



Carmel of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph
327 Water St.
Fairfield, PA 17320

An update to our dear friends...
Month of the Sacred Heart June 19, 2021

Dear Friends,

Praised be to Jesus Christ!

We are writing this personal letter to you, all our dear friends, to shed some light on the recent events involving our Carmel of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Once we realized there was both misinformation and misunderstanding regarding Elysburg and Philadelphia, we wanted to relate to you the truth of these matters. We hope this letter will be enlightening and helpful.

First of all, regarding Elysburg, we made a wholehearted attempt to keep two monasteries open in this diocese by splitting our community in half. This proved too taxing on our Nuns and detrimental to the spiritual welfare of our community. Therefore we have brought all our Nuns to Fairfield. This was the original plan, and it has proven the best plan. We apologize that from your perspective it seemed rushed, but for us it was very much a necessity. While it seemed from the outside that Elysburg and Fairfield were two separate entities, Elysburg was in fact leaning heavily upon our support and direction. We found it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of all our young and vibrant Sisters at both locations. Because of this and because of the exciting prospect of being united in time for the beautiful liturgies of Holy Week and Easter, we accelerated our moving plans.

Ideally we would like the Elysburg property to go to another religious group. We had one lined up but it fell through just recently. We will continue to pray that Our Lord will send one to take our place, but we remain at peace with whatever His Will may be. By selling the building, we will be able to reinvest into our present home all the work and donations given during our fruitful years in Elysburg. So while our location has changed a little (same state, same diocese), the community of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph remains faithful to the invitation received from the Diocese of Harrisburg in 2009.

Secondly, we would like to dispel any lingering misinformation about our and the Carmel in Valparaiso's involvement in the departure of the twelve Discalced Carmelite Nuns from the Philadelphia monastery on April 9, 2021.

As some of you have noted, the Elysburg monastery closed just about the same time as the Philadelphia Carmel. Because of this, there has been some outside conjecture that the two closures are related. However, the two events were enacted for entirely different reasons and were completely un-choreographed.

In July 2017, the Valparaiso Carmel was invited by the small and aging Philadelphia Carmel to help rejuvenate their community. Leaving their beloved Mothers and Sisters and the quiet setting of their monastic homes behind, three of our Nuns from Elysburg and six from Valparaiso undertook this task. Along with the one member of the original Philadelphia community, to whom they became quite close and from whom they received an enthusiastic welcome, these nine Nuns worked together to build a flourishing house of the Lord.

However, there was a looming cloud that threatened what we all thought would be a peaceful and fruitful future. For many years, the Philadelphia Carmel had been part of an association. When our Nuns arrived, it was assumed that withdrawing from this association would be a small matter. After all, the Nuns had been invited by the community and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia with the clear understanding that they were part of a young, thriving, dedicated Order who loved the Extraordinary Form of the Holy Mass and the time-honored traditions of the Discalced Carmelites. As attempts were being made to not only interfere with but to obstruct their way of life, the Nuns tried one way after another to gracefully bow out of this pre-existing commitment. When it became painfully clear that the freedom to maintain their identity as originally promised by the Archdiocese was not being honored, the only option left to the Nuns was to return to the monastery in Valparaiso, Nebraska. They did this in the most correct way possible, fulfilling all canonical requirements.

Contrary to rumors, April 9th unfolded very quietly at the Carmel in Philadelphia. The Nuns, with smiles and a few tears, took their leave of the original Nun (who wished to remain) and peacefully departed. This Sister's well-being was, of course, an important concern of the departing Nuns, despite her good health and energetic nature. Therefore, the Mothers in Valparaiso requested that a few of us from Fairfield come to stay in the monastery with her to help in any way necessary. We cooked and cleaned for her, helped her with the sacristy and turn, and arranged for the little ducks and bees to be taken care of. All this we joyfully and willingly did. We only left at her repeated assurance that she would be well taken care of by the surrounding lay community (which has indeed been the case: may God reward these good people!).

The Carmel of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in Valparaiso wishes to extend their fullest support and confirmation of what we have related herein. We stand together in our efforts to be faithful to Our Lord and the charism He has given us through Our Holy Mother, St. Teresa of Avila. We humbly beg for your prayers and support in our endeavors. We will keep you all informed of any developments. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to email FairfieldCarmelites@gmail.com. Catherine Bauer is happy to help and will pass your messages along to us.

Meanwhile, as the good Lord leads our little community up and down the humanly inexplicable ways of His providence, work proceeds well here in Fairfield. We are currently putting in an orchard and building raised stone-beds for our kitchen garden while we watch the refectory and kitchen take shape before our eyes. In even more exciting news, our permanent chapel's excavation is well underway.

We are enormously grateful to be surrounded and supported by such a wonderful Catholic family as you. Be assured of the continued prayers for you and all your loved ones.

In the Hearts of Jesus, Mary, & Joseph

Mother Stella-Marie of Jesus, Prioress
& the Community of the Carmel of Jesus, Mary, & Joseph, Fairfield