

Workshop On "Formation And Allegiance To Jesus Christ"

by Kathy Myny, OCDS

There once was a Discalced Carmelite, who had trouble with mental prayer. She had such difficulty in keeping focused, that she thought St. Teresa was talking especially about her when she said in chapter 19 of *The Way of Perfection* that there are some souls and minds so scattered they are like wild horses that no one can stop.

One day, frustrated with her inability to concentrate she said to the Lord, "Let's do something different! Could we go for a boat ride on a lake."

She was surprised that immediately she found her mind focused on a scene with Jesus, in which he beckoned her into a row boat. The Carmelite was prepared to take up the oars, but Jesus insisted on rowing. As He took His position in the boat, he said, "I am the Server."

The Carmelite, like a helpless child, sat in the boat. Her attention was completely centered on Jesus, the Rower. The setting was a picturesque lake, much like one of those lakes up north in the early morning, with the mist rising off it just before dawn.

As Jesus rowed across the peaceful lake, He told the Carmelite how intricate the soul of each person was, and how much time, for want of a better word, God took to fashion each person, and how unique and precious each soul was to Him. He explained that no matter how deformed or limited the body of a person was, the soul was always created perfectly, and was the true worth of a person. Those who delve into their own spirituality, He said, were the ones who would discover their true destiny and purpose, as prescribed in their soul. He also talked about the mud and decaying matter at the bottom of the lake, and how much it was like sin. He said it filtered down from the events in our life and lay there collecting, stifling the life of the soul and interfering with the ability of the individual to understand itself and its purpose in life. After some time, the Carmelite found herself reluctantly leaving Jesus and the boat. His last words to her were: "Remember Me today, and call My Name often."

This Carmelite made the scene so real to me, I began to think about what it all meant. Here was Jesus, the "Server", taking the position of Navigator, Teacher and Guide. That's like us in our individual relationship with Him. He wants it to be intimate and interesting and He also wants us to accept our helpless position, our inability to even row our own boat for ourselves. He wants us to accept His guidance, knowledge and authority as a loving parent-child relationship. He wants us to listen to His commands and obey them out of love for Him. To do that, we need to be in touch with our own spirituality, to keep our soul as pure as we can. That means to have a great fear of offending God, like St. Therese did of soiling her baptismal robe. She wanted so much to keep her soul in a pure state to please God. (*Story of a Soul*, 150) She intuitively realized that Pope Paul VI said in his *Dialogues* (25), "God is the first cause of being, God is the supreme ground of thought, God is the fundamental law of human action."

Precisely, because at one point in our life, we as individual Christians got in the boat with Jesus, and we obeyed His call, we are here. At this very moment the searching and discovering goes on for each one of us.

When Jesus was on earth, He often got in a boat with the disciples. Sometimes He taught them in a boat, or on a mountain, or any place where He could get their attention and teach them. This group of disciples was the first community of the church. They were searching and discovering as we are.

Now, if we transcribe these thoughts to our own communities we can see, that in formation, our aspirants are in a similar position to the apostles in their community with Jesus. We are all in the same boat physically once a month with the other members of our community. Jesus, God, is always the Guide the Voice we should listen to. This isn't always easy for the waters can be stirred up, and the boat can be rocking, and mud can be flying everywhere, from the personalities we encounter and our own ideas and agendas. These roadblocks can

prevent us from seeing the direction, the concrete steps in organization that should be taken to best serve our aspirant. Thomas Kempis says in the Imitation of Christ (164), "My own sins frighten me and my muddled conscience holds me back from sharing ... Your sweet words call me to you, but my many offenses weigh me down." Integration of our aspirant into our communities, and their initial teachings are most important to make them feel welcome and to preserve their initial enthusiasm. The Holy Spirit gets so excited and happy, when someone takes the right step, that through grace, that person is filled with real zeal and real energy to learn and discover.

We all know love is our most precious resource. In our communities it needs to flourish in its purest form. Love is the best adhesive ever. It's better than duct tape or glue or any sticky stuff man has ever invented. Love's the glue that holds a community together. It holds without smothering, without diminishing our demeaning, without judging and without aggression. True love is not associated with sin, pride or egoism. Charity is love made visible through action: acts of kindness, patience, consideration, respect and dignity. Archbishop Cushing in the Introduction of Divine Mercy said, "In loving and serve we become like the Server, Jesus, or in the words of St. John of the Cross, "God by participation."".

Prayer is the link to the divine that sets us free. If in doubt, pray! Call on His Name, Jesus, often. Acts 4.12 says, "There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved." Not only can you be saved at the end of your life by the name of Jesus, but at each moment you can be saved and blessed by calling on Jesus by name. His heart aches while He is waiting for you to call Him. St. Therese tells us in her letters, that our soul is so well made for consoling Him ... She invites us to love Him to folly for all those who don't love Him.

The cross is our standard, our flag of allegiance. Everyone has a cross to carry; their life. It is freely given. It is exactly what we need. Just as St. Therese accepted everything as necessary for her progress towards God, so it is of us. Accept with joy, gently, with dignity and be honoured that you work of the Kingdom. Accept your cross as the athletes accept the Olympic torch. Stand tall and straight, for as a member of God's Kingdom, you are called to serve faithfully. You are always on duty for war is perpetually declared in the battle of good and evil.

The Discalced Carmelites are a specialized division in the King's Army. Prayer is our weapon. Knowledge of His word and the study of the saints given to our order are our guides and ammunition. In studying faithfully, we commune with the Divine and the community of saints.

Our aspirants must feel and see the difference in the atmosphere of your communities compared to other church and secular gatherings. If we are disciplined Carmelites in God's Kingdom, it will show. St. Paul said to the Romans 12.12 "Do not conform yourself to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect."

Carmelites are called as faithful member of the Apostolic Church on earth, to love and serve through prayer, in order to evangelize others into the inner circles of God's Kingdom.

Your oath of Allegiance to Jesus is this:

I, a humble child of the Kingdom of God, promise to try to love God with my whole heart, with my whole soul and with my whole mind, and to love each one I meet or pray for, as Jesus loves me. (Mat 22.37)

I would like to close with a quote from Pope John Paul II during World Youth Days 2002, at Downsview Park. You might wonder why, because you think of yourself as old. But even though your body is old, or you feel old, your soul is timeless and in comparison with the age of this earth or the Discalced Carmelite Order to which you belong, you are so very young. Our mission as Christians, in allegiance to Jesus Christ, be it today, or 2000 years ago, has always been the same.

"God is entrusting to you the task, at once difficult and uplifting, of working with Him in the building of the civilization of love."