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Houses are blessed and Carmelites' lives are explored at monastery near Hague

By Terri Lang

On Sun., Feb. 4, 2018, a house blessing/house warming event was held at the Carmel of the Holy Face of Jesus Monastery near Hague. The event celebrated the recent donation of two new modular buildings and the expansion of the monastery.

Leland Vetter, the President of the Monastery's Advisory Board, gave presentations about the Carmelite Nuns and their mission in the Bismarck Diocese. He provided some good historic facts, and talked about their way of life, and he discussed the future of the monastery.

"Today, I am here to give you a great opportunity to learn more about the Carmelite contemplative vocation," Vetter said.

His intent was to answer questions that he often hears regarding the Carmelites — Who are they? What do they do? Why are they here?

"This is the only Carmelite Monastery in the entire world dedicated solely to the Holy Face of Jesus," he said.

Vetter explained the meaning of a Carmelite (coming from the name of Mount Carmel) and backed it with some history from 900 B.C. He explained that Carmel is another name for Carmelites. Carmel also represented a vineyard, God's vineyard.

"Today we refer to it as a monastery of monks or a community of Nuns," Vetter said.

He brought up some facts about the present Carmelites in Hague. There are four in this monastery at the present time. He explained the Sisters who are located in other parts of our state, and the U.S. They help teach, help the poor and do other very important work.

"We have disclaled Carmelites who are cloistered here," Vetter said. "They live a hidden life and they do very important work."

Vetter pointed out they are trying to replicate, in this monastery, the way the Virgin Mary lived.

"They are trying to replicate their Mother, doing simple, daily duties and enjoying Jesus," he added.

The Carmelites here cannot leave their enclosure unless they get permission from the Pope, which goes through the Bismarck Diocese bishop. There are certain reasons that they may be given permission to do so.

"These Sisters here are dedicated to their contemplative life," Vetter said. "They are doing the most important work. These Sisters are living with Jesus now — in the moment."

Vetter showed some photos of how the Sisters live and what they do. The pictures were of them cooking and sewing.

"The most important thing they make is a garment called the scapular," he said.



Leland Vetter, the President of the Monastery's Advisory Board, gave several presentations throughout the day about the Carmelite Nuns and their mission in the Bismarck Diocese. He also spoke about the future of the monastery near Hague.



Father Leonard Eckroth blesses the two modular buildings at the house blessing/warming ceremony. Father Leonard is the chaplain for the Monastery Chapel of the Carmel of the Holy Face of Jesus. Allen Eberle was the altar server.



Two mobile homes donated to the monastery were positioned on site on Nov. 30, 2017. One will be used for future novices, the first will be arriving in July. The other mobile home will be for the families of the Sisters when they come to visit or for prospective candidates while they are discerning.



A Carmelite Sister is making the bed with the new sheets and quilts they received from others who continue to show their support for their ministry.



Following the celebration of the house warming, guests joined the Carmelite Sisters in praying the Litany and other prayers in honor of the Holy Face of Jesus.



Each of the mobile homes has a kitchen, dining room, restroom, laundry area and three bedrooms.



Leland Vetter discussed the many things the cloistered Carmelites do, beyond their main ministry of prayer. They do lots of cooking and baking, and sewing garments. Pictured are the scapulars they make at the monastery.



Leland Vetter spoke of a famous Carmelite, St. Therese of Lisieux (The Little Flower). Her statue arrived in 1934 and is at the high altar at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Hague. Saint Therese's mother died when Therese was only four years old. As a result, her father and sisters babied young Therese. She had a spirit that wanted everything.

by the outcome.

"The Carmelites pray for everyone. They pray for everyone's souls. They know that God will take care of them," he said.

Novices come to this monastery to learn about the Carmelites' lifestyle.

"Our Carmelites here help teach them to be Nuns," Vetter added.

Vetter closed in discussing the modular buildings that were brought in, and the future of the monastery.

The modular buildings will provide much needed living space at the monastery and will be used until the funds necessary to construct the permanent monastery can be raised.

The east building will enable the Sisters to begin receiving new candidates to their monastery this summer. The west building will be

used mainly for the families of the Carmelite Sisters when they come to visit and for prospective aspirants who are discerning their vocation to the religious life.

Meanwhile, the Sisters will continue with plans for the construction of a permanent monastery building and the chapel will now be the first phase of the building project.

Mother Mary Baptist, the prioress of the monastery, is very grateful to Leland for sharing his knowledge of the Carmelite history and the

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future of the monastery.

“Leland has been a tremendous help with his talks he has been doing to educate others on the contemplative life,” Mother Mary Baptist said.

There are four Sisters at the monastery and their first postulant will be arriving in July. Mother Mary Baptist and Sister Mary Joseph said this lifestyle, the Carmelite way of life, is still so new to this area and so they understand why some people question their purpose, their ministry.

“It will take time to understand,” Sister Mary Joseph said. “If they do not understand, they will be baffled with us.”

The Catholic Church, the Bismarck Diocese, the Carmelites, and people like Leland Vetter try to help educate others on who the Carmelites are and what they do.

The Carmelites try to live what are still the customs and traditions of religious life as it was begun in the East. In the east, the principal thing of religious life was to pray.

“We try to follow those traditions and live the contemplative life as it was designed,” Sister Mary Joseph said. “We set everything else aside and devote our whole selves to prayer.”

They hear that some people feel they do not do anything. While they may not do anything externally, such as nursing or teaching, they do those things, just not out in the public.

Carmelites who are cloistered have infirmaries where they take care of the ill Sisters. They cook for the whole community of Sisters. They feed the hungry.

“We help teach and instruct each other and help each other

to grow in our spiritual lives,” Mother Mary Baptist said.

Sister Mary Joseph said they have no problem in filling the time they have allotted for work.

“Our cook laughs at some of the remarks that they do not work! We make everything from scratch,” Sister Mary Joseph said.

They also sew their own clothes and do lots of mending.

“It’s kind of like being a stay-at-home mom. She has plenty to do even though she does not have a job she goes out to,” she added.

Their ministry is also with helping other people. They receive many prayer requests — people who call or write to them. They respond to their many donors and benefactors.

“That takes quite a bit of our time also. But that is good as it gives others an opportunity to pray with us,” Mother Mary Baptist said.

They do lots of correspondence communicating with others from all over the world, through hand-written letters and snail mail.

“People contact us who just find out about our monastery and want to help us,” Mother Mary Baptist said. “Some ask for our prayers and sacramentals.”

She said their financial support continues to grow.

“It is just amazing what has happened in the past four years. People have really come together to help us,” she added.

The Carmelites said their support system is growing and they appreciate the help they get from the community.

“People help us a lot such as bringing us groceries and moving snow for us,” Sister Mary Joseph said.

They are excited about the progress at the monastery,

most recently, the mobile homes. They are also continuing work on the expansion project and are currently working with the architects on the chapel.

“At first, the plans were to start with the first wing where the sisters would be living,” Mother Mary Baptist said. “But we were then encouraged to start with the chapel.”

That will allow them to use the home they are presently living in awhile longer, and using the mobile homes to expand more until they build.

“The trailers have really been a blessing to us to expand, and the novices and novice mistress will be able to live in them,” she said.

Mother Mary Baptist asks you to keep this project in your prayers.

If you wish to donate, know that all donations are tax deductible and can be sent to the Carmel of the Holy Face of Jesus, 2051 91st Street SE, Hague, ND 58542. Questions can be directed to (701) 336-7907. Online donations can also be made at their website, www.CarmeloftheHolyFace.com.

The Monastery Chapel of the Carmel of the Holy Face of Jesus is open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Holy Mass is at 7:30 a.m. daily. Turn hours are from 8:30 a.m. (after Holy Mass) until 7 p.m. The turn Sister is not available during prayer times of 11 to 11:15 a.m. and 2 to 2:30 p.m. (schedule may sometimes vary).

If you would like to submit your prayer intentions, please write to the Nuns at the same address. For more information about devotion to the Holy Face and the apostolate of Carmel, see www.CarmeloftheHolyFace.com.