



Hidden with Christ

The Call to Enclosure

Dedicated Service to Family, Country and God

BY SR. MARIE OF THE INCARNATION, O.C.D.

I was born to Rowland and Clemmie Mintzm Watson in Alabama on October 17, 1919, the third of eight children. When I was 2, my grandfather said I “would be a great woman.” I hope to be great in humility, and to be a saint. When I was 4 years old the one-room schoolteacher wanted my mother to let me go to school but she waited until I was 6.

Just before the Depression, my father sold our 65-acre farm to buy an 83-acre one. We had borrowed \$3,000 to buy a larger farm but could not pay the debt with the low prices of cotton and corn, so we lost our farm and became “tenant” farmers. When I was in the Army Nursing Corps I sent most of my salary home to help buy another farm.

All of the family worked hard, especially during the summer and fall. After the crops were “laid by” we would reciprocate week-long visits with cousins. My chores were cleaning house, milking the cows, doing garden and fieldwork, especially hoeing cotton and corn—just helping wherever I could.

Mama and Daddy read us stories when we were small. One was about a brownie who went about doing good. So, I would make the beds, then hide. Mama would come in and say, “Oh, a brownie has been here.” The family was Baptist and when my sister Mary and I went up and sat on the bench in our church

in front of all to proclaim our faith, I experienced a strong realization of the presence of God, of being taken over, of being accepted. We were baptized together in 1936.

When my youngest brother was born, I stayed home one year of school to help Mama. This was in the eleventh grade, so I was 18 when I graduated from high school. My grades in school were always A's until at Catholic University I received a C in French. I would stay up all night to work on projects or lessons.

After graduating from high school, I entered St. Vincent's Nursing School in Birmingham, Alabama. It was 1939. I graduated in 1942 as an R.N. I had never seen a religious sister or a Catholic building before. I was very much impressed by everything. The students would attend the daily 5:00 A.M. Mass and after some time I began to join them. I realized there was a special Presence in the chapel. I also went to the Stations of the Cross when they had them during Lent and I remember attending the “Last Words of Jesus” preached by a Passionist priest.

Christmas was special there. I think all the students went to Midnight Mass. The last Christmas that I was there I received the grace to ask for instructions in the Catholic faith. Some time passed and no instructions. I asked again. Sister Mary Louise arranged for other students who wanted



more knowledge of their Faith to go with me for instructions once a week at the Church of St. Paul's.

During May we always had a procession with a statue of Our Blessed Mother. We would wear our white uniforms and grayish-blue capes. It was through these different experiences that I received the grace of Faith—the whole atmosphere, the sisters... I was completely open to all. I had no struggles over anything. The Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist drew me more than anything else, and continues to draw me.

I was received into the Catholic Church and baptized conditionally on May 6, 1942. I went to Confession and the next day I received my First Holy Communion at the graduation Mass. The evening before, I was awarded a little medal for outstanding service as a nurse. It had an inscription in Latin about labor and prayer. It was a complete

surprise to me. I gave the medal to Mama.

There was talk about the need of the Army Nursing Corps to recruit nurses, so I joined. In January of 1943 I was stationed at Fort McClellan very near our home. I stayed there for almost a year; then volunteered for overseas duty. Around the first of January of 1944 we sailed on a French ship with a convoy by way of the North Sea. As needed, we were sent to several hospitals. “D-Day” was the beginning of real presence. Some of us bought Christmas gifts for each of our patients and I remember buying flowers for the wards in the Spring.

After the war in Europe was over, my friends and I volunteered for service in the Pacific. The war ended while we were on our way. We landed in Okinawa, Japan, and were there until we sailed back to the States. I took the train to New Orleans and then to Anniston, Alabama. I walked to our “new farm” and I saw Mama working outside, probably feeding the chickens, and ran up to embrace her.

I visited St. Vincent’s Hospital soon after getting home and told them I was planning to go to school. The sisters suggested that I go to Catholic University in Washington, D.C. They were opening a nursing school program. After Christmas I started school there. This was in 1946. I was there until the end of the Spring semester in 1948.

In the Spring of 1948 several friends were talking about Carmel. I had been going to Mass at the Carmelite friars’ monastery. I was also receiving spiritual direction from a Carmelite priest. He offered to teach me catechism, so I went once a week for instruction.



Fr. John of the Cross, when speaking with a group of us who were with a woman who was entering Carmel, turned to me and said: “What about you?” Truthfully, I had been thinking about the Medical Missionaries and had visited their little, poor house near the University. There I met Mother Dengel, their foundress.

So, “what about me?” I was given some books on Carmel by another nurse who was entering the Santa Fe monastery. It seemed as if St. Therese of Lisieux and Our Lady were both drawing me to Carmel. So I wrote to the monastery in New Orleans and they suggested I write to Lafayette. Mother Theresa Margaret, then novice mistress, answered and I treasured her letter but it was left in my purse when I gave up all belongings the day I entered and put on the brown cape dress.

On the day I was leaving home to enter Carmel, I went to Mass. I was troubled and wondering if I should not go but stay at home to help build



a better house on our farm. Mama did not want me to go—she was not yet Catholic. I talked to the local pastor after Mass. He asked me how many brothers and sisters I had. So I told him five brothers and one sister. He then told me to go on.

One of the books given me by the nurse who entered the Santa Fe monastery was a history of Carmel as well as a life of Holy Mother (St. Teresa of Jesus). I had read obedience was the way to act in troubled times or something like that. So I obeyed and was at peace.

My sister Lindsey drove our car to the train station in Anniston. Coming into New Orleans, the train crawled. A hurricane had just passed through New Orleans. Telephone lines were down and I could not call Lafayette so I went to the bus station and got a bus and then a taxi to the monastery. I arrived at recreation time, September 4, 1948.☪

Sr. Marie of the Incarnation lived for nearly sixty years in Carmel. During her time in the monastery she worked in the kitchen as the “Queen of Cooks.” Sister died on March 25, 2008, and as a military veteran was buried with military honors, including a gun salute and Taps.

To read Sister Marie’s entire biography or for more information on the Monastery of Mary, Mother of Grace, visit: LafayetteCarmelites.org