

OCDS Letter July 2020

Dear OCDS Members:

I hope all are doing well during the present pandemic. To those who have experienced loss, we pray for you in this difficult time. To those who have been touched by illness, we pray for healing, and to those who are experiencing loneliness, we pray that the Holy Spirit will comfort and support you during this time.

The following are a couple of topics that the OCDS Provincial Council and I wish to advise communities about:

First Promises & Definitive Promises: After seeking the advice of the General OCDS Delegate, Fr. Alzinir Debastiani, OCD, as well as Father General, this is the decision that is effective for all Discalced Secular Carmelites communities: there are to be no First Promises until communities can restart meeting in person. This also applies to Definitive Promises. Formation and preparation continue for members in this situation. I realize all this can cause anxiety, but I encourage a continued trusting in the providence of God, knowing that God's will is for us to wait at this time. Also, the renewal of Promises, if the community is not meeting, can take place via Zoom, FaceTime, etc., or phone.

Meetings: I realize there are differences throughout our province on who is able to meet; some communities are meeting now, others already know that they will not be able to meet for the rest of 2020, and there is the possibility that even those who are meeting now, will at some point be told that they cannot meet for a couple of months. Because of this reality, I advise communities to wait for at least three meetings before allowing for First Promises, Definitive Promises, as well as clothing new members. I suggest this because for effective formation to take place, as well as voting for members to make promises, there needs to be stability in community life for a vocation to take root and flower. This is not a hard and fast rule, there are exceptions to everything, but I think it is the best course of action given the realities of the present. If there are questions regarding this, please contact your OCDS Provincial Council representative for assistance.

Communication: One of the areas that I wish to improve in our province is communications with local communities. With this in mind, I and the OCDS Provincial Council member will be scheduling Zoom meetings for the OCDS councils in the various regions. The first of these will happen shortly. These first

meetings will be more informal, with no agenda, but are to further express the contents of this letter, as well as to offer mutual encouragement during these trying times. I want these kinds of meetings to be an ongoing reality for our province and do a second round of meetings in the fall. My hope is through this, and other means of communication, to improve and strengthen our bonds as OCDS members.

I end by encouraging everyone to continue to pray for our Discalced Carmelite Order and a world that so desperately needs prayers and the presence of God. Always ask Our Lady of Mount Carmel to spread her mantle of protection over the world. Stay strong in our OCDS way of life and may Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ bless and keep all in union with Him.

Your brother in Carmel,

Fr. Matthew Williams, OCD
OCDS Provincial Delegate