

SINGING THE MERCIES OF GOD:
ENCOUNTERING ST. TERESA IN OUR WORLD
TODAY

August 22, 2014

“I shall enlarge on only three things, ... for it is very important that we understand how much the practice of these three things helps us to possess inwardly and outwardly the peace our Lord recommended so highly to us. The first of these is **love** for one another; the second is **detachment** from all created things; the third is **true humility**, which, even though I speak of it last, is the main practice and embraces all the others.”

- St. Teresa of Jesus
The Way of Perfection, 4:4

THE CAST

In order of appearance:

Seeker.....*Marynella Burkard, OCDS*
Narrator.....*Theresa Thomas, OCDS*
The Voice of God.....*Rev. Gerald Werner, OCD*
St. Teresa.....*Kathleen Lara, OCDS*
Horned Toad Lizard.....*Peter Burkard, OCDS*

PROGRAM NOTES

THE GENRE

“Pious recreations” have been composed in the Teresian Carmel for the celebration of special feasts, since the very beginning, in order to join relaxation and edification with the sense of gaiety which seems to be one of the requisites of a perfect Carmelite. They are not always plays, but may blend theater and music, or theater and poetry. Not infrequently, there is a paraliturgical element, especially when the piece is composed for a major event like Christmas. While, ideally, the “actors” would have learned their parts by heart, we are quite within the tradition to rely on the scripts we carry with us, and we beg your indulgence, for we are older than the novices who usually perform these, and far from professional actors!

THE PLAY

In our world, the most direct encounter with St. Teresa we ordinarily can have is through her words. We've crafted this little pious recreation to create a sacred space in which to encounter her, to let her speak to us in the person of the Seeker, and to join her in singing of God's mercies. For this reason, with rare exceptions, her lines are direct quotations from her writings.

To use the metaphor of singing, our “song” is intended as a four part harmony of these voices: the Seeker, who is earnestly searching for God, and in whose mind the action takes place; the Narrator, who is usually one of the voices in the Seeker’s head, and who provides context and transitions; St. Teresa herself, of course; and last, but definitely not least, the Voice of God, who speaks to us through Sacred Scripture. There is, of course, a fifth character, but he doesn’t actually speak.

The “lyrics” will touch on St. Teresa's personality, her way of praying with the humanity of Christ, friendship, the pots and pans of life, and the Cross. Our melody is one of pure love and joy. We hope it draws you to enter into that deep, interior place of love and joy and grateful praise of God with respect to the circumstances of your own lives: We invite you to join our chorus and sing His mercies along with us.

In the first pages of the Book of her Life, St. Teresa describes herself as “singing the mercies of God.” Carmel is Marian. Long before St. Teresa, Our Lady herself “sings the mercies of God” in her Magnificat; St. Teresa merely followed her example. Today, in keeping with the tradition of the pious recreation, our focus will be on St. Teresa, but don’t lose sight of the fact that we are also celebrating the Queenship of Mary. Chief among the mercies that we will sing about is the gift of St. Teresa’s very practical creative spiritual genius, a wisdom as fresh and useful today as when she first expressed it nearly five hundred years ago. Her genius built

upon Mary’s, so in a certain sense, we are singing about Mary. Our “songs”, of course, are metaphorical; we are not going to try to actually sing. Trust me, you would not be pleased with the result!

THE SET

Our circumstances constrain us to rely on your own creative genius to supply with your imagination the elaborate set that you might find in a proper theater, or in an opera house. On your left, represented by the simple writing table and chair, create in your mind St. Teresa's 16th century cell, where she spent long hours late into the night praying and pondering, writing for the nuns, or managing the business affairs of her foundations. As we move to the other side of the stage, we pass through a time warp, and land in the 21st century, where our Seeker lives and searches for God's will in her life, turning to St. Teresa for help and solidarity. The table in the middle is the place of movement from one time zone to the other. It symbolizes the sacred space we are striving to create, and holds the few props we will use to help our singing.