

CARMELITE MONKS' LIFE OF PRAYER



Photo by Dan Cepeda
A rosary hangs from Father Daniel Mary's belt.



Photo by Dan Cepeda
Brother Joseph Marie runs a vintage Cat tractor, which is loaned to the monastery by area farmers. Brother Joseph Marie constantly works on the equipment to keep it running.



Photos by Dan Cepeda
Above left: The monks are in the process of building new hermitages for them and for visitors to eventually use. Above: Monks walk to the new building that houses their coffee roasting operations. The monks have begun selling the fresh coffee at select shops and over the internet.

A DAY IN *from page 1*

done, prayers to be said and souls to be saved.

The young monks hurry to wash the sleep from their eyes and to arrange the ribbons in their prayer books, just in time for the prior's knock as his venerable voice cuts through the early morning silence, "We shall go into the house of the Lord." As this sweet psalm chimes forth from each mouth, the brown robed monks slowly process down the stairs and into the chapel "to praise the name of the Lord." Each morning begins in this way, as it is written "Seven times a day I have given praise to thee." Yes indeed, the monks' eyes are still tired, but their hearts and minds are filled with love and peace as the Divine Office echoes back and forth, from one side of the chapel to the other in the ancient monastic tradition. In this way Matins and Lauds are prayed and God is praised by His Carmelite Monks who come to Him with the prayers and intentions of His Church. With 6 a.m. near, the Angelus bell breaks forth in its joyful tone and words of the Angel Gabriel are spoken, the Virgin Mary honored, and the Incarnation of God adored.

With the public prayer of the Church said, the monks' voices rest for one hour as they contemplate the Lord in silence and love. Each monk listens in the stillness of His heart to the gentle voice of God who is so very near, and places at God's feet the world, the Church and the many intentions of the monastery's friends and family. How delightful and profound is the silence during the morning hour of mental prayer as the monk gazes intently upon His God, hidden in the tabernacle and as God gazes back at His servant! This is the work of the monk, to be alone with the Alone and to elevate all men to our Loving and Merciful God.

As the sun rises on the monastery in Clark, the Divine Office continues with Prime and Terce. His Church once more prays the psalms prayed by Christ, as the monk's mind and heart turn ever more to the Lord. The chant of the monks flows forth in hymns, psalms and readings as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass draws nearer.

Arising from prayer, the monks prepare with joy for the coming of the Lord upon the Altar and for the Sacrifice of Calvary to be made present in their midst. There is no greater delight for the monk than to hear Holy Mass and to receive the

Lord within. Father Prior vested as a soldier set for battle ascends to the Altar to offer the Sacrifice of Sacrifice in expiation for sin and in burning love of God. The eyes of the monks' glisten and their voices resound as they too share in Christ's Crucifixion and in His love. You see, each monk is like another Christ; he sacrifices his life for souls in an unbloody, but nonetheless real way. The Carmelite must become all the more like Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The monk must come close and learn from the Lord and Master.

With the Blessed Sacrament within them, and after due thanksgiving has been given to our God, the monks process forth to the work of the day chanting in humble thanksgiving, "Let all the people give praise to thee." Although the busy day of the young monastery must begin, the praise of God shall not be deterred for in every act and word, God must be praised who has blessed us. Looking to the prior to render his obedience, each monk's work is assigned. Some of the Brothers must clean the monastery, another must tend to the phone and the gate, yet another has letters to write, and a few

others are off to the coffee workshop to roast the day's batches of beans.

In the coffee workshop the roaster is started, the bags of green beans opened and roasted to pure perfection. Back at the monastery, the phone begins to ring and the bell at the gate beckons. One woman has a prayer intention that the Lord bless her with health and for a dying friend. A neighbor comes to the gate with fresh rhubarb, asparagus and eggs. A priest writes asking for the monks' prayers for his confirmation class and a newly married couple. And so the morning passes, as the monks labor for their keep. Each monk has his role to support the monastery's growth and its future in Wyoming, but none of the work can stir the monk's innermost peace and joy where God dwells. Here the monk confides the little struggles and challenges, the intentions of the world, and the good of the Diocese of Cheyenne. The monk turns in to renew his love and his zeal for the Lord who has called him to be occupied in praising Him.

The morning passes as sweat drops down the monk's brow, but this too is passing as the bell tolls anew at twenty till noon. The work must be punc-

tuated by prayer in that rich balance of the monastic life. The monk prepares with haste to process to the chapel and to behold again the dwelling place of God. There the psalms are once again taken up and the morning's cares and labors brought to Christ. After the heavenly singing has stopped, the Angelus is rung and the monks' process off to the refectory to take their noon meal.

The food is blessed, each monk takes his spot and the reader begins in calm tone, "In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen." The Gospels are read and then the wisdom of the saints as each monk begins to eat his portion, mind and heart ever fixed on the Lord. As the mind is preoccupied with holy thoughts, the body too is nourished by the simple food put before each monk. The reading is ended by the prior's knock and the community chants its thanksgiving and returns to the chapel to pray the Divine Office of None. There is much to give thanks for and much to pray for as God has provided. "Praise is truly fitting."

When prayer is done, the monks wash the dishes. This chore is accomplished in silence, but with great love and peace as each dish is washed and dried for supper. The crucifix hanging on the kitchen wall and the icon of Mary above the sink are reminders; the monks' labor is love in the presence of God and His Virgin Mother.

The silence and prayer are interrupted for one hour each day, so that the monks may find rest and laughter in the company of the community. The monks joke and tell stories; they speak of the saints and of nature and sometimes even play a little football. Laughter is not found wanting, but peace and fraternal charity abound as the seven young monks marvel and praise God who brought them together in a little cloistered monastery in Wyoming. Perhaps even a letter from a mother or a picture of a Brother's family is shared. Carmel is a family, the family of Mary.

The 3 o'clock hour at last arrives and the monks stop everything; this is the hour when Christ died for love of us poor sinners. The monks kneel and turn to the Mother of Mercy, the Virgin Mary invoking her maternal tenderness on the monastery, Wyoming and the world as her glorious titles are proclaimed and Her