

## **A Heart to Heart Encounter**

*Sr. Marie Gemma ocd Carmel Baroda,  
INDIA*

It happened in Avila, in May 2003. We, the little group of ten nuns representing Carmels all over the world had accomplished our mission at the General Chapter of our Discalced Carmelite Friars. To crown the 'gift' of our unprecedented presence at that Chapter, we were taken on a pilgrimage to places sanctified by Teresa, Our Holy Mother. Was it for real? This surpassed my wildest dreams, - visiting her home, the Incarnation, her first foundation,...it was for me an emotionally charged spiritual experience....till we reached the place of her rest – Alba de Tormes. With my companions I knelt and prayed at her tomb aware of her presence, of her incorrupt mortal remains and then before the reliquary containing her heart. The reliquary was encased in glass behind a grille.

And then it happened!!! Without warning, all of a sudden, Mother Prioress went up to the reliquary and bringing it out placed it by my side!! It was more than I could take, I broke down, silent tears streaming down my face. Nothing yet had brought me closer to Our Holy Mother than this very close encounter with her heart. I prayed intensely for a heart like her own, – large and wide as the sands of the shore, a heart that beat for JESUS alone with a passion that consumed her. I prayed for a love that springs from the conviction of first being loved by Him – JESUS, who was her Spouse, Friend, Lord, 'His Majesty' who 'held her by the right hand,' who never took his eyes off her. I longed for it all - to love to the end, to discover more and more this JESUS who awaits me and enters the core of my being, encourages me to leap into the mystery of GOD and at the same time to embrace the whole world with a large heart. This wholly unexpected and gratuitous grace left me

humbled and grateful, my heart inundated with a joy and peace whose perfume lasts to this day.

Holy Mother St. Teresa 'look down and visit this vine which you have planted'... grant that all our Carmels be the height where souls in love with GOD are drawn in intimacy and union with Him.