



“I will take my stand to watch, and station myself on the tower, and look forth to see what He will say to me.” Habakkuk 2:1

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

From the window of the Secretariat office one views the evidence of a deep and cold winter. Pure white snow blankets the ground, and the trees glisten with a silvery glow as they bend and sway from the weight of February’s winter.

Although the scene of such elegant beauty and stillness awakens within the sense of His Presence, one’s eyes are drawn even more to the immensity and spaciousness of February’s radiant blue sky above with its gently floating array of luminous white clouds which one only notices in the winter months.

The fullness of this picture of winter’s spacious sky above and earth’s pristine snow covered view below elicits immediately the cry of words of Daniel’s Canticle in Scripture *“Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord. You heavens, bless the Lord. Let the earth, bless the Lord. Praise and exalt Him above all forever.”* (Daniel 3).

However, when one brings a more contemplative gaze to this view through “sustained attention” one notices that this view outside the office window begins to dissolve into a series of small and just noticeable movements and changes that alter the perception of the scene. With sustained attention this scene becomes alive with motion and energy. How awesome is that!

One notices the sudden movement of a red cardinal on a tree branch; a squirrel foraging in the snow for food; a sudden falling of a branch from the old cedar; a cloud changing shape as it moves across the sky; a burst of sunlight slowly illuminating patches of the landscape. This shift in perception teaches us that it is easy to presume we have the whole picture with just a glance, and that we must look closer and with more care as there is always more to discover if we look with sustained attention. And so it is with our inner landscapes. For Secular Carmelites we call it our interior castle.

On March 5th we enter into the holy season of Lent. Let us put the same contemplative gaze of sustained attention into entering within our castle to more deeply explore and discover its many rooms and what treasures lie within them. If, as part of our Lenten practice, we look ever more carefully into these rooms, we will notice and discover which rooms need repair; which need updating; which rooms need the clutter removed; which need some shifting or rearranging. We will become aware of the motion of the Holy Spirit communicating and illuminating our interior castle from within, just as we notice the movements in our exterior landscape.

Then in six weeks after deepening our ability to practice sustained attention not only without but within, we will find ourselves more alert in noticing the first signs of spring in our exterior landscape with the appearance of the crocus in the garden, but even more thrilling is the deepening glimpse our perceptions take in recognizing God’s presence “springing” up within the rooms of our interior Castle. How awesome will that be!

Gladys McMullin, ocds
President, Secretariat