



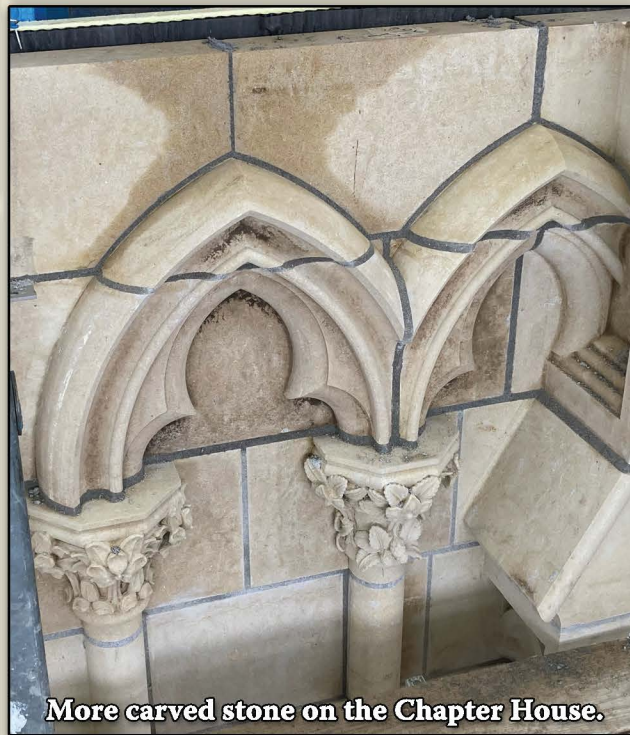
Computer rendering of the Chapter House.



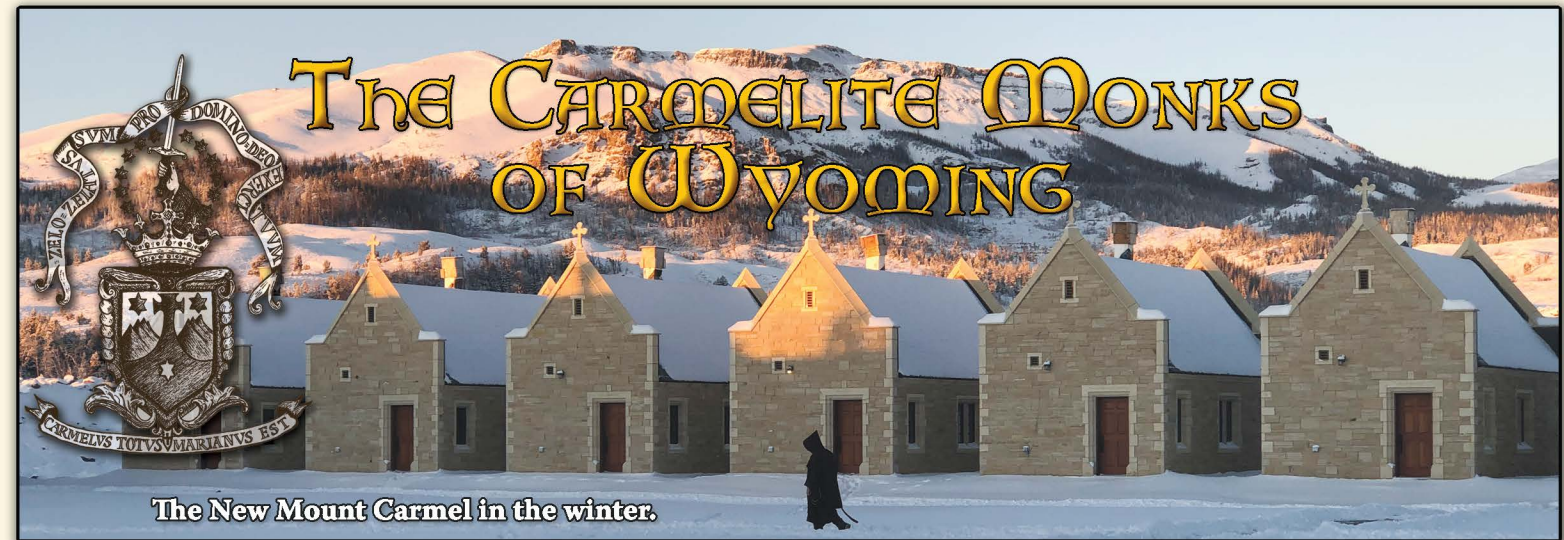
Installing carved stone on the Chapter House.



Stone awaiting installation.



More carved stone on the Chapter House.



The New Mount Carmel in the winter.

The Carmelite Monks of Wyoming

March 2022
Newsletter No. 1

Dear Friends of Jesus and Mary,

Praised be Jesus Christ! “Carmel is the garden of God.” From my earliest inquiries into the Carmelite Order as a young seminarian, I have heard time and time again this phrase repeated to describe the contemplative life we lead. Now those same words find frequent repetition on my own lips to detail this life to both family and friends.

Despite these recurring utterances, questions proliferate about the cloistered monastic life and its hidden followers. Authors of fiction and non-fiction seek to penetrate the mystery—to somehow grasp this strange and mysterious life, long loved and little known and understood. Some question the utility of such a forgotten existence in a world with so many seemingly more pressing and urgent needs. Others romanticize a life of “holy leisure” where real life joys and struggles give way to what might be termed at best a life of “floating on clouds” and at worst a lifetime of boredom. In our modern, secular world, the monastic life lamentably

finds comparison to religious cults, clearly showing an ignorance of the completely free choice made not once but daily by every cloister dweller.

Reading the commentaries of reporters and the observations of short-term visitors, I have found over the years that descriptions of monastic life—the “nitty gritty” we might say—often leave more questions than answers. Monks and nuns shy away from the media and publicity, preferring to remain silent to eschew any tinge of self-aggrandizement or defense. Meanwhile, the questions endure and the modern world wonders anew at exactly *what* the monastic life consists of and the vocations of monks and nuns.

Pondering these realities recently, I found myself convinced that God was inviting us to offer you, our dearest friends and family, not just a picture of our life (photos never seem to be lacking in our newsletters), but to pull back the



Detail of stained glass window by Judson Studios destined for installation in the monastery chapel.

the good God for this opportunity to share our life in its fullness with honesty and transparency. Until next month, our prayers accompany you; please pray for us too to become the holy priests and brothers of which our Church and world stand in such urgent need—even at this very hour.

I remain,

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

veil in a humble, real way that you might see, hear, smell, and touch our own monastic life here in Wyoming. Rather than present our life as a fairy tale as some have done, my hope is to present our monastery and its Fathers and Brothers in a way that is true and honest. Having often thought how happy I would be for each of you to see the peace and joy of the monks here, I hope through the newsletters of the next year to expose in clear language our ancient life as it is lived today and tomorrow and, in the days, months, and years after that. After all, our monastic life would not be possible without your charitable prayers and alms!



The Novitiate following Br. Elijah Marie's clothing.

Before beginning this series of reflections with the Midnight Office next month, I think it is helpful to elaborate upon our monastery's relationship to other Carmelites and the Diocese of Cheyenne that you might understand how we *fit into* the big picture. As you might recall from earlier newsletters, brochures, letters, and our website, we are an entirely new community in the Church, being founded in the Diocese of Cheyenne on October 15, 2003. Having received my own formation as a Carmelite with the Carmelite Hermits in Lake Elmo, Minnesota, and having discerned a vocation to a monastic expression of the Carmelite life in Wyoming, our monastery was born to return to the inspirations and spirit of Ss. Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross which harken back to the first hermits on Mount Carmel, while also being founded not in the early Church nor in the Middle Ages, but instead in the twenty-first century. Concretely, this means that while our life is ancient and not arbitrary or based upon subjective whims, at the same time we believe the Carmelite charism remains perennially valid as an efficacious source of grace for the Church and the world and that Jesus is calling the young men of today to leave the modern world to embrace the ancient Christian tradition of monasticism.

Accordingly, we are not juridically affiliated with the Carmelites of the Ancient Observance or the Discalced Carmelites; these branches of the large Carmelite family are our brothers and sisters to whom we are united in the observance of the Carmelite Rule. As cloistered monks with no external apostolate, our unique way of living Carmel (known as a "charism") is complementary to the life lived by solitary Carmelite hermits and active Carmelite friars, and yet utterly distinct. Perhaps the simplest way to explain all of this is just to say that we are "something old in how we live and something new" as a gift given by God to the Church through the goodness of our founding bishop and his successors, the bishops of the Diocese of Cheyenne, who have supported and shepherded our community from its infancy.

Another helpful detail before beginning to explore our life in next month's newsletter is that our monastery has both priests *and* brothers. Some monks are priests. Other monks will be ordained priests in the future. These monks who are priests, or will be priests, are known in the Carmelite tradition as "choir monks" because their primary duty is the worship of God in the liturgy

through the chanting of the Divine Office in the "choir" or the part of the chapel where the monks sit. Other monks, however, are not priests nor do they aspire to be ordained priests in the future; these monks are known as "lay brothers" because they are not ordained clerics through the reception of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. We will explore both vocations in the months to come as we open the door to our life; for now, know that there are monk-priests and monk-brothers. Whether priest or brother, each is fully a monk united in this one monastic way of life. Each vocation is absolutely essential to the monastic life and has a history full of saints. You will hear much more about "choir monks" and "lay brothers" in the next series of newsletters we hope to write over the upcoming months.

As you can probably already tell from this little introduction, monasticism is rich and vibrant—with a unique history, spirituality, and tradition. Since we monks often joke that our life requires a dictionary to understand all of the special words and intricacies, and since you are our beloved spiritual children, we thank



Br. Elijah Marie of the Transfiguration being clothed as a novice.

Since you share in each and every prayer and penance within the monastery walls, I am deeply humbled to figuratively open the enclosure door and grating by means of these next newsletters. My goal is to present our life in a way that renews your love for monasticism and helps you to better understand the importance of the varied vocations in our Mother, the Church. How we need each other!



Br. Elijah Marie receiving the monastic cincture.