



OCDS Provincial Newsletter

California-Arizona Province of St. Joseph – March 2021

Obedience in Council Members and a Book Review

“...It is important that obedience be the fruit of dialogue, illuminating the conscience and done in charity....”

(From *The Promise & Vows in the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites* by Fr. Alzinir Debastiani, OCD, General Delegate)

The Promise of Obedience in Council Members

By Lynn Miyake, OCDS, Provincial Councilor

Have you ever wondered whether community/group council members are still subject to the promise of obedience once they are elected or appointed to serve as council members? The answer is a resounding YES! But how exactly does the promise of obedience apply to council members? To what and to whom are council members subject in obedience? These questions are important, and all OCDS members need to understand the answers, whether they are currently serving on a council or may be asked to serve in the future.

OCDS Constitutions, No. 43, states: “The Provincial Superior, usually aided by the Provincial Delegate, is the Superior of the Secular Order within his territory....” Bringing this down to the local level, No. 48 adds the local council to the General Superior and Provincial Superior as the legitimate authority within the local community or group. Since the General Superior, Provincial Superior and Provincial Delegate cannot be involved in the everyday running of every OCDS community and group, they have approved and provided us with our OCDS Constitutions and Provincial Statutes. To recap, the primary obligation of obedience in council members is to the following:

- The General Superior, the Provincial Superior and his Provincial Delegate.
- The provisions of our OCDS Constitutions and Provincial Statutes.

However, this is not the end of the story. How does the promise of obedience operate among the local council members as they make important decisions for their community or group? Are the council members required to be obedient to each other? Once again, the answer is a resounding YES!

Provincial Statutes, Sec. XIX, “The Provisions for Council Actions”, requires the full council to work together when making important decisions. In other words, the president is not the boss; the formation director is not the boss; and no other individual council member is the boss. Sec. XIX, No. 6, (a) – (k), lists the important matters that require full council participation in decision making. Every council member should be fully cognizant of these provisions.

Sec. XIX, No. 5, requires the use of parliamentary procedures and voting in council actions. However, before the council votes, all of the facts pertaining to a matter should be brought to the table and thoroughly discussed. This can take time. If a decision is difficult, the council may want to delay the decision and pray about the matter before voting, but sooner or later, after all available facts are known, a decision must be made. One council member makes a motion. Another seconds it. The council votes. Voting is important because it ensures that each council member has the opportunity to express his or her position on the matter.

Once the council has voted, any dissenting council members are subject, *in obedience*, to the decision made by the majority. This can't be stressed enough. Each council member needs to support and help implement the decisions made by the majority, with charity and humility, without complaining or bitterness. Division, distress, and in-fighting among council members generally spills over into the community or group. It can cause distress

The Promise of Obedience in Council Members (Continued)

among the members, create a hostile environment, and become an obstacle for spiritual growth among the members. If it continues, it can result in the loss of members and the loss of incoming vocations. Each council member should carefully consider whether he or she wants to be responsible for such a dire situation.

A council member (especially a president or group leader) who is overly controlling can create a stifling atmosphere in a community or group. Before members are elected or appointed to serve on a council, they are asked whether they are willing and able to serve. [See Provincial Statutes, Sec. XXVI, No 2(k).] The same courtesy should be extended to community/group members when the council asks them to serve in non-elected positions, such as treasurer or formator. Disalced Carmelite Seculars don't live together in community. The council does not know the full extent of the daily responsibilities and time commitments of their members.

Before making any major changes within a community or group, the council members should ask themselves whether the OCDS Constitutions and Provincial Statutes actually give them the authority to do so. The authority of the community/group council is limited to the actions specified in our legislation.

When a council member recognizes his or her position as only one of five (or one of three), that council member acknowledges the others as equally capable of good ideas, equally in possession of important facts, and equally subject to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This recognition is very liberating to self and life-giving to the others. When *all* of the council members operate with this understanding, the council becomes a dynamic, life-giving force within the community or group.

This article has offered only a few points related to the promise of obedience as it pertains to council members. The topic is vast, and much more could be added by others. I hope it will at least provide for some food for thought.

The whole purpose of our vocation is to grow closer to God and to help others grow closer to God as well. Those of us who have held leadership positions within the Order can probably recall mistakes we have made. Those who are just beginning to serve as leaders will probably make mistakes too. In this life, we can never be completely free from errors. Knowing and accepting our human tendency to make mistakes is the beginning of wisdom. What else can we do but place ourselves in the hands of God and beg Him to perfect our efforts for the sake of our beloved members.

Book Review

by Fr. Donald Kinney, OCD

Suzie Andres, *Being Catholic: What Every Catholic Should Know*, Augustine Institute/Ignatius Press, 2020, 190 pages, \$13.00 paperback.

The Disalced Carmelite Seculars of the California-Arizona Province should be very proud of Suzie Andres, OCDS, and her recent book, *Being Catholic: What Every Catholic Should Know*. Suzie is a member of the Westlake Village OCDS Community, where she has been a formator. Among other books, she has already written two fine books on St. Thérèse: *Something New with St. Thérèse: Her Eucharistic Miracle* and *Stations of the Cross with our Sister St. Thérèse*. The latter has been translated into Spanish and Vietnamese—and soon into Portuguese. Suzie is a graduate of Thomas Aquinas College and the University of Notre Dame. She lives in Southern California with her husband and two sons. Suzie is the daughter of Dr. Henry Zeiter, OCDS, who died recently. He was a founding member of the Lodi OCDS Group.

Book Review (Continued)

I highly recommend this book! It is an intelligent and insightful look at the truths and traditions of the Catholic Faith. Suzie Andres is witty and humorous! Her book reflects this. It is engaging, well-paced, and a delight. You will smile a lot when you read it! It gives good documentation from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and the *Code of Canon Law*. Carmelites will feel very much at home reading this book because of the rich references to our Saints. Suzie knows Carmelite Spirituality well.

I want to emphasize that this book is wonderfully composed. She begins by taking the reader on a visit inside a typical Catholic church and explains the holy water font, the tabernacle, the altar, the Mass, the Sacraments, etc. Her descriptions and charm really draw the reader on.

Suzie's explanation of the Mass is refreshing, and she discusses the often divisive subject of the "old Mass" and the "new Mass" in a balanced, reconciling way. She treats other issues that can be controversial, such as marriage and family planning. She writes, "It's best in these confusing times to be sure you know what you believe. Know, that is, what the Church teaches so that you can more easily live it out..."

There is a lovely chapter, "What to Make of Mary," followed by a chapter, "Our Lady and Our Ladies," on the apparitions of Mary. I found the chapter, "Different Catholic Rites," succinct and helpful. In her last chapter on "the last things," I'm glad she wrote about indulgences, which many of us neglect.

For me, the most poignant part of the book is a story in the "Introduction." Suzie tells us about the Catholics in Nagasaki, Japan who had to live their faith "underground" for more than two hundred years because of severe persecution. There were 300,000 Catholics in 1638 when Catholicism was outlawed and only 1,300 in 1865 when it became legal again. But those 1,300 held on! She explains, "They had not had the Eucharist for more than two hundred years, for they had not had a priest... But they had kept the rite of Baptism, they had kept the seasons of the liturgical year, and they had kept their Savior's mother as their own." We are going through something similar in this pandemic. We pray very much for Catholics who have not been able to go to church all this time, that they will also hold fast to their Faith. Suzie Andres' book would be a real support to them.

Throughout this book, you will read how much "being Catholic" means to Suzie Andres. Her love and enthusiasm for the Church is contagious. Whether you are a practicing Catholic, or have fallen away, or are wanting to become Catholic, this book will inspire you. I predict that if you buy and read it, you will want to buy copies for other people. The epigraph from St. Thérèse says what this book will do for you: "O how glorious our Faith is! Instead of restricting hearts, as the world fancies, it uplifts them and enlarges their capacity to love."