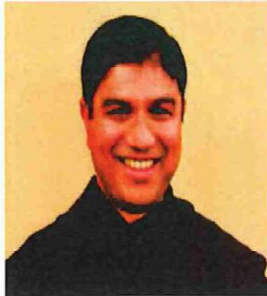




St. Teresa of Los Andes
Canada Region Office, 15 Templebow Rd, N.E.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada - T1Y 6J3

Zelo Zelatus Sum Pro Domino Deco exercituum.



The welcome sound of Christmas chimes is very much in the air. We are rushing to the end of this special year 2020, and are waiting eagerly to celebrate Christmas, the most loved celebration in the world, especially of Christians. A glimpse deeper, and our minds are confronted with the shockingly surprising historic context of the birth of the Christ Child in a lowly stable. It was the coldest part of the winter in Bethlehem, just two kilometres from Jerusalem.

And the birth happens amidst the stench of cattle. No warmth of a home, no comfort of a hospital ward, nay just a cave carved on the side of the hill, when their own blood relatives and friends rejected accommodating a pregnant woman about to give birth. Mary of Nazareth had to give birth to her first babe even without the minimum assistance from a woman in her dire moment of need; she was denied the minimum comfort of warmth, fresh air and light. We would not wish it even to those who hurt us most. Our contemplation would suddenly stop with a shocking question, why at all would God choose this 'weird' way to introduce the saviour of mankind, Jesus Christ.

John 3,16 tells us, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only Son' to give us inner freedom to turn to God. Therefore, the mystery of this strange surprise of Jesus' birth amidst us is to be placed in the heart of the Fatherly love of God for us. A father's love is encompassing, focused for the long-term good of the family and its members. It is often sensed as crude, rude, uncompromising and even heavy and unjust. But God's ways are not our ways (Hos. 11, Is 55,10; Rom 11,33). Our thinking is often blurred by human sympathy and pity. What we decide is often not leading us to the happy end of our lives.

In the painful situation of the birth of Jesus, the mystery of the suffering cross, and foreshadowing of the victory of the resurrection are hidden. The willing surrender to God's will is indeed an act of homage to God. Therefore, the sacrifices of Mary and Joseph and the lowliness of the birth of Jesus among the cattle that sacrifice their lives to human beings, the shepherds who endure the vagaries of nature in the open fields day and night to care for the sheep, have a lasting message specifically for our days.

The whole of this year, the world is shaken by an invisible Corona virus and every country lost thousands of its citizens. It snatched away the parents and the grandparents, friends and foes without mercy.



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The worst torment was that we could not even approach them and offer them our help even in their last moments. The message is clear; we do not have a lasting city here below. We are pilgrims headed to a promised land. We have to renounce what our nature desires to choose what God wants. We cannot bypass the cross if we want to find the true joy of resurrection.

I am happy to share the good news from the Carmelite General Definitory. It has juridically assigned the English-speaking territories of Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan to the care of the Province of Karnataka-Goa. It means we can now venture into new initiatives, with your cooperation, for the spiritual enrichment of Canada. Right now, we total twenty friars serving Canada under the Provincial Delegation of Canada. On the other hand, the twenty-eight OCDS communities are spread all over as the ferment of spiritual life: nineteen of them in Ontario, one in Prince Edward Island, one in Nova Scotia, one in New Brunswick, one in Saskatchewan, two in Alberta, and three in British Columbia. We look forward to the birth of many more.

As the Delegate Provincial, I have the duty of making pastoral visitations to favour and facilitate authentic Christian spiritual life and fidelity to the Carmelite heritage amidst us. I would begin the visits as soon as it is feasible. Meanwhile I entrust each one of you to Jesus in the manger, and to Mary and Joseph. May the tragedies around us not deter us and discourage us into passivity. God is above everything; He knows what is truly good for us and Our heavenly Father cares. Let us seek to do His will. Besides, St. Teresa too reminds us, Carmelites, that we are called to be a joyous people. May I wish everyone, our friars, nuns, OCDS sisters and brothers, friends and benefactors, a joyous and blessed Christmas and a New Year 2021 full of health, hope and happiness.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Jerald D'Souza, OCD
 Delegate Provincial

