 4 years] all was going well, but during his pastoral visit the Bishop said he needed us in New Orleans and told us to prepare ourselves to leave. It was on the 27th of March 1838 that we left our dear parish of the Assumption."* As a matter of fact, the bishop needed his house and land in order to build a seminary. As a result, the Sisters of Mount Carmel would permanently establish themselves in New Orleans in 1838, taking charge of the *"School for Free Women of Color"* as they had originally expected to do.



The sisters were in Plattenville only four years, but Mother Thérèse considered those years vital to the beginnings of the community. In her 1873 letter to France, she speaks of Plattenville as *"The cradle of Carmel in the New World."* In our [Book of Foundations](#), she recalls very nostalgically that it was a quiet town in a remote area, *"the place where we had lived in such peace and happiness... where we peacefully pursued our vocation."* That sense of peace must have been strongly evident because when they left Plattenville for New Orleans, four young women joined them, the very first members of the Congregation. They were siblings Felicissime Ocoïn (Sr. St Paul), Bathilde Ocoïn (Sr. St Joseph), and their older sister, Marie Ocoïn (Sr. St. Jean de la Croix). This last sister would become the foundress of our schools in Thibodaux and New Iberia and, after Mother Augustin's death, she would serve as Mother Thérèse's *"right hand."* The fourth young lady was Constance Giroire (Sr. du Carmel).

The Sisters of Mount Carmel eventually returned to Plattenville. In 1890, the pastor Canon Jules Boucher, an energetic, pious and remarkable priest who championed education for the betterment of his people decided to open a Free Parochial School and invited the sisters to come back to administer the

Message from the Administration

A Weathered Wisdom: Builders of the New

At a recent Mount Carmel Academy high school reunion in New Orleans, I found myself scanning the room with amazement at the energy emanating from the gathering of women who celebrated between five and sixty years since their high school graduations. Greetings were exchanged and women listened to the life stories of one another with love, encouragement, and affirmation. Various gatherings throughout the weekend provided opportunities to bless one another for the person each has become, and for the strength generated from projects created and hardships endured.



From teenage rivalries to the maturity of life that knows what truly matters and truly sustains, each woman has a weathered wisdom with a life lesson to offer. As a Sister of Mount Carmel, I want to believe that the sisters' contribution to their formation during their four years at Mount Carmel helped them to be the women of faith I met again.

I pondered, what if all that individual goodness and productivity could be directed to one cause at the same time? What if energy were focused at one time to the same efforts for peace, or eradication of hunger, or eliminating violence on our streets? What if all proclaimed Christ at the same time in the faith, love, and hope that builds the new creation?



For all the contributions made to family, community, church and society, I esteem those classmates. I want to surface the new that can be created from their rejoined spirit! I want to capture that spirit and harness that energy for all the good that lies within that group of women. "Behold, I am doing something new...can you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19) If, indeed, we believe we are builders of the new, will we not create it?

Sister Andrée Bindewald, O. Carm. is Assistant to the President, Executive Councilor, Congregation Corporation Secretary and Development Director, Lacombe, LA.

Plattenville: Cradle of the Congregation continued from page 2

school. The authors of 100 Years in Louisiana remarked "How could ... [we] turn down such an application when we remembered that Plattenville had been the first hospitable spot to welcome the strangers from France who had arrived with the firm determination to force the tiny plant from foreign shores to take root in the soil of Louisiana?" The sisters taught there for 27 years, until the school was forced to close in 1917.

Sources: "100 Years in Louisiana" (Sr. Consuela Caillouet and Mother Clare Coady) Letters of Mother Thérèse Chevrel; The Book of Foundations: 'The Gem of Bayou Lafourche: A short history of The Assumption Church in Plattenville, La.' by Father Henry Holleman. 1948.

Sister Thérèse Gregoire, O.Carm. is Congregation Treasurer and Archivist, New Orleans, LA.



Sisters of Our Lady of Mount Carmel



Sister Odile Theriot, O. Carm. celebrates 60 years of religious life as a Sister of Mount Carmel. Sister Odile, born Mildred Marie in New Orleans, LA, is the first of two children of the late Joseph S. Theriot and Odette Marie Jung. She entered Carmel in 1948 and professed first vows in 1951. Sister attended St. James Major Elementary and Mount Carmel Academy, New Orleans. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics from The University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette and a master's degree in Administration and Supervision from Nicholls State University, Thibodaux.

Sister Odile taught at St. Dominic, New Orleans; Mount Carmel High School, New Iberia and Abbeville; E. D. White High School, Thibodaux; and Vermilion Catholic High School, Abbeville. She was principal for 20 years at St. James Major High School, New Orleans. She also served at Mount Carmel Academy as supervisor of plant operations and is currently the coordinator of retired sisters at St. Leo Convent, Lafayette.

Sister Fatima Mouton, O. Carm. celebrates 60 years of religious life as a Sister of Mount Carmel. Sister Fatima, born Florence Ann in Lafayette, LA, is the tenth of ten children of the late Rene Joseph Mouton and Elise P. Martin. She entered religious life in 1948 and professed first vows in 1951. Sister attended Mount Carmel Elementary, Lafayette and Mount Carmel Academy, New Orleans. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Loyola University, New Orleans.

Sister Fatima devoted 45 years to catholic education. She taught at St. Elizabeth, Paincourtville; Our Lady of Prompt Succor, Westwego; St. Augustine and St. Dominic, New Orleans; Mount Carmel Elementary, Abbeville; Rayne Catholic Elementary, Rayne; Cathedral- Carmel, Lafayette, all in LA, and St. Euphrasia, Granada Hills, CA.

She has also ministered in pastoral care, bereavement ministry and to the homebound in St. Mary Magdalen and St. Theresa Parishes in Abbeville. Currently Sister Fatima is spiritual assistant to Lay Carmelites in the Abbeville and New Iberia area and ministers to the homebound in the Abbeville area.



Sister Jane Frances Remson, O. Carm. celebrates 50 years of religious life as a Sister of Mount Carmel. Sister Jane is the youngest of four children born to the late Marcel Remson and Josephine Frey Remson of New Orleans. Sister Jane pronounced her first vows in 1961. She is a graduate of Mount Carmel Academy, New Orleans and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and Medical Technology from St. Mary's Dominican College, New Orleans.

Sr. Jane ministered in the United States and the Philippines as a medical technologist where she was a co-founder of the Mount Carmel Mobile Clinic. She served on the Executive Council of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mount Carmel. Sr. Jane established the annual Walk for the Hungry in metropolitan New Orleans. She served on the Advisory Board of Hands Across America, President of the New Orleans Artists Against Hunger & Homelessness, Member of the Mayor's Task Force on Nutrition in New Orleans, the Governor's and Mayor's Task Forces

Celebrate Jubilee of Vowed Life

for Welfare Reform in Louisiana, Human Services Task Force for Louisiana Legislature, White House Discussion on Welfare Reform in Louisiana, Board of Directors Bread for the World National, U.S. National Committee for World Food Day. She was a delegate to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Bali, Indonesia and Johannesburg, South Africa and represented the Carmelite NGO at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark and at the Carmelite International Commission for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation Conference at Fatima, Portugal.

Today Sister Jane continues her ministry as the Director of Bread for the World in New Orleans and serves as the main representative to the United Nations for the Carmelite NGO.

Sister Mary Martin, O. Carm. celebrates 50 years as a Sister of Mount Carmel. Sister Mary, formerly Sister M. Joachim, is the fourth of five children born to the late Charles James Martin and Marcella Anne Erhart of Pennsylvania. She entered Carmel in 1958 and professed first vows in 1961. Sister Mary attended St. Raphael Elementary and Bishop Conaty Memorial High School, Los Angeles, CA. She received a B.S. degree in Elementary Education from Dominican College, New Orleans; M.Ed. degree from Loyola University, New Orleans, in Guidance and Counseling with certification in Elementary Administration and Supervision; and an M.A. degree in Theology from St. Michael's College, Colchester, VT.



Sister taught at St. Dominic, where she was principal from 1971-1981, St. Louis King of France and St. James Major, New Orleans, Mount Carmel Junior High, New Iberia. She was principal and teacher St. Euphrasia, Granada Hills, CA and Rayne Catholic Elementary, Rayne, LA. She was coordinator of retired sisters at the Motherhouse in 2002 and began working at the Lay Carmelite Office in Darien, Illinois in 2003 as Assistant to the Director of Lay Carmelites. Currently Sister Mary is Provincial Coordinator to the Lay Carmelites Most Pure Heart of Mary Province.



Sister Carlita Panaligan, O. Carm. celebrates 25 years of religious life as a Sister of Mount Carmel. Sister Carlita, born Charlita Qunido Panaligan in Bayawan, Negros Oriental, Philippines, is the fifth of seven children of the late Jesus Panaligan and Conchita Quindo. Sister entered Carmel in 1984 and professed first vows in 1986. She attended Bayawan Central Elementary School and St. Augustine Academy, Bayawan, Negros Oriental. At Foundation University, Dumaguete City she received an Associate degree in Secretarial Science and a Bachelor's degree in Commerce.

Sister Carlita has ministered at Bread for the World, Loyola University, New Orleans, as assistant to the director. In the Philippine region she served as a pastoral worker, formation and vocation team member, vocation animator, Mount Carmel Mobile Clinic director and coordinator, Director of Diocesan Commission on Catechesis and as regional secretary and treasurer. She is currently Coordinator of the Formation Community, Postulant and Junior Formator, and serves on the Regional Council in Quezon City, Philippines.

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Bindewald, Mrs. Kathy by Mrs. Joyce Cambias

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Broussard, Mr. Jerald Lynn by Our Lady of the Brown Scapular Study Group B

Broussard, Mr. Ronnie by Ms. Anna Thoman

Buras, Derek by Mr. and Mrs. Lee Krouse

Cambias, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Gerald by Mrs. Joyce Cambias

Cathedral Carmel School Students, Faculty, and Staff by Sisters of Mount Carmel

Cook, Mrs. Faye by Mr. and Mrs. Larry LeBlanc

Cramer, Sister Clare by St. Leo Altar Society

Davis, Mrs. Janelle by Immaculate Conception, T.O.C.

DeCuir, Mrs. Rita by Immaculate Conception, T.O.C.

DeGruy, Mrs. Louise by Sister Joan Broussard, O. Carm.

DeRouen, Sister Bartholomew "B" by Mrs. Barbara Epstein, Ms. Wendy F. Romero

DuBos, Mr. and Mrs. Clarence by Mrs. Jean B. Hall

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Laperouse, O. Carm., Sister Barbara Nell by Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Cavell, Mrs. Nona Robichaux

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McInnes, O.P., Reverend Val Ambros by Sisters of Mount Carmel

Meaux, Laura M. by St. Joseph Lay Carmelite Community, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Gossen, Sr.

Menard, Fred by Mr. and Mrs Ray Schneider

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Owens, Mr. Sean by Mrs. Edith Owens

Pharr, Pat and Pete by Sister Donna M. Girard, O. Carm.

Ramoned, Mr. and Mrs. John by Mrs. Joyce Cambias

Robichaux, Glenn by Mr. and Mrs. Bob Broggi

Robichaux, T.O. Carm., Deacon Wil by Immaculate Conception T.O. Carm.

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Siffert, Tammy by Mr. and Mrs. Larry Boullion

Smith, Charlotte Monk by Sister Barbara Nell Laperouse, O. Carm.

Smith, Jeanette by Cathedral Carmel School

Sorongon, Emie by Mrs. Jessica Mirasol

Sun, Tai, Elain, Emily by Mr. and Mrs. Gary Delaune and Katie Delaune, Sister Barbara Nell Laperouse, O. Carm.

Tanory, Jasmine Hannie by Mr. John F. Tanory

Tanory, Luke Wayne by Mr. John F. Tanory

Tapia, Mr. Leonardo by Immaculate Conception T.O.C.

Theriot, Mr. and Mrs. William by Mrs. Joyce Cambias

Turner, Kristi by Mr. Roland Theriot

Turner, Raegan by Mr. Roland Theriot

Turner, Rayce by Mr. Roland Theriot

Van Nguyen, Reverend Lich by the Wagner-Caroni Family

Wagner, SSJ, Reverend Richard by Jan and Deb Cavalier

Ward, Eddie by Mr. and Mrs Ray Schneider

Wickman, Mrs. Rachel by Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Landry

News of Note

Sisters Attend Their March Assembly at the Carmelite Spirituality Center, Lacombe, LA--



Participating in group discussions are **Sisters Leah Sellers, Catherine Martin, Margaret Safford, Lena Collins and Barbara Breaud.**



Participants of the assembly included **Sisters Gwen Grillot, Judith Hebert, Gwen Monahan, Mary Martin and Libby Dahlstrom.**



Pictured with **Brother Loughlan Sofield, ST**, facilitator for the assembly, are members of the future planning task force: **Sisters Kathy Farrelly, Angele Sadlier, Lawrence Habetz, Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, and Andrée Bindewald.** Absent from picture is **Sister Alice Abate.**



The staff of the Carmelite Spirituality Center hosted the assembly. Pictured are **Sisters Josephine Deveras, Margaret Safford and Lena Collins, Mary Williams and Sister Barbara Breaud, Executive Director.**

Brother Louis Couvillion, SC, right, celebrates the closing liturgy with the assembly participants.



News of Note

Mount Carmel Academy Annual Reunion--



Sister Camille Anne Campbell honors the Mount Carmel Academy Alumna of the Year, **Judy Vicknair Quinilty**, at the reunion banquet held at the Pavilion of Two Sisters in City Park.



Sister Thérèse Gregoire, second from left, explains historical artifacts to Mount Carmel Academy alumnae on a tour of the Motherhouse during the reunion weekend in April.



Mount Carmel Academy's annual Spring Fling Fundraiser provided photo ops for **Beth Ann Simno**, Vice President, left, and **Sister Mary Ellen Wheelahan** with Saint's coach, **Sean Payton**.



Sister Rose Marie Penouilh wears the Super Bowl Championship 2009 ring while admiring the Saints' Lombardi trophy.

News of Note



Sister Janet LeBlanc, principal of Mount Carmel Elementary, Abbeville, second from left, is honored at St. John Cathedral in Lafayette as one of the outstanding administrators of the Diocese of Lafayette. Pictured, from left, are **Anna Larriviere**, Superintendent of the Diocese of Lafayette, **Sister Janet**, **Most Reverend Michael Jarrel**, Diocese of Lafayette, **Mrs. Myra Broussard**, principal of St. Michael's, Crowley and **Mr. Fred Menard**, principal of Rayne Catholic, Rayne.

Sister Joan Broussard's Spanish Class of three year old students from Cub Corner celebrated Cinco de Mayo. The children enjoyed quesidillas in celebration of the day. Pictured with the children is teacher, **Kathryn Luth**.



Wrapping the maypole, kindergarten students of Mount Carmel Elementary School in Abbeville, LA open the festivities for the Mount Carmel-Vermilion Catholic annual May Fest.

News of Note

At a reception in her honor held at Evangeline Oaks Guest House, **Sister Bartholomew “B” DeRouen** welcomed friends for a book signing of her new publication, Glory to Glory.



Sisters Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Andrée Bindewald, and Gina Yabo met with the General Council of the Sisters of Providence of La Pommeraye in Paris, France to become acquainted with the fusion of three congregations, including the sisters of our heritage, the Sisters of St. Martin of Tours, with the Sisters of Providence. Sister Gina Yabo, Regional Councilor of the Sisters of Mount Carmel in the Philippines, offers cultural and geographic information to the Sisters of Providence as they consider a new mission in the Philippines. Standing are **Sisters Marie Sodonie Kafando, Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Joelle Charloux, Marrianick Caniou**, secretarial assistant, **Isabelle de Vareilles**, and **Sister Lizeth Gomez Archaga**.

A Congress of the Carmelite Family was held in Sassone, Italy in May. **Sisters Elizabeth Fitzpatrick, Andrée Bindewald, and Gina Yabo** were among the participants that included members of the General Council from the Curia in Rome, leaders of the Federation of Nuns, the Superiors General of Carmelite Congregations of Apostolic Life, a representative of Carmelite hermits, and the International Commission for Lay Carmelites. The members met to discuss the relationships that form the Carmelite family. Participants were joined from Brazil, Zimbabwe, Spain, Indonesia, Kenya, Italy, the U.S., Tanzania, the Republic of the Congo, and the Philippines. The group committed itself to build the Carmelite family of common heritage and traditions in their various vocations and locations.



A Pilgrimage to Italy

During this past Lenten Season I had the wonderful opportunity to travel on a pilgrimage with 16 others from Metairie and Lake Charles, La. We had four days to tour and to pray at the major basilicas in Rome. The guide always allowed time for private prayer in all the churches we visited and arranged for the celebration of Mass daily. For me this was a sacred quiet time of prayer.

The time spent at the Vatican, at St. Peter's, the Vatican museum, and the Sistine Chapel was unbelievable. The trip to "St. Paul's outside the Walls" was special since I took Paul as my patron many years ago. In the catacombs I came to appreciate the sacrifices of the early Christians in their striving to be good followers of Christ. Continuing on the journey to Assisi, we visited the home town of Clair and Francis and the hermitage where he prayed; the sense of quiet prayer prevailed. We celebrated Mass in the Franciscan monastery in Assisi. Each day lunch was on our own, so we had the opportunity to go off alone for quiet time. The square in Assisi overlooked an olive grove and an interesting valley. This was another opportunity for quiet prayer.

The home town of Catherine of Siena provided a climb of steep streets. There we celebrated Mass in the chapel that contains the relics of her head and thumb. Besides visiting the baptistry and the leaning tower of Pisa, we had Mass in a chapel in the major church of Siena. The art and architecture of all these huge churches were awesome! We were challenged by the tiny streets that allowed for no cars nor buses. We walked a lot up the steep streets. Walking, too, had a way of quieting down the pace and giving us time to see the area. I did feel sorry for the priests who had to carry all the materials they needed for celebrating Mass.

A special part of this pilgrimage was a trip to Brescia. St. Angela Merici lived most of her life in and around Brescia. She is the patroness of our church parish in Metairie. She was the foundress of the Ursulines. Her young life was filled with hardship and the deaths of those close to her. While working with the sick, she gathered young women who believed in her ideals. During this time she found a place of protection for the children. Her later life was given to the christian education of children, especially girls. She believed that as mothers they would lead their families in faith. To educate the mothers was to educate their families. For us parishioners of St. Angela parish, it was a privilege to visit the church where her body is kept. We visited the small museum and learned more about her life. Mass was celebrated in the Church which remains an active parish. Since the parish is off the regular pilgrimage path, the parishioners were as excited to see us as we were to be there.



Parishioners of St. Angela Merici, Metairie visit St. Angela's tomb.

One of the last highlights of the pilgrimage was spending time with Leonardo di Vinci's Last Supper. What a powerful experience! It depicts the calmness of Jesus after he has told the apostles that one of them would betray him. The painting depicts the apostles around him as confused, angry, doubtful, questioning. We were able to spend time here in this special room with this marvelous painting.



Overall, this entire trip was prayerful, quiet, filled with awe over the creative gifts God has given to so many great artists. The architecture of the basilicas with the beauty and the power displayed in the buildings was striking. I give thanks to God, to my community and my pastor for allowing me to share in this with those on the pilgrimage with us.

Sister Paula Marie Derise, pictured above left, is Director of Religious Education, St. Angela Merici.

Being a Carmelite: *To Listen, To Allow and To Yield to the Spirit*

As a nurse, my first assignment in the United States after making first vows, was to a hospital administered by the Sisters of Mount Carmel: St. Joseph Hospital, in Thibodaux, Louisiana. Being constantly with the sick gave me the understanding that the experience of sickness, pain, and loneliness are the same in all people. Human suffering was not selective and knew no boundaries of race, creed, politics, and circumstance. Some took sickness and suffering with quiet acceptance, equanimity, faith and trust in the goodness of God. Others were angry, bitter and blamed God for what befell them. These complained incessantly and were never satisfied with anything that was done to alleviate their pain and discomfort. This was true whether one was in St. Joseph Hospital in Thibodaux, Louisiana or Holy Child Hospital in Dumaguete City, Philippines and in all the other health care facilities where I did nursing.

However, all were receptive and grateful (yes, even the angry ones) when for a moment I would linger at their bedsides and quietly listen to what they had to say, touch their foreheads, hold their hands, and change their positions. Looking back, I realized that these little acts of kindness all done in silent mindfulness and empathy were most appreciated and I think eased their pain and loneliness a little more than the pills and treatments I gave them. Words at those moments would have been superfluous and trite.

How did I sense this gratefulness? Not so much in words but in the way eyes would light up and lips would smile when I entered the room. These touched me deeply and also made me humble. I was made to see the suffering Christ personified in these patients. I was not aware of it then, but reflecting on this experience today, I am now able to put a name to what I was being and doing – being a contemplative in action, being fully attentive to the present moment, the present moment of those who were sick and suffering. I understand that it was an outflow from the faithfulness of my community to our prayer life. Now I have clarity of what being a Carmelite is.

My experience with the sick and suffering serves me well in my current ministry as Directress to our Canonical novices. It has become a reference point in trying to develop the capacity to be patient, to be understanding of the human condition, to be non-judgmental, and to be respectful. I feel that my role as Directress is not to constantly be telling the novices what to do and not to do, to be always on the lookout for faults. I resonate with the following lines from the book *A Tree Full of Angels* by Macrina Wiederkehr - *"I seem to be coming to a point in my life where I see that what the Spirit is demanding of me is only that I be truly present to others."* - a very Carmelite stance – that is how I see my role – to be present to accompany, to listen attentively, to allow creative initiatives and responsibility and most of all to give space to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of the novices to develop a contemplative attitude, to see the face of God in all humanity and creation and to slowly embody the special charism of the congregation which is *"an orientation to a life of prayer and service in union with Jesus, in whom continual prayer and action coexist harmoniously."*

Sister Maryphilip Surban, O. Carm. is Directress of Canonical Novices, Balugo, Dumaguete, Philippines.



*"Flower of Carmel blossoming, bearing one, light of heaven,
Mother of God's dear Son, vine and virgin,
Gentle parent, pure beyond human love, bless your children."*

(Edith Stein, modeled on "Flos Carmeli" English translation by John Sullivan.)

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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