



“The Lord God lives in whose sight I stand”

1 Kings 18.15

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Carmel,

The Secular Order of Carmel and its members are the heirs of the rich and magnificent heritage of St. Teresa of Jesus. As heirs to this contemplative life and tradition it is our mission today as Secular Carmelites to search for a genuine renewal of Teresian spirituality adequate to the needs of the Church in our time, it is our task to make this heritage live again in our age.

One of the greatest needs in the Church today is the renewal of an intense and vibrant contemplative life. This takes first of all, a deep and passionate consecration to the seeking of Divine Companionship and Presence. *“The Lord God lives in whose sight I stand”*. (1 Kings 18.15)

Then and only then, through our lives as Secular Carmelites will we be able to emphasize with **thunder** to the world in which we live the greatness and magnificent of our God. Only then will our lives **ring out** with great joy the reality of the first and greatest commandment: *“Thou shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, with your whole mind, and with all your strength.”* (Mark 12.30)

Secondly, we need a great boldness and daring as well as a singleness of purpose in searching the wellsprings of our Teresian traditions to guide us in the renewal of our Secular Carmelite lives. If we are to meet the needs of the Church today, our contemplative lives should be informed by a strong and vibrant contemplative vision straight from the heart of Teresian spirituality.

Our holy Mother St. Teresa has taught us over these past four years of study of her major works in preparation for the Centenary celebrations in 2015 that the “whole of life” must be rooted in a vibrant and living knowledge of God. We’ve come to this understanding through intense effort and study both individually and in community of her thought and teaching. This was primarily an intellectual effort.

Our holy Mother is so much more than her thought and teaching. This year we are encouraged and challenged by the Order to delve right into her lived experience through the study of her minor works. What a delight this is going to be!

We will listen to her spiritual testimonies, read her poetry, meditate on her writings on the Song of Songs, study her soliloquies, and delve into her personal letters. In this study we see the very personal side of St. Teresa. We witness her lived experience in all her humanness. What a source of strength and courage for each one of us as we strive to interpret for the world today through the lens of Teresa’s personal testimonies and lived experience as well as her thought and teaching how to live a genuine contemplative life in the world.

The direction the Secular Order takes today for tomorrow is dependent upon the insight, energy, and purpose we draw from our Teresian studies. The genius of our holy Mother St. Teresa rests in both the personal (lived experience), and objective (thought and teaching) approach to living an intense life of prayer and contemplation that she envisioned for those who would take up the breathtaking challenge of contemplative life in the tradition of Carmel.

Each of us by our vocation is called to meet that challenge in our lives as Secular Carmelites and to bear witness to it in the world today for the good of the Order and the Church.

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