By Pat Haggerty

On October 15th, the church celebrated the feast of St. Teresa of Avila. This feast day gave me much pause for thought. Having some connection with Carmel in my early years, I always feel a love for Teresa of Avila. She was born in Spain in 1515 and spent much of her life writing about doctrine and the mystical life. She is considered a Doctor of the Church.

Thinking of Teresa made me also think about the monastic life. What connections, if any, have you had with a monastic? What can we learn from Teresa and from modern monastics?

Perhaps you know a Benedictine or went to a Benedictine college. Perhaps you have visited an abbey or a priory. Maybe you have read some of the works of Thomas Merton.

My first introduction to a monastic life came when I was nine years old, and I actually attended my first retreat. I spent a few days at the Monastery of the Precious Blood (in New Hampshire) with Sister Eileen as my retreat mistress. I was mystified by the grate, by the midnight prayers, and by the chanting of the sisters. I continued with this practice of a retreat with Sister Eileen for many years. Even to this day, Sister Eileen and I are still friends. She is no longer in New Hampshire but resides in New York in one of the monasteries operated by the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood.

The Sisters, like other monastics, have prayer at the center of their lives. Everything they do radiates around prayer and is rooted in prayer. Whether they are painting, doing publications, or running their gift shop, they always keep their prayer life as the focus of their daily lives.

This is something that we could emulate. We are not going to stop our days to "do the office" or get up in the middle of the night to chant prayers. However, we should take a piece of our day and dedicate it to our very own monastic side. It's as if we etched out a portion of our day to connect with all those monastics who are communing with God and the other members of His Mystical Body. That's not such a bad idea!

In Sunday's gospel, the Lord told the man who questioned, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Part of the Lord's response was ". . .come, follow me." We need to follow the Lord in our everyday lives, and how better way to do this than to become a monastic---if only for a few moments! We can still do our jobs, clean our homes, and work on the computer; but, we need to isolate a few moments of each day to become a monastic and to spend some quiet time with the Lord. Try it! Follow Teresa of Avila and live by her words: "Let nothing disturb thee, nothing affright thee. All things are passing. God never changes. Patience gains all things. Who has God wants nothing. God alone suffices."