



Rare Meeting

Sister Mary Ann Binsack, left, and Sister Mary Noreen Graney will lead a delegation of more than 70 Rochester Sisters of Mercy to a gathering of more than 1700 members of the congregation from North and South America in Pittsburgh, Pa., June 22-24. The meeting is part of the national observance anniversary of the founding of the religious congregation by Catherine McAuley in Ireland 150 years ago.

A Discaled Carmelite Nun

Viewpoint: Sisters Reflect



Contemplatives

The contemplative life, totally dedicated to God in faith and love, is an open profession of the reality of His existence and a concrete witness to His active presence in the world. It has no meaning except in the light of God, and is in complete contrast to the position of those who see this world as the beginning and end of everything, and hold that man in himself has the answer to everything.

The contemplative aims at attaining through prayer and self-denial to loving intimacy with Christ, and through this union to be of service to the Church. Thus her life itself is her apostolate, a hidden and purely spiritual power. Not long ago Cardinal Pironio observed that the best service contemplative religious could offer their dioceses was to live their specific vocation to the full.

In this age of specialization, contemplatives could be called specialists in prayer. Like all specialists, they have to channel their energies and curtail works and pleasures which, however good and legitimate, could be a hindrance to the primacy of prayer in their lives. This is why they abstain from active participation in the important ministries of other religious, why they separate themselves from the pleasant company of family and friends, from TV, radio, travel and such things in order to occupy themselves more completely with God in solitude.

The Holy Father recently pointed out that for contemplatives to furnish the Church with the spiritual contribution she looks for from them, "they should live the mystery of the desert in a realistic way." (In Scripture, the desert is the privileged place of meeting with God.)

But where in Rochester can you find a desert? Today this desert is seldom a physical one; rather, it is "created" by a voluntary withdrawal from outside activities in order to permit a more intense life of prayer, and in this way to offer the Church its particular way of expressing the paschal mystery: death to self ordained to resurrection in Christ.

The contemplative community contains within itself all that is needed for the spiritual growth and welfare of its members. The love and virtue practiced toward one another is the measure of its spiritual progress, for if we do not love the sister we see and live with, how can we say we love God, or the many brothers and sisters whom we do not see?

Austerity of life is not something simply imposed by rule; it flows from an inner necessity of a soul who is seeking intimate friendship with God, for prayer and self-indulgence do not go together. Each day a contemplative joins her sisters in worshipping God in the Eucharistic Sacrifice and in praising Him in the Choral recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours; besides private prayer, wholly concentrated on God, she tries to make a spirit of loving recollection so penetrate the work of her day that all becomes a means of grace for herself and for others.

Her prayer is especially in the name of the people of the diocese, offering God their worship and interceding for their needs. Her place is in the heart of the Church, fulfilling there the hidden function of the heart, sharing in the activities of the diocese, animating them and making them fruitful through love.

The preceding report was written by a Discaled Carmelite Nun.

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