With exuberant joy and ardent charity, I greet each of you this day. I ask God to bless you for remembering us in your prayers and in your alms on which we so greatly depend to sustain our contemplative life and prepare the way for the precious vocations God is sending. Just as the Incarnate Word of God assumed His human flesh from the Virgin Mother, may Jesus come to you in this hour through Mary’s maternal presence and intercession, particularly under Her glorious title as Our Lady of Mount Carmel. I remain, with all of the good, holy monks here.

Your devoted Father in Carmel,
Fr. Daniel Mary of Jesus Crucified, M. Carm.
Prior

Dearest Carmelite Family and Friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ and Mary, His Mother! This morning, after months of silence, I sit to write to you with the tenderest paternal greetings, love in the Lord, and countless prayers. Our thoughts and prayers are with each of you, as we know the many crosses borne by so many faithful souls these past months, both physically and spiritually. As I write, I ask the good God to graciously pour out blessings upon you in this hour, particularly those miracles of physical and spiritual healing of which you and your loved ones stand most in need. Our commitment to be your spiritual fathers remains unwavering.

I must begin by begging pardon for the absence of an update from the monastery these past months. We have sought to be cognizant of St. Paul’s admonition, an important part of the Carmelite Rule, that “we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:9 RSVCE). As we have been ever mindful of your difficulties, we have not wanted to further worry a single one of you with our own modest needs. To those of you who have continued to remember us in your prayers and in your alms, there are no words to adequately thank you for such generosity. Oh, how we need one another in the Mystical Body of Christ that we might indeed become the saints God is calling us to be!
In this time of sorrow and difficulty, I write from this solitary wilderness with news of great joy. I put pen to paper today that a bit of Carmelite news might warm your heart and most especially console you in your afflictions at this hour. The words of the prophet Isaiah seem most apropos at this moment in salvation history: “I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in Him” (Is 8:17). In our time, we all stand in need of hope when so many are carried away by irrational fear and hardships press around us both physically and spiritually. At this moment, our Blessed Savior is asking each of us, “Do you trust me?” So often we want to trust, to be a people of hope and to grow in the theological virtue of hope, but we are held back by distrust and fears. The admonition of St. Peter instructs us, “Through [Jesus] you have come to trust in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God” (1Pt 1:21 RSVCE2).

The monks’ trust too has been tested during these months. Our plans for discernment retreats, family visits, entries of new candidates, joyous celebrations of novitiate clotheings, and construction have all been delayed, greatly simplified, or slowed. Now, it is possible to question the inescapable designs of Providence, and yet Jesus asks for our trust in Him. Despite the difficulties of the new civil and diocesan restrictions during the pandemic, God is not absent, but rather intimately present. And God can and does will to bring good out of the current evils. The proof is the unimaginable number of young men calling and writing each day, seeking to give their lives to Jesus and to the Church through the immaculate hands of the Virgin Mother. Verily there is not enough time in the day to speak with every candidate that would like to talk! And so, we wonder at the infinite and eternal Wisdom of God in sending us so many young men in this hour of deep unrest and uncertainty in our world.

I believe that the answer to this astounding blessing of vocations must be shouted from the rooftops and shared with humble thanksgiving, God is calling young men to this solitary and silent monastery as clear proof and affirmation of Jesus’s promise to St. Peter: “[T]hou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18 DRA). Our beloved Church cannot be conceived without contemplatives, without consecrated souls hidden within the enclosure interceding for the Church and the world, without priests and brothers who offer their lives in prayer and penance that souls might be saved. In this very hour God is calling and inviting the young men to come, to leave the world and its passing illusions, and to live a life more heavenly than earthly. Oh, how our world needs this radical witness of holiness in the following of the obedient, poor, and chaste Christ!

As the phone rings and the inbox of e-mails fills, the Novice Master and I scramble to find ways to continue to journey with these young men. The self-quarantine has shown the youth in many cases the joys of solitude, the possibility of being enclosed, and the importance of steadfast prayer; now they knock at our door seeking to try this monastic life of the glorious Carmelite saints, the life of St. Teresa of Jesus, John of the Cross, and Thérèse of the Child Jesus. As so many of you wonder, “Where am I to look for hope in this hour?” I wish to encourage you with the blessing of this vibrant monastery filled with selfless young priests and brothers, ordinary men called to something extraordinary in this band of brothers. Dear friends, hear the words of the royal psalmist that they might be said of you, “I have lifted up my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come to me. My help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Ps 121:1-2 DRA).