

## LITURGICAL CREATIVITY FROM EDITH STEIN

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### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Sympathetic Sharer in the Liturgical Movement

The growth in faith of the convert Edith Stein occurred in decades noted for energetic German leadership of this century's liturgical movement. Names of significant liturgists like Romano Guardini, Odo Casel and Burkhard Neunheuser were familiar to her.<sup>1</sup> All the efforts to bring the Catholic Church alive in celebration of the divine mysteries were called by Guardini a re-birth of the "springtime of the Church" ("Frühlingszeit der Kirche"). Stein both benefited from this ferment and, in her own way, contributed to the thrust for renewal among those she knew.

Her many visits to Beuron Abbey prove to any doubters that her well-known intellectual life was frequently complemented by long hours of spirit-filled praise and prayer. On her way there she stayed at Saint Lioba's Benedictine priory in Freiburg-im-Breisgau to join the community chanting the Liturgy of the Hours, as much as to share philosophical reflections with her phenomenologist friend Sr. Adelgundis Jaegerschmid.

And, however coincidental it might seem, before entering Carmel on 14 October 1933 Stein made a final stop-over at Maria Laach Abbey, by far the most well-known **haut-lieu** of liturgical renewal in all Germany.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> OLIVIER ROUSSEAU "3. The Liturgical Movement: Dom Guéranger to Pius XII" in *The Church at Prayer* vol. 1, ed. Aimée-Georges Martimort (1963), pp. 57-58 [in German edition].

<sup>2</sup> See EDITH STEIN, *Wie ich in den Kölner Karmel kam, Mit Erläuterungen und Ergänzungen* von Maria Amata Neyer (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1994), p. 34. Stein refers to chant lessons provided by a monk of Maria Laach Abbey to the Cologne Carmel, about a decade before she entered, in Letter 178,

## 1.2 Published and Unpublished Works

### 1.2.1. **The Prayer of the Church** (1937)

Stein went beyond seeking inspiration from liturgical prayer, she also wrote about it. Her reflection **The Prayer of the Church** (*Gebet der Kirche*) was published in 1937.<sup>3</sup>

In it she indicates clearly the importance of active participation in the liturgy for overall healthy Christian life. Her intent was to blend her love for the liturgy with her daily experience as a contemplative nun who spent several hours a day in silent, meditative prayer. The following passage identified the liturgy as the fountainhead of her spiritual life with repercussions for daily life:

. . .the monks “resembling angels” surround the altar of sacrifice and make sure that the praise of God does not cease, as in heaven so on earth. The solemn prayers they recite as the resonant mouth of the church frame the holy sacrifice. They also frame, permeate, and consecrate all other “daily work” so that prayer and work become a single **opus Dei**, a single “liturgy.”<sup>4</sup>

### 1.2.2 “Very beautiful task” — Draft of a Votive Office (1940)

Stein did more for the liturgy than merely to comment on it, however. She answered calls to devise texts for actual worship. One of the creations never reached the level of approval intended for it, and thus was never used for public prayer; the other occupies a place in a conventual collection of hymns, used discreetly to this day, and is the object of this study. Both incorpo-

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23 July 1934, *Self-portrait in Letters*, trans. J. Koepfel, vol. 5 *Collected Works of Edith Stein* (Washington: ICS Publications, 1993), p. 182.

<sup>3</sup> EDITH STEIN, “Das Gebet der Kirche,” in *Ich lebe und Ihr lebet, Vom Strom des Lebens in der Kirche* (Paderborn: Bonifacius Verlag, 1937), pp. 69-84.

rate a devotion dear to her monastic community in Cologne, namely, to Mary Queen of Peace.

Regarding the first, letters from Echt in the Spring of 1940 tell two different correspondents she drafted a Latin Mass and office in Lent that year to honor Mary Queen of Peace.<sup>5</sup> Her text was sent to Cologne for further steps seeking Rome's approval since, at that time, any new texts for the Mass and for what was then called the Divine Office (today the Liturgy of the Hours) needed Rome's go-ahead.<sup>6</sup> Rome, as far as we know, did not issue an approval, even for local use. Due to the length of what she wrote (no fewer than twenty-eight pages in the original manuscript that carries the Latin text and a German version to go with it, also by Stein), we can state as she once stated in another context, "it is not within the scope of this article to follow the historical development of" that work.<sup>7</sup> It is our purpose however, to study here the second and briefer instance of Latin composition.

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<sup>4</sup> See "The Prayer of the Church," *The Hidden Life*, trans. W. Stein, vol. 4 *Collected Works of Edith Stein* (Washington: ICS Publications, (1992), p. 9. For a treatment of Edith Stein's liturgical sensitivity and reflections one can consult E. GARCÍA ROJO, "Vivencia y aportación litúrgica de Edith Stein" in *Ephemerides Carmeliticae [Teresianum]* 30 (1979), 69-97.

<sup>5</sup> See Letter 311, 30 March 1940 and Letter 312, 26 April 1940 in *Letters*, pp. 319 and 321.

<sup>6</sup> Cologne Archives, File B I 20 "Missa et Offizium B.M.V. Reginae Pacis," no date, 28 pp. The beatification process created a list of writings by Stein, but the numbering adopted do not always concord with the Cologne Archives' system: see, for this *Officium*, the list in the private publication *Gli Scritti della Serva di Dio Edith Stein — Teresa Benedetta della Croce — Carmelitana Scalza (1891-1942): Studio ufficiale dei due teologi censori della S. Congregazione per le cause dei santi* (Roma: Postulazione Generale O.C.D., 1977), p. 22. The addition of Stein to *Flos Carmeli* under study in this article was not reported directly when the beatification list of writings was drawn up, only implicitly in the entry on p. 24 of *Gli Scritti della Serva* "St Michael - ein Festspiel (Original in holländischer Sprache im Klosterarchiv des Karmel Echt)" — see note 20, *infra*.

<sup>7</sup> Quote taken from EDITH STEIN, *Ways to Know God: The "Symbolic Theology" of Dionysius the Areopagite and its Factual Presuppositions*, trans. Rudolph Allers (Elysburg, PA: Edith Stein Center, 1981 reed.), p. 81. This article of Stein refers often to the Church's liturgy. A text from the *Officium* was published by Stein's prioress Teresia RENATA POSSELT, *Edith Stein, ein Lebensbild* (Nürnberg: Glock und Lutz, 1954, 7. Aufl.), pp. 103-104. She included Stein's hymn for the hour of Lauds [Morning Prayer] to illustrate Stein's facility for versification in Latin.

## 2. A Previously Unknown Poetic Text

In fact, still today an additional strophe devised by Sister Teresa Benedicta for the traditional Carmelite hymn called "**Flos Carmeli**" is sung at the Cologne Carmel. In its own way, it gives a taste of all she wanted to express later, either at Cologne in 1937 or in that votive office to the Queen of Peace devised in Echt for Cologne<sup>8</sup>; but our study looks directly at the briefer hymn addition. Consequently, some background remarks about the Marian hymn are necessary, to see the setting in which Stein's creation now lies.

### 2.1 The Hymn "**Flos Carmeli**"

#### 2.1.1 Brief History of the Hymn

"**Flos Carmeli**" is a medieval Carmelite hymn in praise of Mary, full of symbolism suited to the Holy Land origins of this Marian order.<sup>9</sup> The Mother of God is described as a **flower** (clear allusion to the reference of Isaiah 35:1-2 to the mountain of Carmel); an ever-blossoming **vine** (a traditional interpretation of the name "Carmel" in the Order, though one no longer admitted by exegetes)<sup>10</sup>; all pure and **undefiled** (a possible hint at the white color stripes alternating with the brown stripes of the hermits' mantles);<sup>11</sup> and star of the **sea** (an obvious allusion to the loca-

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<sup>8</sup> The *Officium* deserves a study unto itself. Stein contributed much to the 1937 celebrations in Cologne of the tercentenary of the founding of the nuns' first monastery there: see NEYER, *Wie ich in den Kölner Karmel kam*, pp. 76-83. Her activities at that time would offer ample material for a separate study.

<sup>9</sup> See B. XIBERTA, "Rhythmus 'Flos Carmeli' in liturgia Carmelitana," *Analecta Ordinis Carmelitarum* 20 (1957), 156-59.

<sup>10</sup> See the new study of the Carmelite Order's presence in its birthplace, especially the section in the opening chapter by ROBERTO FORNARA "The Mount of Elijah: The Bible and Carmelite Traditions" in *Carmel in the Holy Land: From the Origins to Our Days*, ed. Silvano Giordano (Arenzano: Messagero di Gesù B., 1996), pp. 12-18.

<sup>11</sup> See JOHN SULLIVAN, "A Carmelite Devotion to Mary in the Easter 'Exsultet'", *De Cultu Mariano Saeculo XVI: Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani Internationalis Caesarugustae anno 1979 celebrati*, vol. II (Roma: Pont. Academia Mariana Internationalis, 1985), p. 296.

tion of the Carmelites' first house close to where the **via maris** passes by Mount Carmel).

Its original Latin lines comprised just one strophe (see text followed by Stein's addition below).<sup>12</sup>

The Discalced Carmelites now use it as a "Sequence" or chant sung during the Eucharist's Liturgy of the Word on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (16 July).<sup>13</sup> Over time the Discalced Carmelites added other strophes to the primitive text's single strophe. Two of these extra strophes have been popular in the Order around the world, at least until post-Vatican II revision of liturgical books among the Discalced.

### 2.1.2 Cologne Monastery's Usage of the Order's Text

Edith Stein mentions the hymn in a letter to Sister Maria Ernst of her beloved Cologne Carmel in Mary's month during the war, that is, on 16 May 1941. She evokes Saint Simon Stock, whose feast was celebrated that day and whom Carmelite tradition supposed was the medieval author of the hymn. Then she writes that the community in Echt used the hymn for May devotions. "There are so many promises contained in it."<sup>14</sup>

Stein found the text to which she added her own strophe in a Latin liturgical book from Rome that provided texts for Mass and Divine Office on proper Carmelite feasts.<sup>15</sup> The hymn stands at the back of this **Proper** with the following three strophes; her new text follows in a section of its own.

1. Flos Carmeli  
vitis florigera  
Spendor caeli,  
Virgo Puerpera  
singularis.

2. Radix Jesse  
germinans flosculum  
hic adesse  
me tibi servulum  
patiaris.

<sup>12</sup> See XIBERTA, *Rhythmus*, p. 157 for a photo reproduction of the hymn with musical notation from a fourteenth-century Bamberg codex.

<sup>13</sup> *Proprium Missarum Fratrum Discalceatorum Ordinis Beatissimae Mariae Virginis de Monte Carmelo, Editio Typica* (Roma: Curia Generalis OCD, 1973), p. 158.

<sup>14</sup> See Letter 320, 16 May 1941, *Letters*, p. 330-31.

<sup>15</sup> See *Proprium Missarum et Officiorum Ordinis Carmelitarum Discalceatorum* (Parisiis, Tornaci, Romae: Desclée, 1933), 242 pp.

Mater mitis,  
sed viri nescia,  
carmelitis  
da privilegia,  
stella maris.

Inter spinas  
quae crescis lilium  
serva puras  
mentes fragilium,  
tutelararis!

3. Armatura  
fortis pugnantium,  
furunt bella,  
tende praesidium  
scapularis.  
Per incerta  
prudens consilium,  
per adversa  
iuge solatium  
largiaris.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.1.3 Stein's Additional Strophe

The following are Stein's original and a vernacular rendition of it (in a ten-line strophe layout to parallel the earlier Latin ver-

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<sup>16</sup> *Proprium*, p. 234. The following strophes appear in the current *Lectioary OCD*:

1. Flower of Carmel  
blossoming, bearing one,  
light of heaven,  
mother of God's dear Son,  
vine and virgin.  
Gentle parent,  
pure beyond human love,  
bless your children  
star shining far above  
this world's ocean.

2. Root of Jesse,  
flower in the cradling bud,  
take us to you,  
keep us with you in God,  
his together.  
All chaste lily  
rising despite the thorn,  
strengthen, help us,  
so feeble, soon forlorn,  
great protectress.

3. Be our armor,  
valiant for Christ when war  
rages around us,  
hold high the scapular,  
strong and saving.  
In our stumbling  
guide us on God's wise way,  
in our sorrow,  
comfort us as we pray:  
rich your mercy.

ses). Even though Stein adopts six-line Latin versification, the words fit the musical notation for the hymn quite smoothly :

**Filiarum cordi suavissimo  
Cor tuarum illi mitissimo  
o inclina.  
Pacem rogamus-audi clementer nos,  
Te obsecramus-juva potenter nos.  
o Regina!**

(translation)

Draw your  
daughters' hearts  
to that sweetest  
and gentlest  
of hearts.  
We ask for peace:  
hear us kindly;  
we pray you:  
help us mightily,  
Our Queen!<sup>17</sup>

Since these lines were neither published nor commented on by Stein, one must weigh evidence found in the Cologne Archives in the light of the historical setting of Stein's Cologne years to grasp the significance of this example of liturgical creativity. Three central images in Stein's text are prominent from the beginning: they are the heart, peace and queen.

## 2.2. Contextual Setting

Deducing a date for composition of the extra strophe by Stein depends primarily on events in her life. Details of what was occurring in the monastery after she entered in mid-October 1932 until the end of 1938, when she moved to Echt, as well as interpretative advice from the current community of nuns in Cologne, are keys to determining its origins.

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<sup>17</sup> The English translation is by the author, with useful advice from J.A. Stones.

### 2.2.1 Poetic Strophe of **Flos Carmeli**

Research found no dated original copy of the **Flos Carmeli** lines in Stein's handwriting in the Archives.

Nonetheless, the year 1935 emerges as the most likely time for composition. Stein had entered Carmel only a few years previously, it is true; still, she accepted invitations to write small pieces about topics or persons who summed up the Order's spiritual vision.<sup>18</sup> One such essay appeared in the Spring of 1935 and mentioned St. Simon Stock in an overview of the Order's history.<sup>19</sup> In spite of the fact that no archival evidence exists to demonstrate a definite date for when the extra strophe was first sung, personal recollections of Sr. Teresia Margareta, co-novice with Stein, attest that the strophe was indeed sung once at Cologne-Lindenthal to "honor St. Simon Stock during recreation on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel [16 July] 1935."<sup>20</sup> It came at the end of a skit written by Mother Paula, prioress of Aachen Carmel in the 1920s, and was acted by the Cologne novices, including Stein in the role of St. Simon Stock. The concluding song had the traditional three strophes followed by Stein's new Latin text. Sr. Amata Neyer, Edith Stein collection archivist in Cologne and well-known interpreter of her life, agrees that this explanation is plausible; and she has enhanced this article with numerous insights.

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<sup>18</sup> Several of these shorter essays appear in STEIN's, *The Hidden Life*, passim; see also A. NEYER "Verzeichnis der von Edith Stein in Köln und Echt verfaßten Schriften," in *Wie ich in den Kölner Karmel kam*, pp. 139-41.

<sup>19</sup> See EDITH STEIN, "On the History and Spirit of Carmel," *The Hidden Life*, pp. 1-6, originally published as "Über Geschichte und Geist des Karmels" in the Sunday supplement "Zu neuen Ufern," no. 13, of the *Augsburger Postzeitung* newspaper on 31 March 1935.

<sup>20</sup> Personal conversation held on 29 October 1997 in Cologne with Sr. Teresia Margareta (Drügemöller). She described how the strophe demonstrated a striking parallel with the Echt text, that is, the hymn attributed to St. Simon Stock was sung to conclude each recreation skit. Unfortunately, written traces of what was presented at Cologne-Lindenthal monastery for that Scapular Feast in July 1935, along with other precious writings of Stein, were lost in the wartime havoc that destroyed the Carmel.



## 2.2.2. Handwritten Text of Stein's Poetic Strophe (1942)

In the Cologne Archives, since return there from Holland in 1996, the original of another skit exists containing the **Flos Carmeli** additional strophe. The six-page text was entitled "Aartsengel Michael" [sic]. Stein drafted her text in Dutch except for the two strophes of the hymn in Latin at the end.<sup>21</sup> We reproduce here the final page since it shows the text we are concerned with:

Zij leed' mij boven al het kruis <sup>6.</sup> be-  
 het kruis, dat opstijgt mit het heilig <sup>aminnen,</sup>  
 Om waard van't levent omme der liefde <sup>hart,</sup>  
 van't kruis heb voort'ste vrede ik ge- <sup>blam.</sup>  
 het was roep mij de weg <sup>vonden</sup> in't die <sup>krac-</sup>  
 O geloof mij wel, ik heb het onderwon- <sup>heid.</sup>  
 kilt'varien om de karmel, zij <sup>sten;</sup> gijfen een.  
 En aan de voet van't kruis staak <sup>Onze Moeder,</sup>  
 De Koningin en dienstster van de karmel,  
 Die ene Koningin van Trede is.  
 O sweetst met ons: zij zal ons wel  
 verhooren.  
 (De Koningin van den Karmel  
 wordt zuchtbaar; allen gijfen!)  
 Flos Carmeli, vitis florifera  
 Splendet Cacti, Virgo purpurea  
 Singularis.  
 Mater mitis, sed viri rescia  
 Cameli tis de privi legia, ~~stella~~  
 Stella maris!  
 Filiarum Cordi marissima  
 Cor tuum illi mitissimum  
 O inclina! <sup>quasi</sup>  
 Paucis rogamus - ~~et~~ <sup>alimendy nos</sup>  
 Te obsecramus <sup>et</sup> ~~potentes nos~~  
 O Regina!

<sup>21</sup> Cologne Archives, File B I 63: fol. 1, Title page with dates, s.n; fol. 2-7 numbered 1-6 by Stein; 15,5 x 24,5 cm; entirely hand-written, in ink. Archivist Sr. Amata Neyer attests that the handwriting that dates the text belonged

The parallelism with the earlier feast-day skit in Cologne in 1935 (as per Sr. Teresia Margareta) is striking: **Flos Carmeli** is sung to conclude the presentation, and Stein's new strophe brings down the curtain, as it were. This creates the impression Stein is repeating at a later date something she already knew. The corrections evident in the final strophe also call our attention and contribute to our understanding, in spite of way they indicate initial errors.

The meaning of these corrections, given our knowledge that the strophe was already sung in similar circumstances in 1935, is plausibly this: Stein jotted down the words from memory, but then realized she had not rewritten exactly what she had previously created. Therefore, she changed the words "O mater" to "Audi", and the words "O Virgo" to "Juva". (The previous crossing out of "Stella maris" was merely a question of positioning on the page, and not a reversion to an earlier text.)

These lines represent the earliest handwritten trace, from the pen of Stein herself, of her strophe in honor of the Queen of Peace. The text escaped the ravages of World War II and is precious written evidence of Stein's creativity in regard to the **Flos Carmeli** hymn. Although it comes from the year 1942, therefore seven years after the first time it was sung by Stein and the other Cologne novices, it fills in the documentary gap that exists in the Archives. She seemed glad to repeat her text on several occasions. This makes a consideration now of its symbolism all the more interesting.

### 3. Symbolism and Implications

#### 3.1 Symbols in the New Strophe

Added to the previous contextual considerations a brief analysis of the main symbols adopted by Stein will further our understanding of what Stein meant to convey by her Latin verses.

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to Mother Antonia, Prioress at Echt during the war years. The date corresponds to her namesday, i.e., the feast of Saint Anthony, 13 June 1942, within two months of Stein's deportation to Auschwitz.

### 3.1.1 Heart

The heart serves Stein as a symbol of contemplation. Line two of her poetical strophe asks Mary to draw the hearts of her “daughters”. From the context we know these “daughters” are her sister religious in the Carmelite monastery of Cologne, contemplative daughters of St. Teresa of Avila, the great “undaunted daughter of desires” (words of English poet Richard Crashaw, alive at the time the Cologne Carmel was founded, 1613-1649).” She was their mother foundress graced by the mystical transverberation of her heart.

It was thanks to the contemplative description of God’s grace at work in the volume of St. Teresa’s *Life* that Stein decided to become a Catholic. The kind of “truth” she recognized in the pages of that classic autobiography one night in the summer of 1921 was a holistic truth, the type of truth that included more than just intellectual questing or even satisfaction over clarity. It was Christian sapiential truth, the one which acknowledges a world rife with the Creator’s presence. Thus, Stein discovered and would thereafter seek, a wide-ranging truth that could fill her own heart with trust throughout life’s difficulties. Or, as Bishop Walter Kasper, appearing in the SDR docudrama about Stein, “**Stationen eines ungewöhnlichen Lebens,**” put it: “Edith Stein does not represent some simply thought-up theology written down on paper, but rather a theology that has been lived and suffered through.” Stein’s emotions or the movements of her own heart, in other words, were part of and influenced what she put down in her keen-minded reflections.

The heart, taken as complement to the intellect and not something in opposition to it, had vocational significance for Stein herself. She chose not to join either of two Orders familiar to her for their intellectual accomplishments, namely, the Dominicans or Benedictines. She did esteem their special witness and contribution to Catholic life, still, she knew her way would be to develop her gifts along the lines of contemplative, therefore, loving prayer. And the passing of time in the cloister eventually gave her scope for cultivating a contemplative approach to intellectual work itself. Hilda Graef, first to translate a major work of Stein into English, wrote that Stein “was a **contemplative**, and she necessarily tended to interpret her contemplative experience

not as a theologian, but as a phenomenological philosopher which she remained."<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps the best way to summarize is through the words of Stein herself. In a speech given at Augsburg she stressed how very important the heart is to the human person as she explained Mary's relationship to her Divine Son in the Mystical Body:

The terms body, head, and heart are of course simply metaphors. But their meaning, nevertheless, is somehow absolutely real. There is a distinctive coherence between head and heart, and they certainly play an essential role in the human body; all other organs and limbs are dependent on them for their existence and function.<sup>23</sup>

It is not a far step at all to move from such stress laid on the human heart for corporeal human living to the importance Stein placed on the heart as symbol of human aspirations toward loving, deep relationship with God.

### 3.1.2 Peace

Contemporary historians easily show now the wide-ranging preparations underway by the Nazis for a push to conquest in 1935. Hindsight traces the imperious crescendo Hitler and his minions were building toward the use of military might to promote implementation of their racist and expansionist dreams.

In Edith Stein's correspondence one can detect the movement toward cataclysm by noticing her discreet yet unmistakable references to discrimination against Jews and adverse effects on private education: she wrote in Letter 213: "Please pray for my loved ones at home. Difficulties are constantly increasing for them. Three nephews have already gone to America. . ."; and in Letter 200: "There will be many difficulties. . . That will require more wisdom and prudence than would be needed in a paro-

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<sup>22</sup> HILDA GRAEF, *The Scholar and the Cross: The Life and Work of Edith Stein* (London: Longmans, 1955), pp. 218-19. Emphasis mine.

<sup>23</sup> EDITH STEIN, *Essays on Woman*, trans. Dr. F.M. Oben (Washington: ICS Publications, 1987, 1st ed.), p. 233.

chial school. . ."24 The government might be promising to better the social condition of the country, yet Stein could clearly see a stark undercurrent of actions designed to destabilize large segments of national life in order to strengthen the Party's hand, and she knew that would surely induce great destabilization in Germany. The infamous Nüremburg Laws, for the preservation of so-called Aryan racial purity, were issued in September, thus alienating people more than ever. In that kind of situation she turned to Mary, Queen of Peace inspired, at least in part, by the story of St. Simon Stock. A word about it would be useful at this point.

Tradition in the Order taught that St. Simon Stock prayed the **Flos Carmeli** hymn to obtain heavenly intervention in favor of the Carmelites. As General Superior he was frequently burdened with problems of all kinds; so serious did they seem that the very existence of the Order was thought to be threatened. Inter alia, military victories of the Saracens in the northern part of the Holy Land held out the prospect of severe persecution of the religious at the mother house on Mount Carmel: it was destroyed, in fact, later in the century in 1291, resulting in the disappearance of all Carmelites from their religious homeland. Then, assimilation into church life in Europe was meeting with resistance from other well-established centers of religious life. Edith Stein in 1935 passes on the tradition-inspired description of him in the following terms: "In the year 1251 the Blessed Virgin appeared to the general of the Order, Simon Stock, an Englishman, and gave him the scapular. . .this visible sign of her motherly protection on her children far from the original home of the Order."<sup>25</sup>

We are told Simon Stock turned in prayer through the **Flos Carmeli** to Mary, to entreat her to assist her brothers in their moment of need. The Blessed Virgin appeared to Simon, as the medieval **legenda** goes, granting him the scapular to show he could rely on her as a sure patron. Stein composed verses of her own that showed her reliance on Mary in her troubled time. Presumably the additional Discalced verses she found in the Order's

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<sup>24</sup> EDITH STEIN, *Letters*: Letter 213, 17 November 1935, p. 221; and Letter 200, 13 May 1935, p. 236.

<sup>25</sup> EDITH STEIN, "On the History and Spirit of Carmel," *The Hidden Life*, p. 3.

Proper Offices book published in 1933 would have caught her attention, i.e., “furunt bella, tende praesidium scapularis” or “when war rages round us, hold high the scapular.” She would express a devotion that could offer consolation for war-like conditions assailing her, namely, a devotion to Mary Queen of Peace.

Her collaboration on a Mass and Office for Our Lady of Peace led her afterwards to state that groups of religious were dedicated to Mary under this title: the Picpus Fathers was one institute, and the nearby Discalced Carmelite Province in Belgium also called the Queen of Peace its patron — both these realities she was probably aware of back in 1935.<sup>26</sup> Stein shared the usual trust placed by religious in Mary Queen of Peace, but she went beyond it as she looked to her as source and model of peace.

For Stein Mary was certainly a model for women, and one of her essays earlier in that same decade assigned women in Germany the role of genuine agents of peace. Her words in **Woman** are:

It is obvious that this is a matter of immediate concern to women. If it is their vocation to protect life, to keep the family together, they cannot remain indifferent to whether or not federal and national life will be able to assure prosperity for the family and a future for youth. The important international petition of 6 February 1932 in Geneva showed that many women today regard the issue of peace and international agreement as their concern.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> STEIN attests to the Picpus and Belgian Carmelites' devotion in Letter 311, 30 March 1940, *Letters*, p. 319. Until 21 February 1934 Cologne-Lindenthal, along with Aachen and Cordel (Trier) Carmels, were all governed in the Discalced Carmelite Order by the Provincial of the Flemish Belgian Province, so Stein actually entered the Carmelites within their jurisdiction — see NEYER, *Wie ich in den Kölner Karmel kam*, p. 70.

<sup>27</sup> See *Woman*, p. 142.

Her new poetry was a devotional way to address her concerns to Mary, protector of peace, and loving Mother of Carmel. Subsequent events proved catastrophic for both Germany and Stein. All the same, and in spite of the outcome, she applied her creative powers to coining a beautiful new hymnodic stanza worthy of the older hymn. As our consideration of Mary the Queen next shows, the peace offered by her and her Son can coexist with a share in the redemptive sufferings they experienced. Stein asked, not for any exemption from life's difficulties in her new strophe, but the peace "the world cannot give" promised by Jesus to his followers in order to be, herself, a source of peace to others.

### 3.1.3 Queen

With ever-increasing desires today for greater shared power in the Church one must use the concept of queen in a Christian and thus analogous way. Mary was not born a queen. Appealing, indeed, is the expression of the American author Phillip Sharper who once called her the "commoner become queen." Her royal Son carried only fool's purple at the time his Roman executioners declared him "The King of the Jews." All this was taken into consideration by Stein as she honored Mary as Queen of Peace in her poetry.

Her basic attitude would have been similar to another Carmelite who was her contemporary for six brief years, then a saint in her Order, viz., Thérèse of Lisieux. For Thérèse Mary was "more mother than queen." With those four words Thérèse coined an ingenious phrase worthy of repetition, since she does not totally exclude the attribute of "queen" from Mary. Rather, she places it in proper balance with Mary's status as Mother of us all, due to the fact she was mother of the Redeemer. In her role as mother and queen Mary had to share in the sufferings of the Suffering Servant, and with him console all disciples who, through all ages, would have to pay the "cost of discipleship." Mary was destined to be a much different kind of queen than worldly sovereigns, but queen all the same because she stayed by Christ, the King of Kings, in his most needful hour. Stein knew this, so Stein had no difficulty calling Mary Queen. As a result, Her strophe placed the word "Queen" for the first time ever into the venerable Carmelite hymn, **Flos Carmeli**.

But there is more to Stein's appreciation of Mary as queen,

and the connection to Mary Queen of Peace is real, too. Through the figure of Esther, the Queen who stood by her people and interceded for them in their moment of greatest need, Edith found a parallel to Mary. Both were queens who stood in the breach in order to assuage the sufferings of their people. In 1941 Stein wrote a fascinating meditation about Esther wandering the centuries and visiting a Carmelite Prioress at night.<sup>28</sup> It conveys the singular, but poignant idea that Esther seeks peace for the Jewish people and also for the followers of Christ, thus serving as a forerunner of Mary: “my life serves as a image of hers [Mary’s] for you.”<sup>29</sup> The message of the meditation is that Queen Esther and Mary, Queen of Carmel, are actively helping others, though in God’s eternity. Significantly, this is not a one-time only allusion to Esther in the works of Stein.

In her non-approved Office to Mary Queen of Peace, Stein chose readings from the Book of Esther for the Hour of Matins or Readings.<sup>30</sup> In that still unpublished Office Esther holds pride of place in the selection for readings, occupying the First Nocturn which, per se, could have contained readings from any other part of Sacred Scripture. Only, Stein places Queen Esther there to draw a parallel with the intercessory role of Mary, to whom the Office is dedicated. Nowadays when some liturgists (along with many an exegete) bemoan the use of the Hebrew Scriptures as mere “types” to illustrate the New Testament, instead of as sources of spirituality in themselves, the presence of Esther’s story in Stein’s votive office looks quite prophetic.

## 3.2 Implications

### 3.2.1 Living Matrix for this Discovery

Before the end of this analysis of archival and printed materials it is time to describe the immediate context of my discovery of Edith Stein’s extra verses in the hymn **Flos Carmeli**.

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<sup>28</sup> EDITH STEIN, “Conversation at Night,” in *The Hidden Life*, pp. 128-33.

<sup>29</sup> STEIN, *Conversation at Night*, p. 129.

<sup>30</sup> *Missa et Officium Reginae Pacis*, pp. 5-11. The pericopae numbers are: 1st Reading, Es 5:1-8; 2nd Reading, Es 7:1-4; and 3rd Reading, Es 10:4-5; 11:5-11; 10:6-9.



A guest of the Cologne community on the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, on 16 July 1997, I was invited to sing Evening Prayer with the nuns. Liturgical books were handed to me, and I intoned the opening verse. All then began to sing the opening hymn which was easy to recognize: it was the Latin version of **Flos Carmeli**. Knowing the first three verses by heart I closed the hymnal and starting singing. Quite unexpectedly the community kept on singing beyond the third verse. I quickly paged through the community hymnal to re-find the page I had closed. Once we came to the end of the extra strophe, entirely new to me, the Prioress leaned over and said "Those are lines done by Edith Stein." My curiosity could not have been greater; and the result is this study of what went lay behind her beautiful Latin strophe.

Aside from curiosity, and the extreme good fortune of being on hand to hear this modest treasure the Cologne community keeps alive in its singing from time to time, I cannot help being struck that a living prayer moment was the setting for my encountering it. Stein wrote the lines as an embellishment to a sung prayer, a hymn, after all. Her intent was not to create something to prove her linguistic prowess or to otherwise impress others. Rather, she offered her lines as an addition to verses of praise to the patron of her Order, and thereby enhance devotion to Mary.

Prayer opened the door to discovery of her devotion. I doubt if I would have come across the new strophe had I not participated in the sung vespers of the Cologne community. Stein, with her love for prayer and for Mary, would have been gratified to know that it was precisely in praying that someone else came upon the words sung in for the first time in 1935 expressing her affection for the Queen of Peace and the Queen Beauty of Carmel. There is a certain fittingness to the story, and I can only hope more people will come to appreciate how well Stein put her training and intellectual gifts to the service of her religious commitment.

### 3.2.2 Witnesses to Stein's Linguistic Ability

Beyond the apparently coincidental setting of my encounter of Stein's strophe during worship at community prayer lies the community itself, as mediator of spiritual heritage. In a fine example of transmission with an almost biblical flavor, a living

oral tradition has kept alive a fruit of Stein's linguistic creativity. But there is more. The community at Cologne carries forward to this day memories from now deceased nuns who attested to Stein's easy grasp of the Latin language. With one exception, all those who knew her while still alive are now gone. Just the same, their current successors attest to the great ability their holy sister phenomenologist showed for translating and otherwise using the language of Rome. Stories abound, some captured in biographies: Teresa Renata Posselt affirms she learned Dutch in Echt, thus "adding another to the six languages she had already mastered."<sup>31</sup> An eyewitness account printed for us came from Fr. Jan Nota SJ, helped generously by Stein at the Echt monastery for the Mount Carmel Feast of 1942. Stein asked the recently ordained priest to give a brief exhortation during afternoon prayer devotions. When he pleaded lack of experience she translated the pertinent texts from his (Latin, of course) breviary, and handed him a paper with points for a talk that he delivered to the community.<sup>32</sup> Oral tradition asserts her linguistic ability, and it was oral (or sung) tradition that led to discovery of the **Flos Carmeli** strophe.

My own personal experience from the 1970s can provide confirmation of the above and add further to the collection of testimonies in the oral tradition "pool." Under pressure of the Nazi regime Dr. Father Johannes Quasten, world-renowned patrologist, left Germany and established himself at Washington, DC's Catholic University. He taught for almost a half-century in Washington until he returned late in life to Freiburg. For a number of years I taught liturgical studies in the same School of Theology as Fr. Quasten. He passed on to me the following information of how he knew and interacted with Edith Stein.

Before he left Germany in the 1930s, he taught in Münster. His knowledge of Patristics and patristic languages attracted Edith Stein while she was teaching at the Institute of Pedagogy. She asked him if he would be willing to read some of St. John Chrysostom with her, so she could derive lessons for her lecturing. The work chosen was **De Educandis Liberis**; and the two met with a certain regularity to go over Chrysostom's original

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<sup>31</sup> POSSELT, *Stein*, p. 187.

<sup>32</sup> See collective work *Als een brandende toorts* (Echt: Vrienden van Dr. Edith Stein, 1967), p. 133.

Greek. Quasten was impressed by Stein's desire and dedication to the task of capturing the thought in the work they were studying. Such close-up, we would call it today "hands on," analysis was a sign for Quasten of the serious quality to Stein's work.

Unfortunately, my intentions of taping these impressions of Johannes Quasten never took form. I have just my memory to assist me at this late date. Yet, the story surely has its worth in the context of the present study about Stein's creativity in that other great patristic language, Latin. She swam easily in the currents and eddies of the late classical world that produced the works of the Fathers. So, it was easy for her to pen the lines of the new strophe for **Flos Carmeli**. And we have Father Johannes Quasten to thank for the picture he drew of a person humble enough to enlist the help of her peers in the pursuit of intellectual excellence.

### 3.2.3 Contribution to Spirituality

Each religious order in the Church has its own constellation of devotions that appropriate, but also express, the particular "culture" that flows from the charism intended for it by its founder(s). The Carmelites are known for particular affection for the Mother of God; and monasteries like the one Stein entered are decorated with depictions of Mary revered as "Queen Beauty of Carmel."<sup>33</sup> The "beauty" element in this well-established dictum harkens back to the flower image in the **Flos Carmeli** hymn. Just the same, the earliest text of the **Flos Carmeli**, as well as the subsequent known Discalced additions, do not attribute the title of "queen" to Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Would one be right to think there had been reticence to use the word "queen"?

Before the hermits left Mount Carmel under pressure from the Saracens Pope Innocent IV called them simply "Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel" in a letter written sometime either in 1246 or 1247.<sup>34</sup> Studies assume that some of the first hermits were in all probability veterans of the crusades, those embarrassing (to our ecumenical, interreligious age) cam-

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<sup>33</sup> See ILDEFONSO DE LA INMACULADA, "La tipología de Maria en Edith Stein," *Estudios Marianos* 39 (1974), 131-53.

<sup>34</sup> See Section "Mary, Sister" in *Carmel in the Holy Land*, p.46.

paigns that were oftentimes led by kings of the western nations. Later (14 cent.) medieval tradition in the Order called Mary succinctly the "Lady of the Place" where the former warriors lived on the slopes of Mount Carmel.<sup>35</sup> She was the "Domina loci," no more and nothing more exalted than just that. A queen was not mentioned in the beginning times.

While we with our contemporary spiritual tastes would congratulate those first generations of Carmelites for avoiding a monarchical form of piety toward the Mother of God, we realize that calling Mary "Queen" is to do so **a lo divino**, in an entirely analogous way. No one need answer to royalist leanings just for using the term "queen" in conjunction with Mary.

Without the least shred of triumphalism, Stein has simply done us the favor of capturing in song the Carmelite attachment to the "commoner become Queen". From this queen come only thoughts of peace, sympathy for the suffering, compassion for victims of violence and hope for their liberation. It was as Queen of Peace that Stein included her, thus reminding Carmelites that their queen would be an incitement to them to greater fidelity to a peaceful, contemplative vocation. Mary brought forth the en-fleshed "Shalom" of the Eternal One. She goes on inviting us to learn to cultivate ways of peace, the peace promised by Christ who suffered in the Holy Land but then crowned her Queen in His heavenly home. Her poetical addition to **Flos Carmeli** in 1935 finds an echo and confirmation in several lines of another poem written by her in German (but note the Latin title) for Good Friday 1938:

**Tecum Juxta Crucem Stare!**

So those whom you have chosen for companions,  
To stand beside you at the eternal throne,  
Must stand beside you here beneath the cross.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Information about the earlier centuries of the Order can be found in the standard work of Valerius Hoppenbrouwers, *Devotio mariana in ordine fratrum B.V.M. de Monte Carmelo a medio saeculi XVI usque ad fine saeculi XIX* (Roma: Institutum Carmelitanum, 1960). Coll. "Collationes Mariales Instituti Carmelitani," 1. See especially the section Cap. IV, Art. II 1. "Carmeli Mater an Regina?", pp. 254-65.

<sup>36</sup> POSSELT, *Stein*, p. 87.

One detects easily the parallel between Mary who accepted the call from the cross to be our loving mother, and Mary who in heaven is the queen who welcomes us near the throne of her Son. In both instances she knows how to acquiesce in the will of God, for "in that will is our peace."