



Assumption of the BVM

Aug. 15 2019

Dear Bishop Biegler:

Last summer (2018) Joseph [redacted] was attracted to my Marian YouTube channel. He emailed me to ask prayers for himself as he was discerning a religious vocation since I had experience with religious life. He kept in touch with me thenceforth, but he also had secular clergy to guide him. As the months passed he became strongly attracted to Mass in the Extraordinary Form. I didn't share that attraction, but I didn't discourage him until he said that he was going to do a "come and see" with the Carmelites in Wyoming.

So far, I had not spread any gossip about the Wyoming Carmel, not even to my mother who sends the monks monthly donations. There are historical examples of holy congregations being founded by unsaintly men or women. But now that I was in the position of mentor for Joseph, I felt a responsibility to warn him about the strong, unstable personality of Fr. Daniel Mary. At the same time, I expressed the hope that the Prior had mellowed and matured since I had known him.

Joseph was grateful for my honesty but quite starry-eyed by the website and the steady stream of young men who entered there. I questioned him about the monks' grandiose gothic construction project because St. Teresa of Avila insisted on poverty and simplicity in her monastery buildings: "If I may say what my conscience bids me, I should wish that, on the day when you build such edifices, they may fall down and kill you all" (*Way of Perfection*). Joseph argued that Mother Angelica was a Poor Clare. I responded that she received large donations that were designated exclusively for a new monastery at Hanceville; she did not *seek* the money or establish a (coffee) business to earn it. Joseph proceeded to visit the Wyoming Carmel, January 3-6, 2019. He was in a group of eight candidates. He reported to me that he was *greatly* impressed, as were the other young men. Seven of them signed up to join.

I noticed a few red flags before Joseph's entrance, but none were decisive:

- Fr. Daniel Mary had said to Joseph: "The new rite is not meant for contemplative life. . . it is *bad* for the monks and the nuns..." What pride to throw thousands of good religious under the bus! The *Novus Ordo* 3-year/2-year scriptural lectionary is a *wonderful* source of inspiration. Moreover, the 1950s Latin Carmelite Missal and Breviary which the Wyoming monks are using is *not really* the same liturgy that St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa knew. The Rite of the Holy Sepulchre has been truncated many times since the 16th century.

- Joseph's entrance date was set for May 19th. Normally a significant liturgical feast is chosen.

- Joseph said that he would be *assigned* a name and a title. Carmelites have traditionally been *free* to choose their own names. It's an intimate, personal decision for spiritual identity.

I emailed Joseph farewell, but he emailed me from home 10 days after entrance! Bishop, I can provide you with a full transcript of our email correspondence, but it was primarily in our phone conversation that I realized how *serious* the disorders are in that monastery! He couldn't quite express what was wrong with the community. He attributed it to his own *subjective* negative impressions, so I began to question him about the *objective* quality of religious observance. At this point it hit home to me that *of course* no new postulant would be able to report lacunae in religious observance.

Serious Failures in Religious Observance

1) Joseph said that “perhaps” some monks were praying the Divine Office, but he didn’t see this?!?!?! In any case, the postulants were exempt(!!!) The Liturgy of the Hours is *fundamental* to their life and training.

2) Although St. Teresa stipulated 2 hours of mental prayer (in addition to a Rosary in common), Joseph was distressed because he couldn’t find time to pray just one daily Rosary. Fr. Daniel Mary, recovering from back surgery, assured the young Brothers: “I make enough mental prayer for everybody.” (!!!)

3) Although St. Teresa stipulated 2 hours of recreation, Joseph said there was recreation *only* on Sunday(!!!)

4) Although St. Teresa stipulated that the religious work in silence—and in the solitude of their cells—as much as possible—Joseph said that the Brothers worked together in the coffee house from morning to night: roasting beans, packaging coffee—and engaging in light chatter *all day* (!!!)

5) Although St. Teresa stipulated 30-60 minutes of spiritual reading every day, Joseph was told he must sacrifice that time as a “founding member” (!!!)

6) Joseph did not receive any novitiate lessons because the novice master was away, getting his STL. This instruction is fundamental. Another monk should have filled in.

7) Although the Carmelite Rule (for Calced and Discalced) is *very* strict regarding the eating of meat, Joseph said that, until quite recently, the monks had been eating meat “to keep up their strength” for the labors of construction. For almost ten years they had been eating meat (!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!)

(?) How many benefactors are they lying to, by bragging about the prayers that the monks are offering for their intentions??? If this was discovered could it be matter for litigation?

Fr. Daniel Mary seems to be Conducting the Community as a Cult:

- Fr. Prior psychologically pressures the monks to work ALL DAY LONG as “founding members”!
- Joseph learned, *only* after bidding his family and friends farewell to enter “for life,” that the religious horarium was dramatically truncated to employ young monks in the coffee business and construction.
- When Joseph asked for “at least one hour of mental prayer per day?” Fr. Prior expressed displeasure: “No, we do not make exceptions!”
- The novice master (Fr. Simon Mary) was always stressing “obedience, obedience, obedience” as if religious life and holiness was a matter of becoming an unthinking, unpraying robot!
- When Joseph expressed dissatisfaction, Fr. Prior began to bully him, suggesting that Joseph lacked manly stamina, trying to prompt a reaction so that the young man would dig in his heels to “prove his vocation.”
- Fr. Prior justifies all these gross irregularities as part of the “sacrifice” of founding members, but he’s already talking about building a monastery in Canada. The slave-labor work-cycle could continue indefinitely.
- Fr. Prior suggests to his monks that Bishop Biegler is a liberal and unsympathetic to “traditional monks” and the Brothers must hurry to build the monastery and church to demonstrate to the bishop that they have the funds. Otherwise Bishop Biegler might seize the excuse to dismiss them from the diocese.

Dear bishop, entering *cloistered* religious life feels as definitive as a wedding day. Young people bid farewell to friends and family *forever*. To return home is embarrassing, almost shameful. But to relate that the real reason is dysfunction in the community, risks giving scandal. The young person is caught! Moreover, they cannot articulate what was *objectively* wrong because they hadn’t yet learned their obligations as religious in the Constitutions, the Rule or the writings of the saints of the Congregation.

ADDITIONAL PERSONAL TESTIMONY—CARMEL

Dear Bishop Biegler:

This additional testimony bears witness to my firsthand knowledge of Fr. Daniel Mary. He lived as a Brother in Lake Elmo, MN in the men's monastery, on the corner of the 90-acre property belonging to the Discalced Carmelite Nuns monastery, where I resided for 20 years. I began my Carmelite life at the age of 19 in Springfield, Missouri in 1979. In 1985, after the new Code of Canon Law, division grew among the 800 female Carmels in the world as to how to update the Carmelite Constitutions. In 1990 and 1991 Pope St. John Paul II approved *two* sets of Constitutions. This freed me to transfer to a "1990" monastery in Lake Elmo, Minnesota. As explained on my website, after 33 years in Carmel, I heard a locution calling me to initiate a new congregation. My superiors encouraged me to regard this experience as authentic. I received the proper dispensations and am engaged in that effort now, as I reside in Wichita, KS.

In 1983, young Fr. John Burns, disedified by the irregular observance in American and European male Carmelite communities, received official permission to reside as hermit-chaplain for the nuns in Lake Elmo. Gradually, other young men asked to join him and they received permission to form a diocesan community.

When I arrived in June of 1992, Brother Daniel Mary was a postulant, having joined the community Oct. 15, 1991. It was not his first community. He had been in one or two conservative communities previously (Oblates??) but he had not been content. He and Brother Gregory received the Carmelite habit July 15, 1992. The monks were faithful to the Teresian horarium: a full hour of mental prayer morning *and* evening, the full Divine Office recited at their liturgical times during the day. Meals were in the refectory while one monk read from a book in a pulpit. The times of silence and recreation were also observed.

Their ideal was to beautify the Vatican II liturgy by restoring some of the elements (e.g., Marian antiphons) of the medieval Carmelite Rite. Fr. John Mary was a scholar, fluent in several languages. He was accomplished in Gregorian chant, which the brothers learned with enthusiasm. Br. Daniel Mary and Br. Gregory aspired to the priesthood and after 2-3 years as novices they relocated to Holy Apostles seminary. As a professed chapter Sister, I was aware that the nuns were paying the expenses of the seminarian Brothers, with the expectation that these men would be their confessors and chaplains in due time.

During those years I never heard that Br. Daniel Mary *ever* expressed the *slightest* interest in Latin or the Tridentine Rite. He did not have the scholarly, quiet temperament of Fr. John Mary. He returned from the seminary in the summer of 1997 to pronounce final vows and to be ordained to diaconate. His companion, Br. Gregory, did not persevere, thus Br. Daniel Mary assumed the starring role as "loyal son of Carmel." He professed his final vows May 30, 1998.

From 1997, I was assigned as portress and became closer to the monks and their affairs. The prioress allowed me to be typesetter for their liturgical booklets and iconographic stationery. Then I was appointed the monks' habit vestier. After ordination, Fr. Daniel Mary didn't want to do any *ordinary* work, but only *priestly* work: preaching, confessions and retreats. This was contrary to his monastic vocation. Fr. John Mary, the Prior, was of a mild temperament but he kept making it clear to Fr. Daniel Mary that he would not be permitted to accept frequent invitations to give retreats at other monasteries because he was needed at home.

At this time we had a plethora of female vocations. Fr. Daniel Mary mesmerized the young sisters with lengthy, loud, emotional weekday homilies, pious but shallow. Most of the young Sisters chose him for confessor. He volunteered to give various series of conferences. Since they were optional, I did not attend because I found the content not worth my time.

Tension broke out rather frequently because of Fr. Daniel Mary's "pendulum swings." For example, he would be furious because the monks did not interact more often with visitors. A few months later he would be angry because he wanted more solitude. He began to put pressure on his cousin back in Wyoming. Molly had

turned 18 and Fr. Daniel Mary *decided* that she had a vocation. The thought had not entered her mind, but he kept pushing. Eventually she applied at our Carmel. I was unimpressed and I voted against her entrance. But she gained enough votes, persevered through novitiate and made temporary vows. All that time “Sister Grace” spoke in a barely audible voice and never expressed an opinion on anything. Soon after her vows she had an emotional breakdown and received an emergency dispensation to go home. It was bizarre, but then all of Fr. Daniel Mary’s relatives, whom I met at the door, were “characters.”

The Brothers at Lake Elmo desired to be received into the Carmelite Order. The Discalced Fathers wanted them to be engaged in an external apostolate. The Calced Fathers, on the contrary, welcomed communities dedicated to prayer. Father Daniel Mary was *loudly* in favor of joining the Calced. The Calced Father General was scheduled to be in the United States in September 2003 and would receive their vows. Meanwhile Fr. Daniel Mary’s dad kept begging him to come back to Wyoming because “the priests were too liberal.” Fr. Daniel Mary wanted to split the Minnesota community and make a foundation in Wyoming, but the community was very small, about 8 men, including 2 or 3 novices and one elderly priest. Fr. Daniel Mary became more and more aggressive about it. The professed members voted against the split. They’d be willing *in a few years*, after they had more professed members. But Fr. Daniel Mary wanted to go home to his family *immediately*. He saw an opening of escape because the day that the community would profess solemn vows under the Father General, their diocesan status would dissolve, hence Fr. Daniel Mary could walk away without needing a dispensation. He *suddenly* expressed a desire to be a Discalced Carmelite, *criticizing* the monks for joining the Calced (!) The Sisters were shocked by the news, but I had been long aware of his ongoing belligerence. I was glad to see him go.

The next thing we heard was that he was sweet-talking Bishop Ricken who gave him permission to start a community. Fr. Daniel Mary pressured the novices at Lake Elmo to come to Wyoming. Br. Michael Mary joined him, but Br. Gabriel refused. The previous winter the monks had encouraged Br. Joseph-Marie to return home because he was emotionally *unstable*. Fr. Daniel Mary began contacting “rejected” vocations to establish a psychological bond with young men who began to cling to him. He began to hound Molly to start a convent to do the baking, laundry and sewing for his community of monks. Instead she married one of his ex-postulants.

Bishop Ricken ran into a canonical difficulty because a new diocesan congregation must demonstrate a new and distinct charism for the church. Fr. Daniel Mary had only expressed a desire to be an “authentic Teresian” Discalced Carmelite. Noticing that Latin Mass families generated vocations, Fr. Daniel Mary *suddenly* declared that his charism is to be a *Tridentine* Carmel, despite his ignorance of Latin(!) He toured the country to appear on shows, boasting that his community was the *only authentic* male Discalced Carmel. Soon Bishop Ricken was embarrassed by an angry phone-call from the Discalced Father General in Rome. Next, Fr. Daniel Mary decided he could divert vocations from Lake Elmo by slandering the Minnesota Brothers. Malicious gossip reached the Archbishop of Minneapolis who called in Fr. John Mary to demand an accounting. Fr. John Mary was able to prove the falsehood of every accusation. This was the last straw for Bishop Ricken. His friendship toward the monks cooled. He forbade Fr. Daniel Mary to solicit donations in his diocese. That was the catalyst for the coffee business and “Mystic Monk” commercials. After the slander incident, the nuns in Lake Elmo banned the very name of Fr. Daniel Mary from conversation. My only knowledge thereafter was from the glossy brochures which my mother received. The brochure pictures of the monastery were often confusing. Which portions were existing structures? Which portions were the architect’s projection? The brochures never made it clear how many monks lived there, suggesting that membership was in continual flux.

Bishop, I wanted to inform you last May, *immediately* after Joseph’s experience, to encourage you to investigate and *correct* the irregularities in the community with a formal visitation. But Joseph was hesitant because Fr. Daniel Mary did not exert any cult-like pressure, even paying his plane fare to go home. But Joseph went on to explore other communities and wants to enter a Carmel in Pennsylvania. They want to know why Joseph didn’t persevere in the Carmel in Wyoming. So now I can finally write this letter to you—and send a copy to these monks in Pennsylvania whom Joseph admires and aspires to join. If you would like a copy of St. Teresa’s 20 page manual of making a Visitation, just send me a text or email. I’ll be praying for you to the Holy Spirit!