Drinking from our own well

Joy in Contemplative Community
1. I Find Joy in Living in Communion with Jesus.

My living in allegiance to Jesus Christ means, for me, living in communion with him.

Listening to the Scriptures
But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, (Phil. 3, 8-9)

Listening to the Carmelite Tradition.
Whenever we think of Christ we should recall the love that led him to bestow on us so many graces and favours, and also the great love God showed in giving us in Christ a pledge of his love; for love calls for love in return. Let us strive to keep this always before our eyes and to rouse ourselves to love him. For if at some time the Lord should grant us the grace of impressing his love on our hearts, all will become easy for us and we shall accomplish great things quickly and without effort. (Saint Teresa, Life 22, 14)

We, as Carmelites, intend to “live in allegiance to Jesus Christ, and serve Him zealously with a pure heart and a good conscience”. Christ is present to all of us in the liturgy of the hours, and His presence reaches its peak in the daily celebration in community of the Eucharist. He is present throughout the day, above all, in the continuous contact and actualization of the word of God; in the community life of the brethren which reaches culminating points in the communion of goods and community dialogue; in the mystery of being one with the will of the heavenly Father and in the whole direction of our life, because we live for Him, work for Him and await, full of hope, His coming. (Fifth Council of Provinces 1979, in Towards a Prophetic Brotherhood).

Listening to the Church Tradition.
Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction (Dens Caritas Est, 1; Evangelii Gaudium, 7).
Sometimes we lose our enthusiasm for mission because we forget that the Gospel responds to our deepest needs, since we were created for what the Gospel offers us: friendship with Jesus and love of our brothers and sisters… It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelization unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, not the same thing to walk with him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear his word as not to know it, and not the same thing to contemplate him, to worship him, to find our peace in him, as not to…. A person who is not convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love, will convince nobody. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 265-266).

**For pondering:**
How do I experience the joy of knowing and following Jesus? How do I communicate this joy to others?

**Psalmody (from psalm 1)**
Happy are those
  who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or take the path that sinners tread,
  or sit in the seat of scoffers;
but their delight is in the law of the Lord,
  and on his law they meditate day and night.

**A prayer.**
O living flame of love, awaken in me an intense desire to know Jesus and to dedicate myself to Him. Without him, I can do nothing and without Him, I am nothing. Enkindle within me the desire to live not for myself but for Him so that I might pour out my life in generous service for those whom He loves. Amen.

**Doxology:**
Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph 6:23-24).
2. I FIND JOY IN THE DEPTHS OF SHEER SILENCE.

Silence in the heart, silence in prayer, silence where we live, silence in a noisy world...

Listening to the Scriptures
The building of the Temple was done with quarry-dressed stone; no sound of hammer or pick or any iron tool was to be heard in the Temple while it was being built. (1 Kings 6: 7)

He said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:11-13)

Listening to the Carmelite tradition:
The Rule invites us to remain in solitude in our cells, which “give warmth to the children of grace as to the fruit of their own wombs, nourishing them, embracing them and bringing them to the fullness of perfection, making them worthy of intimacy with God.” The cell is not merely an external structure; we must build it at the heart of our inner selves; therein dwells God, who invites us to enter and seek the One who is. (RIVC, 35)

The decision for redemption was conceived in the eternal silence of the inner divine life. The power of the Holy Spirit came over the Virgin praying alone in the hidden, silent room in Nazareth and brought about the incarnation of the Saviour. Congregated around the silently praying Virgin, the emerging Church awaited the promised new outpouring of the Spirit that was to quicken it into inner clarity and fruitful outer effectiveness. [...] The Virgin, who kept every word from God in her heart, in the model for such attentive souls in whom Jesus’ high priestly prayer comes to life again and again. (Edith Stein, The Hidden life, pp. 11-13)
Listening to the Church Tradition.
In the desert, we rediscover the value of what is essential for living; thus in today’s world there are innumerable signs, often expressed implicitly or negatively, of the thirst for God, for the ultimate meaning of life. And in the desert people of faith are needed who, by the example of their own lives, point out the way to the Promised Land and keep hope alive”. In these situations, we are called to be living sources of water from which others can drink. At times, this becomes a heavy cross, but it was from the cross, from his pierced side, that our Lord gave himself to us as a source of living water. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of hope! (Evangelii Gaudium, 86)

For pondering:
What does the silence means to me? How has silence been fruitful in my life?

Psalmody (from psalm 37)
Trust in the Lord, and do good;
so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.
Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him, and he will act.
Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him…

A prayer.
God our Father, teach us how to cultivate a deeper silence, prompt our hearts to seek constantly your face. Enlighten us by the contemplation of your beloved Son, may we be transformed by the vision of his glory. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Doxology:
“(May) Christ dwell in your hearts through faith that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:17-19)
3. I find joy in the beauty of Carmel.

I thought about beauty and I found it in Carmel … and there was joy!

Listening to the Scriptures
The desert will bloom with flowers. It will be very glad and shout for joy. The glorious beauty of Lebanon will be given to it. It will be as beautiful as the rich lands of Carmel and Sharon. Everyone will see the glory of the Lord. They will see the beauty of our God. (Isaiah 35:2)

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” (Isaiah 52:7).

Listening to the Carmelite tradition

Let us go forth to behold ourselves in your beauty,

This means: Let us so act that by means of this loving activity we may attain to the vision of ourselves in your beauty in eternal life. That is: That I be so transformed in your beauty that we may be alike in beauty, and both behold ourselves in your beauty, possessing then your very beauty; this, in such a way that each looking at the other may see in the other their own beauty, since both are your beauty alone, I being absorbed in your beauty; hence, I shall see you in your beauty, and you will see me in your beauty, and I shall see myself in you in your beauty, and you will see yourself in me in your beauty; that I may resemble you in your beauty, and you resemble me in your beauty, and my beauty be your beauty and your beauty my beauty; wherefore I shall be you in your beauty, and you will be in your beauty, because your very beauty will be my beauty; and thus we shall behold each other in your beauty. (John of the Cross - Spiritual Canticle, 36,5)

Listening to the Church Tradition.
Every form of catechesis would do well to attend to the “way of beauty” (via pulchritudinis). Proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties. Every expression of true beauty can thus be
acknowledged as a path leading to an encounter with the Lord Jesus. This has nothing to do with fostering an aesthetic relativism which would downplay the inseparable bond between truth, goodness and beauty, but rather a renewed esteem for beauty as a means of touching the human heart and enabling the truth and goodness of the Risen Christ to radiate within it. If, as Saint Augustine says, we love only that which is beautiful, the incarnate Son, as the revelation of infinite beauty, is supremely lovable and draws us to himself with bonds of love. So a formation in the via pulchritudinis ought to be part of our effort to pass on the faith. (Evangelii Gaudium, 167)

For pondering
Go back to an experience of beauty that gave you a grasp of eternal beauty and share this with each other.

Psalmody (from psalms 27:50 and 96)
One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. Psalm 27: 4
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth. Psalm 50: 2
Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Psalm 96, 6.

Prayer
Heavenly Father, thank you for revealing your presence through the beauty of your creation and the wisdom of your Word. We pray that your gentle presence in our lives, through unceasing prayer and service of others, may reveal to all the beauty of your love. Amen.

Doxology
“… to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3: 20-21)
4. I FIND JOY IN BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY OF FAITH

Walking with others in unfailing love enables me to rejoice in my faith.

Listening to the Scriptures
“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help” (Eccl 4:9-10)

“And day by day, with one heart, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts … (Acts 2: 46-47)

Listening to the Carmelite Tradition.
So, Sisters, strive as much as you can, without offense to God, to be affable and understanding in such a way that everyone you talk to will love your conversation and desire your manner of living and acting, and not be frightened and intimidated by virtue. (S. Teresa of Jesus, Way 41, 7)

Love for communal life and active and creative participation in common prayer, in meetings, in meals and in recreational activities help to increase sensitivity with regard to the community. Gradually, members begin to identify with the community; they become capable of owning decisions which are made jointly, even when, initially, they did not fully agree with them. It is important to recognize and develop personal gifts, talents and aptitudes; at the same time, however, we must train candidates to assume apostolic, missionary and professional commitments for and on behalf of their communities. In the framework of community, we learn to share in its mission and in its service. The work of each individual expresses and makes concrete the mission of the entire community as we are sent by the community to work and act in its name and on its behalf. (RIVC, 43).

Listening to the Tradition of Church
There indeed we find true healing, since the way to relate to others which truly heals instead of debilitating us, is a mystical fraternity, a contemplative fraternity. It is a fraternal love capable of seeing the sacred grandeur of our
neighbour, of finding God in every human being, of tolerating the nuisances of life in common by clinging to the love of God, of opening the heart to divine love and seeking the happiness of others just as their heavenly Father does. Here and now, especially where we are a “little flock” (Lk 12:32), the Lord’s disciples are called to live as a community which is the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Mt 5:13-16). We are called to bear witness to a constantly new way of living together in fidelity to the Gospel. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of community! (Evangelii Gaudium, 92)

For pondering
What do I find joyful about community life? What impact might this joy have outside of my community?

Psalmody (from psalm 133)
Behold, how good, how delightful it is to live as brothers all together! It is like a fine oil on the head, running down the beard, running down Aaron’s beard, onto the collar of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon falling on the heights of Zion; for there the Lord bestows his blessing, everlasting life.

Prayer
Lord, help us learn to love you and to love one another in the community where you have put us. Help us to find true joy in fraternal gathering in imitation of the early Church. Don’t let us grow weary of community life.

Doxology
May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (1 Th. 3:12-13)
5. I FIND JOY EVEN IN MY STRUGGLES.

I have lived through many difficulties and I have grown stronger…

Listening to the Scriptures
He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.” Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.” Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.” (Luke 22:39-46)

Listening to the Carmelite Tradition.
In the footsteps of the first Carmelite hermits, we too journey through the desert, which develops our contemplative dimension. This requires self-abandonment to a gradual process of emptying and stripping ourselves, so that we may be clothed in Christ and filled with God. This process “begins when we entrust ourselves to God, in whatever way he chooses to approach us.” For we do not enter the desert by our own will: it is the Holy Spirit who calls us and draws us into the desert; it is the Spirit who supports us in our spiritual combat, clothes us in God’s armour, and fills us with his gifts and with the divine presence, until we are entirely transformed by God and reflect something of God’s infinite beauty. (RIVC 32)

Listening to the Church Tradition.
…. new difficulties are constantly surfacing: experiences of failure and the human weaknesses which bring so much pain. We all know from experience that sometimes a task does not bring the satisfaction we seek, results are few and changes are slow, and we are tempted to grow weary. Yet lowering our arms momentarily out of weariness is not the same as lowering them for good, overcome by chronic discontent and by a listlessness that parches the soul. It also happens that our hearts can tire of the struggle because in the
end we are caught up in ourselves, in a careerism, which thirsts for recognition, applause, rewards and status. In this case we do not lower our arms, but we no longer grasp what we seek, the resurrection is not there. In cases like these, the Gospel, the most beautiful message that this world can offer, is buried under a pile of excuses. (Evangelii Gaudium, 277)

**For Pondering**

In the darkest of moments, when all seems hidden from me, to whom do I turn?

**Psalmody (from psalm 86)**

O Listen to me, Lord, answer me, for I am poor and needy. Guard me, for I am faithful, save your servant who relies on you. You are my God, take pity on me, Lord, for to you I cry all the day.

Fill your servant's heart with joy, Lord, for to you I raise up my heart.

Lord, you are kind and forgiving, rich in faithful love for all who call upon you.

Lord, hear my prayer, listen to the sound of my pleading. In my day of distress, I call upon you, because you answer me, Lord;

I thank you with all my heart, Lord my God, I will glorify your name for ever, for your faithful love for me is so great that you have rescued me from the depths of Sheol.

**Prayer:**

*Who can free himself from his meanness and limitations, if you do not lift him to yourself, my God, in purity of heart? How can a person brought to birth and nurtured in a world of small horizons, rise up to you Lord, if you do not raise him by your hand, which made him? You will not take from me, my God, what you once gave me in your only Son, Jesus Christ, in whom you gave me all I desire; so I shall rejoice: you will not delay, if I do not fail to hope.* (John of the Cross, “Prayer of a soul in love”, Sayings 26)

**Doxology**

“… to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen”. (Jude 24-25)
6. **I find joy in the contemplative experience of prayer and worship.**

   *Our common worship fills the heart with joy and nourishes the journey of faith.*

**Listening to the Scriptures**

But the hour is coming -- indeed is already here -- when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father seeks. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4: 23-24)

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col 3:15-17).

**Listening to the Carmelite Tradition.**

“Liturgy is the Church at common prayer – it is moreover the visible sign of the Order at prayer. People are formed and grow in faith through good liturgy. The presence of the Living God in Word, in Sacrament, in ritual, in silence, in gesture and in song is transformative – it changes the nature of our being community. The Word is addressed to us not just individually as in *lectio divina*, but “as community” and the bread is broken and shared, not just symbolically but as a sign of the sharing in the mystery of God and with the community of those in need. (RIVC, 39)

**Listening to the Church Tradition.**

In the liturgy, the Holy Spirit is teacher of the faith of the People of God and artisan of “God’s masterpieces,” the sacraments of the New Covenant. The desire and work of the Spirit in the heart of the Church is that we may live from the life of the risen Christ. When the Spirit encounters in us the response of faith which he has aroused in us, he brings about genuine cooperation. Through it, the liturgy becomes the common work of the Holy Spirit and the Church. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1091).
The Eucharist is thus the source and summit not only of the Church’s life, but also of her mission: “an authentically Eucharistic Church is a missionary Church.” We too must be able to tell our brothers and sisters with conviction: “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us” (1 Jn 1:3). Truly, nothing is more beautiful than to know Christ and to make him known to others. The institution of the Eucharist, for that matter, anticipates the very heart of Jesus’ mission: he is the one sent by the Father for the redemption of the world (cf. Jn 3:16-17; Rom 8:32). At the Last Supper, Jesus entrusts to his disciples the sacrament which makes present his self-sacrifice for the salvation of us all, in obedience to the Father’s will. We cannot approach the Eucharistic table without being drawn into the mission which, beginning in the very heart of God, is meant to reach all people. Missionary outreach is thus an essential part of the Eucharistic form of the Christian life. (Sacramentum Caritatis, 84)

For pondering:
Do we live our liturgical life as a source of contemplation? How do we experience in our daily life the intrinsic connection between prayer, liturgy and mission?

Psalmody (from the Psalm 95)
Come, let us sing to the Lord
and shout with joy to the Rock who saves us.
Let us approach him with praise and thanksgiving
and sing joyful songs to the Lord.

Come, then, let us bow down and worship,
bending the knee before the Lord, our maker,
For he is our God and we are his people,
the flock he shepherds.

Prayer.
You gather us into your Church to be one as you Father, are one with your Son and the Holy Spirit. You call us to be your people, to praise your wisdom in all your works. You make us the body of Christ and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit for the glory of your holy Name.

~14~
Doxology:
“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Col. 3:16-17)
7. I find joy in discovering the love of God in my life.

When I live in authenticity, I can see many signs of God in my life.

Listening to the Scriptures
On the way Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, ‘Give me something to drink. The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew. How is it that you ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink?’ -- Jews, of course, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied to her: If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me something to drink,’ you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water. ‘You have no bucket, sir,’ she answered, ‘and the well is deep: how do you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle? Jesus replied: Whoever drinks this water will be thirsty again; but no one who drinks the water that I shall give will ever be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will become a spring of water within, welling up for eternal life. ‘Sir,’ said the woman, ‘give me some of that water …’ (Jn 4: 5-7, 9-15a)

Listening to the Carmelite Tradition.
“A new awareness of Thy love
Encompasses my heart:
Sweet Jesus, I in Thee and thou
In me shall never part.

No grief shall fall my way but I
Shall see thy grief filled eyes:
the lonely way that thou once walked
Has made me sorrow-wise.

All trouble is a white-lit joy
That light my darkest day;
Thy love has turned to brightest light
This night-like way.
If I have Thee alone,  
the hours will bless  
With still, cold hands of love  
My utter loneliness.

Stay with me Jesus, only stay;  
I shall not fear,  
If reaching out my hand,  
I feel Thee near.”

(“Before a Picture of Jesus in My Cell” by Titus Brandsma February 12-13, 1942)

Listening to the Church Tradition.
(...) When we live out a spirituality of drawing nearer to others and seeking their welfare, our hearts are opened wide to the Lord’s greatest and most beautiful gifts. Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God. Whenever our eyes are opened to acknowledge the other, we grow in the light of faith and knowledge of God. If we want to advance in the spiritual life, then, we must constantly be missionaries. The work of evangelization enriches the mind and the heart; it opens up spiritual horizons; it makes us more and more sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit, and it takes us beyond our limited spiritual constructs. A committed missionary knows the joy of being a spring which spills over and refreshes others. (Evangelii Gaudium, 272).

For Pondering:
Am I able to see the signs of God’s love in my own life? Do I in any way help others to discover God’s love in their lives?

Psalmody (from the psalm 139)
O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways.
Even before there is a word on my tongue, Behold, o Lord, You know it all.
You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is too high; I cannot attain to it.

**Prayer**

*God of mercy and love. Wake me from sleep and let me discover each day the wonders of your love. Open my eyes and my heart to your presence in those with whom I share this earth and in the events that mark each day.*

**Doxology:**

“They may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it. (1 Th. 5:23-24)*
Drink water from your own storage-well, fresh water from your own spring. (Prov. 5: 15)
General Commission for Evangelization and Mission