

+ Jesus

July 16th, 2021

Solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

Dear Mother Stella Marie,

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Recently, a friend sent me a copy of an “Update from Elysburg – June 19th, 2021” which gives an explanation of the move from Elysburg and of the recent departure of the Nuns from the Philadelphia Carmel on April 9th of this year.

In the section of the update concerning this departure, you wrote: *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.*

You wrote: *As attempts were being made to not only interfere with but to obstruct their way of life,* You do not specify where these “attempts” came from, but the way your sentence is framed, it implies that the Association to which the Philadelphia Carmel belonged was the source of such attempts. As a Daughter of O.H.M St. Teresa, I am sure that you love the truth too much to endanger the reputation of anyone, let alone a religious Association recognized by the Holy See. From your own study of *Cor orans* you are certainly aware that no Federation or Association has any authority either to “interfere” or “obstruct” the way of life of an autonomous Monastery.

This was made explicit in Archbishop Carballo’s letter of Nov. 1st, 2020 in which he writes: “The President is never a major superior (cf. CO, 110,)” (Letter Nov. 1st, 2020 – p.9). CO, 110 says: *The President of the Federation, elected by the Federal Assembly in accordance*

with the Statutes of the Federation for a period of six years, is not a Major Superior and, in the exercise of her service, acts on the strength of what the present Instruction attributes to her[81] in accordance with the universal and proper law.

On Dec. 19th, 2020, I shared this letter from Archbishop Carballo with all of the 1990 Carmels in this country. I sent it by email to those Carmels whose email addresses I had, which included the Philadelphia Carmel, and I sent it by regular mail to the other Carmels, which included Valparaiso, Elysburg and Fairfield. Since I know that the post office is often overwhelmed, you may not have received your copy of the letter. For this reason, I am sending it to you again along with this letter.

It is clear, both from *Cor orans* and Archbishop Carballo's letter, that the Association to which the Philadelphia Carmel belongs has **no authority** to "interfere" or "obstruct" the way of life of the Nuns at the Philadelphia Carmel. I am aware that there are many erroneous interpretations of *Cor orans*, and the insinuation expressed in your Update indicates that you may well have fallen prey to some such erroneous interpretation. To imply that the Association and/or its President interfered or obstructed the way of life of the Nuns is a serious allegation which directly touches and thereby damages the reputation of both the Association and its President/Coordinator. Such actions as you imply constitute a serious abuse of authority and are valid cause for the removal from office of the President/Coordinator and for an investigation of the Association by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. I am prepared to contact the Congregation for such an investigation if you consider that to be the best way to establish the truth about this matter. We ought to be very mindful of what we read in The Catechism of the Catholic Church: *Respect for the reputation of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury. He becomes guilty...of calumny who, by remarks contrary to the truth, harms the reputation of others and gives occasion for false judgments concerning them.* (CCC #2477)

I am aware that, as the Prioress of an autonomous Monastery, you may not have been directly involved in the affairs of the Philadelphia Carmel and that your statements may be flowing from what you yourself were told. This is all the more reason for you to establish the truth. For the sake of both justice and truth, you are duty bound either to produce proof of the accusations implied in your Update, which seriously harm the reputation of the Association, or publicly retract them in order to provide reparation, since your letter has been published openly in the public forum. To quote again the Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Every offense committed against justice and truth entails the duty of reparation, even if its author has been forgiven...This duty of reparation also concerns offenses against another's reputation. This reparation, moral and sometimes material, must be evaluated in terms of the extent of the damage inflicted. It obliges in conscience.* (CCC #2487)

As I wrote above, I believe that you are a true Daughter of Our Holy Mother, and that, like her, you value the truth too much to let any falsehoods be published in your name, for that also tarnishes your own reputation. Therefore, I look forward to your taking the necessary action to establish the truth in this matter beyond any doubt.

I have been informed that your Update has been published on several websites. I will take the necessary steps to see that all crucial information will be shared with these sites.

I am sending the hard copy of this letter, along with Archbishop Carballo's letter, by regular mail.

I wish you and your beloved Community, as well as the Communities of Valparaiso and Elysburg, a very blessed and grace-filled Solemnity of Our Mother and Queen,

With prayers for each and all of you,

Sr. Gabriela of the Incarnation, O.C.D.

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Councilor of the Saint Joseph's Association