

Royal and Redeemed Virtual Weekend Retreat
Carmelite Sisters of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles, Sacred Heart Retreat House

Transcription: Conference 1: I am a Daughter of the King, by Sister Gianna of the Resurrection, O.C.D.

Introduction

My dear friends,

Praised be Jesus Christ! Welcome to your retreat! It's such a joy to be with you, through the marvelous gift of technology. My name is Sr. Gianna, I am a Carmelite Sister of the Most Sacred Heart of Los Angeles. It is my eighth month anniversary of perpetual vows, thanks be to God! In July, 2019 I made my final profession as a Carmelite sister. I grew up in South Dakota on a farm, and the Lord called me to the Garden of Carmel in the middle of Los Angeles.

I am speaking with you, and reflecting, and praying with you from Santa Teresita (which is Spanish for St. Therese), my beautiful friend here, joining us with her roses. The Santa Teresita campus is a very special place. It's in Duarte California, and we have about a hundred seniors here we care for. I am currently living in Cristo Rey cottage (that's Spanish for Christ the King!)

Carmelite Prayer

How wonderful that we have this retreat theme of "Daughter of the King!" I get to speak in His home, to you, wherever you are in the world, and join into what God is doing in your life. So this is such a joy and such an important thing for you to know, is that the Carmelite Sisters, wherever we are, are praying for you, and interceding very mightily. That's such a joy! You're our spiritual children, and we're so proud of you that you're on this retreat, responding to the Holy Spirit's invitation [on this Pentecost weekend]. So, with that, let us start with prayer.

Thank You, Lord. In the Name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, come through Mary.

Heavenly Father we ask You to open wide our hearts. Do great things for us. We just ask You for the Grace to put aside any distractions, anxieties, worries, and cares, so that we just may fully receive.

Lord, You are calling us not to perform, or please, or earn. You just want us to receive Your fullness and Your goodness.
And so as children, we open our hearts to that; we open our hearts to receive what You have to give, however You wish to give it.

Make our eyes and our heart attentive to the surprising ways that You want to renew us, and receive Your Love.

Lord, we ask for an experience of Your Love deep in our hearts, and we thank You ahead of time for all that You're going to do.

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Through the intercession of Our Lady, who was the most beautiful Daughter of the King, we entrust these prayers.

Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee.

Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

In the Name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. [Make the sign of the Cross].
Amen.

Children Say the Darndest Things

My friends, daughters, I was speaking to a ninety-five-year-old daughter this morning. You know how we say: children are just so uninhibited, they're so free to say the truth... you know, I'm in the grocery store -- [child's voice]: *Mom! What is she wearing? What is that on her head?* They just say things, and they're not inhibited. We all know that, we've all grown through that. So too, the elderly! So, this ninety-five-year-old lady -- I was reading a book to her this morning -- they're all quarantined in their rooms, so I get the joy of visiting them, and seeing what they need, what kind of spiritual support can I give. This lady -- we are going in every other day/ or daily -- to read for twenty minutes from a [Bible Basics](#) book. It's wonderful! (She grew up Protestant, and became Catholic).

We're at the part talking about Moses and Pharaoh. And she's so beautiful-- I'm reading to her about the Egyptians chasing the Israelites, and now they're in the desert, and now they're complaining. I think we all know this story. They're hungry, they're thirsty, they wish for all the good produce and wonderful food of Egypt.

And the resident stopped me and said,

"Sister, what is worse: the Egyptians, or the hunger and thirst of the desert?"

And I thought for a moment, and I said,

"Even though it was comfortable in Egypt, Egypt was worse. It was much worse, because they were in slavery -- to sin!" That's the whole image of Egypt, and Israel, and the flight through the desert. It's that passage from sin into the freedom -- the glorious freedom -- of the children of God. Even though the hunger and thirst were awful for the Israelites, Egyptians are much worse.

That was coming to mind right now, and a great question that the resident posed to me, because a Daughter of the King -- it's all about living in that glorious freedom of the children of God. And not to be under the yoke of slavery, and sin, and death. That's what Jesus died to give us: we are free in the Son! We are sons in the Son, daughters in the Son of the Heavenly Father.

What Matters

The resident also -- she's very thoughtful, and asks very hard questions sometimes -- it was quiet for a moment, she'd wanted me to stop reading, and then she said,

"Sister, what is Grace?"

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And I paused for a moment, and she continued on, she said,
"I understand Mercy, but Grace..." [Shakes head].

So, I gave her the Catechism answer, and I'm giving it to you now [in Sr. Gianna's own words]: *It is God's life within us. He gives us a portion of His own Life, and He renews us from within. How does this come to us? It's the beautiful sacrament of Baptism. It's that passage that the Israelites made from Egypt to the Promised Land, from slavery to freedom. This wonderful sacrament is ours to get into the palace of the King.* (Reference -- "Grace:" CCC 1996-2005).

Okay, I want to put a footnote here because it was just so cute what the resident also said -- because we always wear face masks on when we're with the residents -- and she said,
"Sister, are you pretty when you don't have the mask on?"
And I thought for a moment, and answered,
"I really hope that I'm pretty -- on the inside."
And she responded,
"That probably is what matters anyway, isn't it."
And I said,
"Yes! Yes."

Inner Beauty

Yes, the beauty of a Christian is not on the exterior, even any kind of joy or charisma or attracting personality that someone can exude. It's about the pure and humble soul within that shines. We can never lose sight of that inner beauty, that we're called to foster. Okay, I just had to share that a little bit.

Baptism! You're to get into the palace. Let's talk a little bit about that. Martin Luther looked at this sacrament, this theology of Baptism, as this process of a dunghill being covered with a light blanket of snow. So from the exterior -- wow -- that's a beautiful, pure, white pile of snow! But no! It isn't! It's still a dunghill! That's not what we believe as Catholics. What we believe: it's not a mere covering of snow, as if God is just ignoring or shielding His eyes from our wretchedness. This Grace that is given in Baptism is God's Life infused into the center of our being. What's wonderful, too, is God is so gentle. He builds on our human nature and allows us to enter into this Divine Adoption. (CCC 2009).

What Christ is -- by Nature -- we are, now, by Grace. (CCC 654). And we can call the Father "Abba!" (CCC 742). God is no longer for us just an almighty, omnipotent, seemingly impersonal God. He is Papa, He is Daddy! Now, that concept we can never really plumb the depth of.

Divine Adoption

Calling God: Papa. I know later on in the retreat we're going to look at healing of that relationship. That Father-daughter relationship is so important. I've found in my limited experience of life and living: that relationship constantly needs to be looked at, gone back to, refined, refreshed, renewed. Even if you had a wonderful father, they still can't measure up to the Heavenly Father and what He says about Himself through Jesus.

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Even right now, saying to you, “Papa” for the Heavenly Father -- there’s something still inside of me that resists that, and maybe I’ll work my whole life long on that. Resist it in terms of: is that too familiar to talk to God -- as Papa/ Daddy? No!!! :-) We bury our head in His shoulder! This is the kind of King: Viva Cristo Rey! This is the King that lets us enter into His palace.

So, our ticket in -- is Baptism. We’re in the palace -- we can run out of the palace! We’re not locked in the tower; we know that. We constantly fall, that’s where sin comes in. We’re going in and out of that, living out of the relationship of royal Daughter to the Heavenly Father, constantly. But the point is that we continue to reclaim our Divine Adoption, again and again and again. And to say it out loud when we’re being tempted: “I am a Daughter of the King!” We have to say truths so that our feelings can come along with them.

Okay, so once you’re in the palace, you will act as other royalty act in the palace. And I don’t mean like -- what’s that movie? -- “Princess Diaries”? I can remember all the cotillion classes she was going through, and the etiquette, and trying to make somebody without manners gain them very quickly and be in the presence of other dignitaries. So it’s not so much that.

Thy Kingdom Come!

I would like you to listen -- for the rest of whatever I’m going to say, by the Grace of the Holy Spirit -- I would like you to listen for something in particular. That is this: in the palace in the kingdom, different rules apply. I want you to constantly frame what I’m going to say, and how you’re going to think about it after you finish this talk, and enter into prayer and your times of meditation and silence with the Lord. Really ask Him to show you how different rules apply in the kingdom.

What I mean by that is, we hear it often, but I want you to apply it in this scenario. When we’re living in the presence of royalty, in the palace, in the Kingdom, that Jesus came and He often -- or I could almost use the word “always” -- acted in a way that people didn’t expect.

Sin No More

For example: the “sinful woman.” What did He do? He was the only One that could throw the stone at her; He invited everyone present to do so -- “the one without sin.” (John 8:7). He didn’t condemn her. There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus. That was totally opposite of what anyone would think at that time in the world, in that culture.

Another example, from my life, kind of ties back to my comment about how we really have to pay attention to those expectations we have on what our relationship with Jesus should look like (and with others). So, there was this event that happened one summer several years ago. All of the sisters were back from out of state, and we were all together at the Motherhouse in Alhambra. We were staying in the retreat rooms, every room is filled because the Sisters are all back from the schoolhouses out of state. That’s a lot of Sisters!

We have a Carmelite custom: in the morning, when it’s time to rise, a sister is assigned the bell-ringer! So she has bells, and she will walk down the hallway with the bells, ringing, and singing a song, calling the Sisters to prayer. The bell-ringer that morning didn’t set her alarm. This is the plight of every Carmelite Sister, one time in her life -- this

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will happen! We all make mistakes, we all hit the wrong buttons on our alarm. It happens, but you can't help how you feel making everyone else late. This was a large group of Sisters she's making late for prayers, you know, starting the day in a rush, and all that goes into that. You just feel really bad!

So, this Sister -- (everybody got to prayers, everybody got to breakfast) -- at breakfast, she asked Mother General if she could get up and just apologize to the Sisters. She was so repentant, and so sorry for making everyone late. She made her apology. Mother took the microphone back from her, and said:

“Thirty lashes with a wet noodle!” ;-)

And we all laughed! I remember when I heard that apology and then Mother's response, there was something in it that is tying in here. The rules of the kingdom are different than what the world would say. You know: *stone her, stone her!* (Well, not for ringing a bell late, but I think you know what I mean). There's a sense of worldly justice that doesn't apply in the Kingdom because His Mercy is so great.

With Empty Hands

We have only to take it from the Little Flower, right? She rejoiced in her littleness and weakness, and didn't want any wonderful good works and merits on her record to earn God's Love, because she knew that wasn't it! She said “with empty hands,” Lord, I come to You!* You, Yourself, will be the Merit.

Alright, so, within that framework, anything else I say, I want you to consider that different rules apply in the Kingdom. The kind of kindness, and mercy, and gentleness that the Heavenly Father and Jesus in the Gospel exudes is what we need to soak up and live ourselves. Especially as the Kingdom spreads, so should the rules of the Kingdom, that of mercy and justice and love.

Reference:

- “With empty hands” -- excerpt from St. Therese's *Act of Oblation to Merciful Love*

Recap

So, we've talked about how a Daughter of the King knows her place in the palace. She knows that her ticket was Baptism, and nothing can take that ticket away, or that place in the palace -- on Papa's lap, at the royal banquet feast. Never forget that.

I hope you dance!

Let's move on to... I like this one. Are there not lots of balls at the palace? Daughters of the King dance, whether it's physical/ actual dance, or in your heart, or in your room, you need to dance with abandon. I guarantee you this will only develop your Daughtership in the King. Take it from King David, he danced with abandon. He was a man after God's own Heart. I just think there's something very important when one dances.

I've heard recently that it has a lot to do with spiritual warfare, because it's praise, just like singing. Praise and worship foil the enemy; any kind of praise, any kind of dance. So, as you gracefully dance, you need to have the most beautiful wardrobe and clothing, when you're living in the palace of the King. I wanted to tie in this little part as we wrap up -- I hope you're bearing with me -- and that is, a Daughter of the King will gracefully learn

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how to carry the new wardrobe of the Kingdom. Our minds can go here to etiquette classes.

Faith, Hope, Love

What I want to focus on is what's given to us in Baptism, and that is, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Without getting too deep into it at all, I wanted to tie in St. John of the Cross in The Dark Night of the Soul, which is an advanced piece of literature. I picked it up in college, and I closed it up and put it right back down again. I could not read it at that time. (And mind you I was already thinking about becoming a Carmelite!) So don't fear that work, nor fear that mighty little Carmelite, St. John of the Cross.

As you come to know him, you'll know he's more about the "todo," or "all" in Spanish, instead of the "nada," or "nothing." He gets a bad rap -- because it's about abnegation and mortification. So anyway: St. John of the Cross, pray for us! But because it ties in with our royalty theme, and it's just so fun, I wanted to mention a little bit in book 2, chapter 21, St. John of the Cross is talking about the soul. The colors of the disguise that the soul wears in the night. So this is on the spiritual journey, and he has these wonderful images that I just wanted to share with you about faith, hope, and love. Alright, so he talks about in paragraph 3:

The soul touched with love for Christ her Spouse, and aspiring to win His favor and friendship, departs in the disguise that more vividly represents the affections of her spirit. Her advance in this disguise makes her more secure against her adversaries: the devil, the world, and the flesh. The livery she thus wears is of three principal colors: white, green, and red. These three colors stand for the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. By which she not only gains the favor and goodwill of her Beloved, but also advances very safely, fortified against her three enemies.

Faith

So this is given to you, it's that inner beauty (as I was talking about with the resident) that matters, that's given to you in Baptism. So, "faith," St. John of the Cross says, "is an inner tunic of such pure whiteness, that it blinds the sight of every intellect." So, faith -- let me get my other paper here -- it reminds me of a talk I heard recently, connecting faith to praise, again, I want you to make a connection here. This is such a powerful virtue. When we are lacking faith in the King, we have to praise, like I mentioned earlier, we have to show with our voice, with our actions, with our body, with our heart -- that we're committed. We're committed to the battle, even when our feelings are doing all kinds of other things.

And praise is so helpful because it lifts our vision, disposes us to receive faith. And let's be honest, in the heat of the battle, especially when it looks very grim, whatever it is that you're going through, the praise that you are engaging in can completely feel just dry and fake. But no, it's faith -- it's faith. If the enemy's tempting you, you're devoid of consolation, you're trying to say: "I praise You Jesus, I praise You Father, thank You for what You're doing," and the evil one suggests to you that what you're doing is fake, you respond and say: "No! This is faith!" You're going past your feelings, and engaging in that praise.

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Hope

The second garment -- continuing with paragraph 6:

Over this white tunic of faith, the soul puts on a second colored garment, a green coat of mail. Green, as we said, signifies the virtue of hope, by which one, in the first place, is defended and freed from the second enemy: the world. This greenness of living hope in God imparts such courage and valor, and so elevates the soul to the things of Eternal Life, that in comparison with these heavenly hopes, all earthly things seem as they truly are: dry, withered, dead, and worthless. The soul is thus divested of all worldly garments, and does not set her heart on anything else there is, or will be, in the world. She lives clothed only in the hope only of Eternal Life.

Hope: how do you keep this alive in the midst of what we're going through right now -- global crisis -- so much suffering, and death, and inconvenience. What we have to do, especially in all the uncertainty, is just expect everything from Him -- everything! Papa, we need You! You are the King, even of this situation. Just raise your eyes, and look at Him.

The Bridegroom in the Canticle (Songs of Songs 4:9) says of the bride: she *wounded his heart by merely the look of her eyes*. So your hope-filled look to Him pierces His Heart. That's what a daughter does to a father, we've all seen it! She goes up to her daddy, she gives him one look, and he melts! His heart is just completely given over to her. We know the Heavenly Father has the Heart -- St. Therese talks about it -- it's a *Heart that has infinite waves of tenderness shut up in it. So imagine what you do by piercing that Heart -- that flood.

Believe this, as St. Therese did, and if you don't -- ask for help. It's really hard to keep hope alive. I'm experiencing it, everyone is experiencing it; it's not easy. It's very easy to become discouraged during this time.

Love

The third piece of clothing that the Daughter of the King wears:

Over the white and green as the finishing touch and perfection of her disguise, the soul puts on a third color: a precious red toga. This color denotes charity, the third virtue, which not only adds elegance to the other two colors, but so elevates the soul as to place her near her God. Charity makes her so beautiful and pleasing to God, that she dares to say, like in the Song of Songs (1:4): 'O daughters of Jerusalem, I am beautiful, and for this reason, the King has loved me, and brought me into his chamber, into the palace.'

I do think if St. Elizabeth of the Trinity lived in the era of chivalry and palaces, etc. etc., that she would just thrive on this concept. Elizabeth is a Carmelite -- one of my very favorite Carmelite saints. She was a wonderful piano player. Entered the convent in Dijon, France. Lived and died just shortly after St. Therese; they were spiritual sisters, and very contemporary in the early 1900s. She says this about love (and remember again the rules of the kingdom):

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“Mark everything with the seal of love, it alone endures.”

Every big thing you do, every little thing you do, mark with the seal of love. The Lord has been teaching me so much about this (kind of tying back to our global crisis). The little things are really the big things, and it has everything to do with love, which the seeds were given to us in Baptism, in that theological virtue, and it's our joy and honor and duty to develop these virtues in our soul. So I'm realizing: even in the midst of crisis and change, and having to go here... change of plans there... new priorities today... change tomorrow -- everyone's having to keep on their toes here -- that I can never be too busy for the little things.

Love and Sacrifice

I also heard a very frightening [acronym]: B.U.S.Y. = Buried Under Satan's Yoke. Isn't that terrible! That's not the yoke we want to be under! The Bridegroom of our souls was a little Lamb, meek, and just following the Shepherd's lead. He was a Lamb led to slaughter. You know what I'm thinking too is: He was clothed in a red garment. Our Lord was clothed in the red garment, like St. John of the Cross is talking about the soul clothed in a red garment. From the prophet Isaiah (63:1), this is speaking of the Lamb of God: "Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? It is I, proclaiming victory, mighty to save."

I want you to think of this red garment -- growing in love, walking in the way of love -- as a Daughter of the King. It happens through sacrifice; love always involves sacrifice. My wonderful patron St. Gianna said,

"Love and suffering are inextricably linked, like the sun and light. One cannot love without suffering and suffer without love."

Going back to that comment about the little things. Those are the little deaths that He's calling us to: always move out in love and serve the other. When we get so lost in the big things, and my To-Do List, we have to be careful, because we are really called to let go of that need for control on getting my To-Do List done, and letting Him lead the way.

Being Little

There you have it, the beautiful garments: white, green, and red, of faith, hope, and love. It is our joy and honor to learn how to gracefully carry these garments, as we live in the palace with the King. So to wrap it up, a Daughter of the King knows her place in the palace, and she'll continually run back to it. She runs to Papa when memories of her old life overwhelm her. She knows that her ticket in is a one-time/ for-all-time ticket, and that is Baptism. The wonderful sacrament of Baptism, which has flooded her soul with Grace and beauty, so that He is forever-after attracted to this soul, most especially in her littleness and weakness.

A Daughter of the King claims His adoption. She will learn to act as the other royalty in the palace act. The Prince of Peace became a lamb. The first will actually be last. There

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are different rules that apply in the kingdom, and in the palace. She doesn't feel at all sad about her lowly status as a daughter. In fact, the last shall be first (and those who become lower and lower and lower in the kingdom). In the palace, life will be raised, because there's no performance necessary. There's nothing to gain, nothing to lose, because your place is at the Father's table. (The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that Communion of Love!)

May you have a ball tonight, and dance! A little bit of your prayer, maybe, if you are so bold. Or maybe in the near future, we will again have Carmelite Sisters and line-dancing with young ladies in the plaza in Alhambra at the retreat house. Either way, the Lord knows what He wants us to do is delight in our daughtership. He wants to delight in that life in the Son -- it's a communion -- no isolation will ever take that away from us. And so, my friends, I will be praying for you very much.

Let us close with a prayer,
entrusting all of this to the Holy Spirit.

In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Lord Jesus,
I thank You for this time, I thank You for the words that You speak.
I ask You to take all the lessons that You wish to give us,
and help them to gently find a home in our hearts
so that they can grow, blossom, and bear fruit in Your good timing.
We just submit to Your gentle yoke.
We say "yes," and it is such an honor to follow You, Lord.
Help us to claim our Divine Adoption,
to understand ourselves as royal,
to see ourselves as more beautiful than we can imagine --
a soul filled with Your Grace.
We ask this always in the powerful Name of Jesus,
and His Mother Mary, and good St. Joseph.

In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.