

Lloyd Wiegele, O. Carm., 1931-1997

Obituary

In August of 1949 the first combined class at the Carmelite Novitiate met in New Baltimore, Pennsylvania. The class of 1949 from Mount Carmel Prep Seminary in Niagara Falls, Ontario met the first graduation class from the Carmelite Junior Seminary in Hamilton, Massachusetts. It was a fortunate meeting that combined the students from both minor seminaries of the Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary into the class of 1950 for simple vows, and the later ordination class of 1956 which served the Province well. Students from the East, Midwest, and Canada met and formed a new class that could distinguish itself in many ways.

One of the outstanding members of the group was Lloyd (Wally) Wiegele from Chicago. This writer's first impression of Wally Wiegele was of a highly intelligent, good-looking, energetic and athletic novice. We were both born in October of 1931, but he in Chicago, Illinois.

Wally loved Chicago and enjoyed telling stories of his growing up years there, and also of his father, Raymond, who had served in the Austrian Army in World War I and was captured by the Russians and spent several years as a prisoner-of-war.

Following the war, Raymond Wiegele emigrated to Chicago. He and his wife, Mary, then had two sons. First-born Raymond, and then Wally, completed their family.

After attending both Ambrose F. Burnside Public School and St. Joachim Parochial School in Chicago, the young Wally Wiegele answered the Lord's call to a religious vocation and enrolled at Mount Carmel Prep Seminary where he excelled both academically and athletically.

On 30 August the Novitiate class of 1950 professed their simple vows and went to Mount Carmel College to continue their academic studies. Here, again, the newly professed "Frater Lloyd" continued as an outstanding student and exemplary religious. Whether in the classroom, the chapel, the recreation room, or the athletic field, he lived life to the fullest with great enthusiasm and enjoyment. He also served well as a prefect for the high school students.

During our years at Mount Carmel College, 1950-53, the need was felt to have the seminary affiliated to an established college or university so that we would be prepared academically to obtain degrees needed later for teaching.

A plan for affiliation with the University of Ottawa fell through for various reasons, not the least of which was that most of the students at Niagara were Americans and not Canadians.

Finally, an affiliation was completed with the help of the Franciscans at St. Bonaventure University in Olean, New York, from which we were granted B.A. degrees which enabled the Carmelite students to enter graduate school virtually anywhere they wished.

However, Lloyd Wiegele was sent directly to the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. where he earned his M.A. degree in philosophy with honors. He was designated to become the philosophy successor to Richard Haag who had taught for decades at Niagara.

While studying at Catholic University, and also his regular theology classes at Whitefriars Hall in Washington, D.C., Lloyd became deeply interested in studying Sacred Scripture. One of his great disappointments in life was that he was not able to do advanced studies in the field.

The ordination class of 1956 for the PCM Province went to various places for their ceremonies and First Masses. The Easterners returned to the Carmelite Junior Seminary in Hamilton, Massachusetts, where Auxiliary Bishop Jeremiah Miniham of the Archdiocese of Boston ordained Godfrey Sill, Brandon Shea, Tiernan O'Callaghan, and Kevin Shanley. Another of the group, John Malley, was ordained on 1 July in Rome, Italy.

Lloyd Wiegele went with his Midwestern classmates to St. Clara's Church in Chicago, Illinois, where Auxiliary Bishop Vincent Grizgys of the Archdiocese of Chicago ordained him with Jeremy Nolan, Franklin Tasker, Rex Morgan and Niles Gillen.

The ordination day was 26 May 1956, and the following day (Sunday), Lloyd celebrated his First Mass in St. Joachim's Church. Roland E. Murphy, the noted Scripture scholar, was deacon. Brian McCulloch, now deceased, was the homilist. A grand celebration, Chicago-style, followed the Mass.

The class of 1956 returned to the Hall to finish our fourth year of theology. We had still followed the custom/privilege of being ordained at the end of the third year of studies. During that year we awaited our first assignments as we operated as "simplex" priests.

Lloyd's first assignment was as a teacher of the newly-opened DeSales High School in Louisville, Kentucky. After two years he returned to Mount Carmel College to teach philosophy. He was greatly appreciated and admired by his students but just didn't seem able to fit into Niagara as a teacher and community member.

From 1964-66, he taught at Carmel High School in Mundelein, Illinois, before volunteering as a chaplain in the United States Air Force. Here Lloyd found a new outlet for his energy, talent and enthusiasm for ministry. He served at United States air bases in Texas, California, Virginia, and Indiana. He also served overseas in Labrador (Canada), Germany, and Vietnam. During his service in the Vietnam War, he received the Bronze Star. He also

received medals for Air Force Meritorious Service, Air force Commendation (with Oak Leaf cluster), and American Defense.

While serving at Grissom Air Force Base in Indiana, in the late 1970's, he suffered the first of his heart attacks. Lloyd survived, but then was placed on limited duty thereafter. This was another disappointment, in addition to receiving a medical discharge after 19 years of military chaplain service. He had hoped to complete 20 years for a full pension.

Following his Air Force career, Lloyd served as an associate pastor of Mount Carmel parish in Newport News, Virginia. His final assignment was to the St. Therese Chapel of the Northshore Shopping Center in Peabody, Massachusetts. He worked at the chapel with his usual enthusiasm and energy, until his failing health precluded such activity.

Death came from another heart attack at Beverly (Massachusetts) Hospital on 15 September 1997.

On Wednesday, 17 September 1997, a Mass of Christian Burial was held at 7:30 PM in the National Shrine of St. Therese at Aylesford in Darien, Illinois. Leo McCarthy, Prior Provincial, was the principal celebrant. Ferdinand Schaefer, who is the director and prior at Peabody, Massachusetts, gave a moving homily which was a fitting tribute to a great Carmelite. Several of Lloyd's classmates, plus other Carmelites, joined the Wiegele family for the wake and Requiem Mass. Burial was the following day at Mount Olivet Cemetery in Chicago, his earthly hometown.

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Homily

Today, we *remember, celebrate* and *give praise and thanksgiving* to God for two individuals separated in time by approximately 800 years but bound together through a written document. One is Albert, patriarch of Jerusalem, the man who wrote the Rule of Carmel around 1208. The other is Lloyd Wiegele, a Carmelite of the Chicago Province, who died this past Monday and for whom I offer our community Mass today. I would like to say a few words about each and then see whether both have a *common message* for us Carmelites today.

As you know, Albert prior to his becoming Patriarch of Jerusalem and prior to his becoming bishop of Bobio in 1184, had been a canon regular of the Holy Cross. His formation as a canon regular entailed two important elements: the constant reading of the scriptures and devotion to the cross of Christ. Both of these "formational" experiences would be reflected in the "formula of life" which he wrote for those first Carmelites.

In the very prologue or introduction to the Rule, Albert tells us that we Carmelites are to live "in obsequio Jesu Christi," a phrase taken from 2 Corinthians 10:5, which roughly translated means, "walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ." We are to walk in the footsteps of Christ, and for Albert, the Christ in whose footsteps we are to walk is very much the suffering and crucified Christ. And at the very heart of the Rule, chapter 7, he tells us that we are to spend our days and nights by ourselves, in our cells, meditating upon the Law of the Lord, the Scriptures. We are to become one with the Word of God.

In this hidden life of silent asceticism and contemplative prayer fueled by the Scriptures, the hermits of Carmel were to do *spiritual* battle with the powers of evil within and without. This spiritual battle is reflected in our first reading from Ephesians 6, which underlies so much of chapter fourteen of the Rule. In this way, through this *spiritual* battle of prayer and asceticism, the hermits of Carmel would accomplish what *physical* armor and breastplates and *physical* shields and helmets could not: reconquer the land, the holy land, for Christ. Recall, we are in the period of the Crusades here. It was this spirituality founded on prayer and the passion of Christ, and not military might, that would reacquire the land which was first acquired by Christ through his own passion and death.

And so we Carmelites age after age continue to be inspired by Albert's Rule. We continue to wage a spiritual battle with the many roaring lions of destruction within and without, anchored in prayer that is fueled by God's Word, and imitating each in his/her own way the suffering of Christ. Through this spiritual battle we hope that we give witness in our day, as Elijah did in his, that there is only one true God and that all the false Baals, the false gods which enslave us, must be overcome and destroyed.

Lloyd Wiegele was a man who read and lived the Rule of St. Albert. He was born in 1931, professed in 1950, and ordained in 1956. He began his ministry as a Carmelite priest at DeSales High School in Louisville in 1957, where he ministered for 2 years; then he went to Niagara where he taught philosophy for 6 years. He spent 18 years as an Air Force chaplain. And after having a heart attack around 12 years ago, he left the Air Force and spent most of the past ten years in our Peabody community, where he ministered in the shopping center chapel. Lloyd was more commonly called "Wally." I presume that is because his baptismal name was Walter. And so if I refer to him as "Wally," that is why.

I met Wally in 1960 when I was a young student of philosophy. He introduced me and many others of us at that time to the world of philosophy. I suspect that most of his philosophy students would say that Wally was a very good philosophy teacher. He made philosophy accessible, understandable. No mean accomplishment. I don't want to get into all the details or all the ups and downs of Wally's life. I just want to mention two points, because they connect Lloyd with Albert and his Rule.

The first point is this: the last ten years or so of Wally's life have been very difficult years, years of suffering. As I said, he had a heart attack around 12 years ago, and he had been on a downhill slide ever since. Heart problems, artery problems, circulation problems,

breathing problems, diabetes. These have not been easy years for Wally. And I suspect that they have been difficult years not only physically, but emotionally. Wally was an extremely talented and gifted man. It must have been difficult for him emotionally to have so much talent and to be able to so little use it during these last 10 to 12 years. I think we could say that Lloyd came to know firsthand what it meant to walk in the footsteps of the suffering-dying Christ.

And the second point is this: I think it will be 9 years ago next June when I last saw Wally. It was a Regional Meeting out at South Bend. I always enjoyed him, perhaps because of our common philosophical interests. And so one night, the two of us stayed up rather late just chewing the rag. And he told me something which I never knew before. He told me how much he loved the study of Scripture; how much Roland influenced him as a teacher; and how much he had hoped to go on himself to become a Scripture scholar. But instead of ending up in Jerusalem as a Scripture scholar, he ended up in Athens as a philosopher. But his heart was never in philosophy. It was in Scripture. He was a man of the Word, as Albert encourages all Carmelites to be.

And so both Albert and Lloyd Wiegele bequeath to us a common message: the message of imitating the suffering Christ and of becoming more and more one with God's Word. We who try to live out Albert's Rule in our day never know how we will be called to walk in the footsteps of the suffering-dying Christ. We never know how we will be called to abandon ourselves to God in naked faith, in seemingly foolish trust and at times very dry love in imitation of Christ's own abandonment. But let us pray that when the time comes, as it did for Lloyd and as it will for all of us in some way, let us pray that we will have meditated upon the Law of the Lord day and night so as to be able to make the act of abandonment, to kiss it all goodbye, including our very own existence. For to do so, to kiss it all goodbye, to be able to make that act of utter abandonment to God, is to give witness in our day to the one true God and to be freed from all the roaring lions and false Baals which enslave us. And as Carmelites, that abandonment, that self-emptying, known perhaps only to God, and not all the great accomplishments of our lives known by our fellow human beings, is our *greatest* glory.

To walk in the footsteps of the suffering Christ takes many routes. I suspect that most of them are not acknowledged by us and are even unknown to us until we are called to walk along one of them, as was Lloyd Wiegele. He has now walked in those footsteps along the way given to him. And so may he now rest in peace with Christ in whose footsteps he vowed to walk in 1950, when he first professed Albert's Rule.

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