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First Sacramento Carmelite in 14 Years Makes Solemn Vows

By Sister Carol Anne O'Marie, printed in the July 22, 1976 issue of the *Catholic Herald*

On July 16, 1976, Sister Alberta Marie, OCD, made solemn vows in the Sacramento Carmel marking the monastery's first solemn profession in 14 years. Bishop Alden J. Bell celebrated the Mass of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and witnessed Sister's profession.



Photo from the Catholic Herald

Sister Alberta Marie, Wearing a Crown of Flowers, Makes her Final Vows

As the official representative of the Church, Bishop Bell asked her, "Are you truly seeking a life of solitude, silence and labor that Carmel requires...that the fruits of your sacrifice may be abundant for the whole Church, and in a special way for the priests and people of this diocese?" "Yes, Your Excellency," she replied. "I desire the grace of solemn profession, and total consecration of my life to the service of God and people, as a Discalced Carmelite nun until death."

A hushed crowd listened as acting prioress, Sister Christine placed a wreath of flowers on Sister's head with the words: "I give you this crown, a single wreath made of many flowers, as a sign of your full incorporation into our community."

The Carmelite community is a cloistered order of contemplative nuns who first came to the Sacramento diocese in 1935. What kind of a young woman freely chooses this life of solitude and self-denial?

"Our personalities are all so varied that it is fascinating" says Sister Christine. "We are not different from other people really," she says; "We just feel a strong call that God wants us with Him."

The call came to Sister Alberta Marie, a convert to Catholicism, seven years ago. As Ann Keebler, one of the six children of Mr. and Mrs. John Keebler of Willows, she taught elementary school in Merced for ten years. Science and space were always of special interest to her. In fact, she chose July 16, 1969, to enter Carmel. That date was both the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the day of the lunar landing.

According to Sister Christine, Sister Alberta Marie brought many talents to Carmel. She paints, embroiders and creates beautiful crewel work. She contributes handmade dolls and animals to the Carmelite Guild sale. "Nature has always raised Sister Alberta Marie's soul to God," states Sister Christine. "She finds the five acres adjacent to the monastery perfect inspiration for prayer," she says.

The flight and freedom of the many birds which visit the country-like acreage are frequent subjects of her paintings. Finding God in all His creation and perfect trust in Him are hallmarks of the Carmelite vocation. Mother Seraphine, the foundress of the Sacramento Carmel, exemplified this simple trust when she wrote to Bishop Robert Armstrong, then Bishop of Sacramento, seeking permission to found a monastery.

"In regards to temporal affairs, we will have enough to make a good start, and much more than our holy mother, Saint Teresa had. As you know, she considered a foundation made if she had a house and a bell. Your Excellency, we have the bell."

Concelebrants at the solemn profession and veiling of Sister Alberta Marie included Monsignor Cornelius Higgins, Fathers William Dinelli, Sydney Hall, James Kidder, John Lysaght, OCD, Joseph King, SJ, and John Barry, SJ.

Monsignor Higgins, the homilist, reminded the congregation that Sister Alberta Marie's profession was a challenge to all, a high point of our baptismal vows. "You have it made, Sister Alberta Marie," he said. "It's too bad more young women do not envy you enough to follow you."

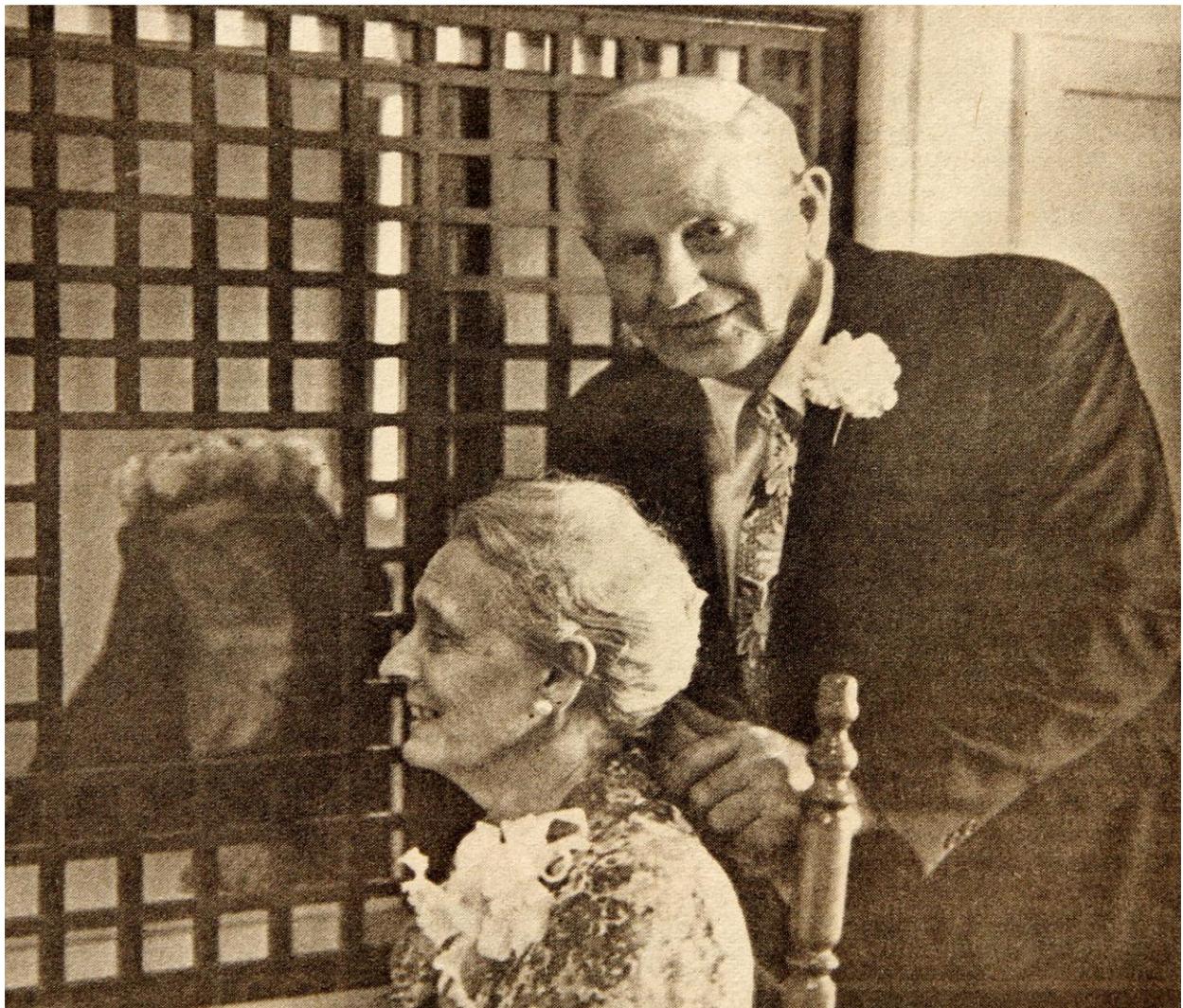


Photo from the Catholic Herald

**After Sister Alberta Marie Makes her Final Vows,
She Visits with her Parents, Mr & Mrs John Keebler, in the Monastery Parlor**