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The Apostles' Retreat



“Let us during these days often turn our thoughts to that silent house on Mount Sion, and visit it in spirit...Let us offer to the Holy Ghost the prayers of the early Church on behalf of the Church of today. The two are one and the same, and meet there in spirit. The upper chamber of the house on Mount Sion has never been empty since the days of the Apostles...This novena is the great prayer-meeting of the whole Church, united in calling to the Holy Ghost to visit us and communicate Himself to the whole world. Let us join in this work of prayer; let us join in the glorious rank of those before us. What an honor it is to pray side by side with the representatives of the Church of God! What confidence should it not give us to see our unworthiness and incapacity thus covered! But let us do what little we can to further the work. The needs are many, the work to be done is great and important! However, one Pentecost can suffice for everything.”

- The Gift of Pentecost, Father Meschler

Dear Friends of Carmel,

It was during these days of the “first retreat” between the Feast of the Ascension and Pentecost that the Apostles underwent the last and most difficult part of their spiritual training. They enclosed themselves in the upper room as still imperfect men, with ideas of an earthly kingdom and attachments to the physical presence and consolations of Our Lord, along with fears for the future. But when they emerged from the Cenacle after the coming of the Holy Ghost, they were the intrepid Apostles of Christ, ready to spread the Faith to the four corners of the earth. God the Holy Spirit filled them with the Gifts that would enable them to overcome all obstacles, to be God’s chosen foundation – stalwart pillars of the Church.

The upcoming Feast of Pentecost brings to our souls a new phase of the Liturgical year. Redemption promised during Advent and Christmas and accomplished during Passiontide and Easter, is now to be lived out in each individual soul. The season of Pentecost is the season of sanctification. In the steps of the Apostles, we are to live, in every aspect of our lives, by all of the doctrines and truths that they have handed down to us from Jesus Christ – and all of this, through “the Spirit of truth.” (Jn. 14:17)

“...He had given commandments through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen...”

(Acts:13)

*“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit,
whom the Father will send in My name,
He will teach you all things,
and bring to your mind
whatever I have said to you.” (Jn.14:26)*



“When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me: and you shall give testimony, because you are with Me from the beginning.” (Jn. 15: 26)

“But you shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth.”

(Acts 1: 1-11)

Throughout our life, it is our turn to “fight the good fight” and carry Christ’s truth and victory banner into the world. And we are not left alone in this great mission of all Christians:

“I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you...”

(Jn. 14:18)

*“In this world, you will have many sorrows;
but take courage;
I have overcome the world.” (Jn. 16:33)*

The Month Of Mary

*“And they mounted to the upper room[...]**All these with one mind continued steadfastly in prayer with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.**” (Acts. 1:23)* How beautiful to recall, in this May newsletter, the significant place Our Lady had in this final, purifying preparation of the Apostles. She was in their midst as guide, teacher, model of all that Our Lord preached, and as compassionate Mother, imparting hope and peace, consolation and encouragement. We must believe and understand that she is all these things for us, too – not only during this Novena, but all through life!

Like her Son Our Lord, and by His express will, she is with us “all days” in this world and its history. Her visits to earth



are testimony of this, as we were reminded on May 13th, the anniversary of the first of the Fatima apparitions. We marked the day by meeting in the evening at Our Lady of Fatima shrine outside to pray the rosary, sing Marian hymns, and offer a special Litany to Our Lady of Fatima, our own composition of invocations for our community, the Church and the world in these days. “The Fatima message” is such an important and timely one.

Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (cf. 1Jn:5:4), and we must live by that faith. The visits, messages and prophecies by Our Lady of Fatima that are so relevant in our days and in this deeply troubled world. We invite you to revisit, or learn for the first time, more about Fatima and the triumph of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart by reading from two of our newsletters from past years: “[Daily Duty](#)” and “[The Sacred Hearts](#).”

WEBSITE NEWS

A Retreat with Saint Therese

[A fitting book for a time of prayerful retreat](#), and one of the favorites of the Sisters, this little book puts forth our Saint’s teaching simply and is an ideal guide for deepening one’s spiritual life in the midst of this busy world. There are chapters summarizing her Little Way, each having concise, practical advice for living according to the pattern Jesus Himself set for us and that Therese followed so well: love, humility, confidence, self-denial, prayer, patience and simplicity. Father Liagre even includes two chapters of particular interest for this time in the Liturgical year – “St. Therese and the Holy Ghost” and “The Gifts of the Holy Ghost”.



St. Therese once said: “I want Jesus to possess Himself of my faculties in such a way that everything I do, from being merely human and personal, may be wholly divine, inspired and directed by the Spirit of Love.” This should be the desire of every soul that sincerely aims at perfection, at sanctity.[...] The gifts of the Holy Ghost are not in any way exceptional favors, extraordinary graces, given to privileged souls (to Therese of the Child Jesus, for example), but graces offered and granted to every Christian souls of genuine goodwill. ([Liagre](#))

Books on the Holy Ghost

We offer on our website excellent sources for understanding and appreciating this all-too-often forgotten Person of the

Blessed Trinity. The small booklets, as well as an excellent hardcover prayer book called [The Paraclete](#), provide a summary of the dogma of the Divine Indwelling in souls, with wonderful litanies and prayers to the Holy Spirit. For more in-depth treatment and instruction, consider both Father Bede Jarrett’s book, [Little Book of the Holy Spirit](#), and the book by Archbishop Luis Martinez, [True Devotion to the Holy Spirit](#). The latter is one of the fullest treatments of the Holy Spirit in all of Catholic literature.

The edition we offer is a slightly condensed version of the Archbishop’s original work, The Sanctifier. We again admit this is a favorite book of our Community – it seems one of us always is using it for spiritual reading and prayer. And well we should, since the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in all who are in the state of grace, is the Leader of our spiritual life, our sure Guide and, as Our Lord Jesus called Him, our Advocate in leading our life with God:

To be devoted to the Holy Spirit is to comprehend the august dignity of the Christian, his holy mission and his arduous duties that are sweetened by love.

It is to establish oneself in truth, to be faithful to the sacred promises of baptism, to be what one ought to be, and then to strive for that perfection to which every Christian should aspire. ([Martinez](#))

New Blessed Mother Images

It was at recreation not many days ago that all the Sisters said, “We must do something to honor Our Lady in our next newsletter!” In honor of Blessed Mother for this month of May, we decided to design a [series of easel/plaques around Our Lady’s words](#), both those from the Gospel and from Her most recognized apparitions. Our Lady is always full of wisdom, instruction, warning, and consolation for her children! And we find these little plaques, which sit easily on a desk or bookshelf, to be wonderful little reminders of her loving care toward us. We designed two of the [plaques around Our Lady of Fatima in particular](#), featuring both quotes from the apparitions and the prayers that were given to the children. We hope to add more designs in the future!



We have offered many [statues of Our Lady of Fatima](#) over the years, but recently had a request for the [crowned image](#). So we were more than happy to add that to our selection as well.



Father’s Day



Mother’s Day was earlier than our newsletter this time, and we have added new greeting card designs for both [Mother’s Day](#) and [Father’s Day](#). We also made a new wood plaque, not unlike our [Holy Face plaques](#), that [features the image of St. Joseph](#) from our last newsletter, the Head of the Holy Family. Find other [Father’s Day gift ideas](#) here.

New Garden Statues

We are probably not the only ones turning to our gardens for “Spring cleaning” and planting during this month of May. Fittingly, we have added a new line of [garden statues](#) to our site, small reminders of our holy Faith and friends in Heaven as we enjoy the soil God has given us to tend.



New Jasmine Candle

We’ve added another [new candle scent](#) to [our collection](#). We asked the Catholic artisan who makes these candles to create a scent around Jasmine. Besides simply being a beautiful scent, it is also often used in incense. Some would say it has a connotation of “a pleasing sacrifice.” We hope that you like it as much as we do!



The Woes of Ordering a Rosary

Regrettably, we do mean woe, since over the past year or so, we have had more and more frequent complaints from people trying to use our [Build a Custom Rosary feature](#). What do we expect from a system we built four years ago that has become outdated? While we very much wish to encourage the practice of virtue and leading a deeper spiritual life – tormenting souls with impossible-to-use and frustrating computer programs is not really how we want to go about it! For one needs great patience and fortitude, so we are told by some (and why it works for some and not others we have not been able to figure out), to order a rosary from our site! So before we say anything else – *we apologize!*

Our latest complaint email brought us a hearty laugh: “I’m not sure why or what sort of tortured mind feverishly thought up ways of making it more difficult to buy a rosary. But C’est la vie!” Well, as you can guess, it was never our intention to afflict those who wish to design and rosary! But the goal is to meet the needs of all. We have customers who love the limitless possibilities and pour over them to choose just the right components for a one-of-a-kind rosary. To our surprise, often enough people write us with even more variation ideas! But then there are others who just want a really nice rosary, and they want it quick, and they don’t want to be bothered with the details. Then, we have a whole range of customers in between.

There are huge challenges here! First of all, of course, we must work with frequent research and orders to keep all of the different beads, bead caps, center medals, and crucifixes in stock. We must balance schedules and communication between the three or four different Sisters who might have their part in each the rosary before it ships. We must always be trying to make simple and pleasant on your end the experience of building/ordering the rosary. And we must always discover ways to streamline the whole process, especially with the increasing number of orders coming to us.



Checking quality on a new batch of beads

Over the years, all of these things (and more) link up like a chain to be our biggest challenge with our website. But now we are at it again – coming up with the solution! The entire “rosary department” is undergoing a re-haul, as we once again attempt to streamline things on our end, and bring the website back up to date on your end – the end result being that we can get you beautiful rosaries in a reasonable time frame, without our website putting anyone trying to order in the nut house!

It’s with the [Build a Custom Rosary feature](#) that people have had the most trouble. We are already working with the expert computer programmers to fix the glitches. Getting all the different programs and platforms and browsers and devices to behave and get along will take some time. So if you have any trouble ordering, don’t allow the problems to torture, but please feel free to contact us by email, and we will help you sort it all out.



However, we are happy to report the progress made so far. The [Partly-Custom Rosary](#) section of our site has been re-vamped, and should be an immense help. Last minute and rush orders have always been difficult for us to fill, but we understand that many people are not able to plan a month in advance when they start looking for this kind of gift. Our [Ready-Made Rosaries](#) have helped with this “urgent need” situation. But with [Partly-Custom](#), we have rosaries that are constructed up to the point of attaching the center and crucifix, so most of the work is done, and customers have the option to choose from our list of in-stock centers, crucifixes and side medals (and we keep a lot in stock!). Once we have their chosen pieces, we have the relatively short work of just making the bows and shipping the rosary for a much faster turn-around. We are hoping this provides the best of both worlds: some options to customizing, along with avoidance of the torment and time of building a rosary that may take some weeks for us to complete. Availability of different bead/wire combinations will vary according to what we actually have in stock and made. The choices right now are limited, but it will not be long before we have built up some stock. We are also able to offer some customization on brass rosaries for the first time, which have been quite popular but are not yet added to our [Build a Custom Rosary feature](#). This is our first “reform” on the rosary section of our website – stay posted for more!

COMMUNITY NEWS

The Great Sewing Project



For some time now, we have been referring to a cryptic “large project” in our newsletters and personal letters to family and friends. It will not be a surprise to any of you that that “large project” was a sewing project, and in particular a vestment project. Our Sisters’ Sewing Brigade has planned and executed many ambitious projects in the past, all for the glory of God and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But that is the problem with ambition – it just continues to grow! Four years ago, when this project began to materialize on paper as the most elaborate and seemingly impossible design yet, even we began to wonder if we might be biting off more than we could chew this time around. Many of the new techniques we have learned and talked about the past few years with other projects - sublimation, 3-D metallic embroidery, etc. – we researched and experimented with, knowing that it was all for this particular project looming in our future.

The solemn set was designed to be used for Easter – so naturally, that means pulling out all the stops! If there is a Feast to go all out for, it is Easter. After all, the Liturgy calls it “the Solemnity of solemnities”! The vestment set - a Priest’s chasuble, cope, deacon’s dalmatic, sub-deacon’s tunic, antependium (altar frontal) and a matching second chasuble for the Feast of the Ascension (so the set could be used for that Feast, as well). The whole project was to honor and celebrate the 50th Jubilee Anniversary of one of our Priests.



We actually completed the Ascension chasuble over a year ago; you might remember pictures in a newsletter at that time. The new entire Easter set was completed with just days to spare before our deadline: April 14th. Happily, it was used for the first time on Low Sunday at the Jubilee Anniversary Mass. We were all thrilled to see it on the altar so soon after

completion, since as we have said before, a new vestment set never feels quite “finished” until it has served its purpose at least once. This particular project was, for us, like the story of Easter. So many obstacles that had to be overcome, so much hard work and sacrifice on the part of all of the Sisters over several years – all was “immolated” on the altar at last – and we hope and pray that the good God sanctified and perfected all those acts of love and made them fruitful, like a tiny image of the unsurpassed fruits of the Resurrection.



Anatomy of a Vestment Project

The first thing we always decide on in any vestment project is what fabric to use. The beautiful cloth of gold we finally chose for this set was both a God-send and a nightmare, depending on which side of the sewing room you worked on. For the embroidery room, not many fabrics could stand up to the millions of stitches we would be putting into it, and any pulling in and wrinkles caused by those millions of stitches easily pressed out flat again. But on the sewing room side, metallic fabric sometimes seems to have a life of its own, curling up, shriveling up, behaving in ways that even our veteran sewing Sisters never could quite figure out sometimes. What laid flat when we left the work in the evenings would the next day be wrinkled, shriveled and either too small or too large for the lining (we never were quite sure which).

The second step is to decide on a main applique, or in the case of a solemn set like this, several main appliques: the images and artwork that would be taking “center stage” on the chasuble, cope, antependium and humeral veil. We had to come up with a beautiful embroidery design to surround and enhance those images – all the while telling the story of the Resurrection, and expressing the doctrine in Liturgical art that proclaims Easter.

The final design was a result of the work/ideas/sketches/revisions of two religious communities after much thought and prayer. That final design was a fine balance of 3-D gold embroidery and color. (Too much color would be distracting.) Getting a white lily to show up on gold fabric was one of our challenges – how

could an Easter vestment not have lilies?! We incorporated quotes from scripture and the Easter Masses, weaving them into whatever parts of the designs where we could fit them. We embroidered all 12 Apostles (along with St. Mary Magdalen, the unique apostle of the Resurrection) and the Evangelists for the tunic and dalmatic. The antependium and the humeral veil feature two different Paschal Lamb appliques. Finally, the applique on the chasuble, the main piece of any vestment set, is, of course, an

image of Our Risen Savior.



After we had our design – implementing it became our next challenge! There were so many “firsts” and “we’ve-never-done-it-that-ways” on this vestment, that it would be impossible to list them all. Very often, we looked at what had

been “dreamt up” and thought: “Well, how we are going to make that happen?” So we brainstormed, experimented, and pushed our way through the obstacles. We really do think that sometimes Our Lord must have had a hand in it, since we’re not quite sure how or why what we did worked, especially with the embroidery. The Paschal lambs were the most complicated multi-step pieces of embroidery we had

The pictures themselves tell the rest of the story of the doctrine, love and devotion that went into this project – truly a contemplative work and labor of great love. We have posted more photos with explanations about the embroidery/sewing process [on our website](#) for those interested in learning more and seeing more pictures.



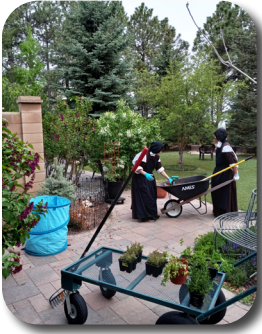
Other Projects

Despite our four-year head start, several “bumps in the road” made it difficult for us to finish the vestment on time – difficult, but not impossible! It was certainly the focus of our work hours the past few months as we finished the important details. And now we are turning our attention to things that we had to put on the back burner – the reorganization of the rosary department being one of them, as mentioned above. But the sewing room is never idle – and never a dull place to be. While a few weeks ago, cloth of gold and elaborate embroidery covered all its work spaces, it only took a few days after the vestment was finished for the Sisters to cover those same spaces with brown wool as they cut out new habits for many of the Sisters.



ever schemed, with sublimation, embroidery of all types/tensions/and textures, appliqued wool fabric for a “wooly feel,” puffy foam split into pieces, etc. We must apologize for using all these various “shop-talk” terms, since we know that the vocabulary of any art tends to sound foreign to those who have never worked with it. But if anyone reading this has any experience of digitizing embroidery, you will have a little better idea of the overwhelming project we have just completed...

The gardens are awake, and tulips and daffodils are blooming at last. Lots of fall cleanup went unfinished in favor of vestment and other pressing work, so those gardens definitely need attention. We dreamed of starting a bigger greenhouse this year for growing food, but as the weeks of May are slipping away, it begins to look as if that might remain a dream, at least for this year – we’ll see. The Sisters



are, one by one, taking the time for their yearly retreats – a week spent alone, away from community recreations and work to concentrate more intensely on holy reading and prayer. Our days, filled with hours of prayer and work, pass all too quickly.

These days between the two great Feasts of Ascension and Pentecost are special ones here in Carmel: a time of

Community Retreat for this Novena to the Holy Spirit. Just as we observe in Holy Week, community recreations cease so that we may spend more time in solitude, silent work and prayer. In this way, we imitate Our Lady and the Apostles, who after Our Lord Jesus ascended into Heaven, following His instructions, withdrew into prayerful retreat to wait for the Promise of the Father, of which they learned from Christ (Acts 1:4).

We close this letter with the hope you will also be able to take/ make time to prepare your souls for the coming of the Holy Spirit. And we pray that on this great Feast, God will bestow upon all of us the precious grace to advance in our spiritual life with even greater determination, and to rise each day with fortitude to the daily work of sanctifying ourselves and sanctifying the world.

May Our Lady, Queen of Peace and Mother of the children of God, be with you!

Your Carmelite Sisters

“We ought to pray and invoke the Holy Spirit, for each one of us greatly needs His protection and His help. The more a man is deficient in wisdom, weak in strength, borne down with trouble, prone to sin, so ought he the more to fly to Him Who is the never ceasing Fount of Light, Strength, Consolation and Holiness.”

- Pope Leo XIII



Feel free to email any prayer requests to us. Unfortunately, we are not able to respond personally to all of the prayer requests that we receive, but please be assured that your requests will be added to our daily prayer intentions.

HELP US CONTINUE OUR LIFE OF PRAYER AND SACRIFICE

DONATE TO THE MONASTERY

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