



OCDS Provincial Newsletter

California-Arizona Province of St. Joseph – September 2022
Election Questions, Mental Prayer, and Prayers for Deceased Members

One of the fundamental elements of our vocation is “to spend at least one half-hour daily in the practice of mental prayer in an atmosphere of interior silence and solitude.” [Provincial Statutes, Sec. I(d)]

Notables	Our Vocation
<p style="text-align: center;">2023 Election Questions</p> <p>As previously noted, all canonically-established OCDS communities in our province will hold elections in the spring of 2023. Since many of the elections scheduled for 2020 were held much later, we are including some guidance on term limits and eligibility. Any council member who will have served for six years from 2017 to 2023 is considered to have served two full terms, regardless of when the delayed 2020 election occurred. The only exception is a council member who was elected as president in his or her second term. That person will be eligible to be nominated to serve as president for one more term, but will not be eligible to serve as a council member if not elected as president.</p> <p>Any council member who was elected to a first term in a delayed election, and who will not have served a full three years at the time of the 2023 election, will be eligible to be nominated for a full <u>first</u> term in 2023. For example: Member X was elected to a first term in a delayed election that occurred in October 2021. Since Member X will have only served on the council for 1-1/2 years at the time of the 2023 election, the incomplete term from 2021 to 2023 will not count for the purposes of term limits as outlined in Provincial Statutes, Sec. XXVI, No. 2(d), p. 82. Please refer to your Provincial Council Regional Representative if you have any other questions about election eligibility related to the 2023 elections.</p> <p>Please remember to submit the names of newly-elected or appointed presidents and group leaders to ocds.info@gmail.com so they will receive all official notifications, including the OCDS Provincial Newsletters. Also, please send the names of any new presidents, group leaders, or council members, along with their email addresses and phone numbers, to your Provincial Council Regional Representative.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mental Prayer, Prayer of Recollection, & Prayer of Quiet By Lynn Miyake, OCDS</p> <p>From time to time, all Secular Carmelites struggle with the required 30 minutes of mental prayer. We may even struggle for long periods of time, even for many years. The Teresian prayer that we strive to practice is the Prayer of Recollection. However, there are many misconceptions about this prayer, and these misconceptions can make our prayer life more difficult than it needs to be.</p> <p>The Prayer of Recollection is simply a prayer of remembering – remembering the Lord who is hidden in the center of our hearts, who is always there whether we perceive Him or not. When it’s time for mental prayer, we withdraw to a quiet location and turn our attention to the Lord who dwells in our hearts. We strive to let go of our everyday concerns and external distractions. If an uninvited sound intrudes, we don’t follow it with our attention unless it calls for an act of charity. St. Teresa wrote that her nuns would grow closer to God by leaving prayer to care for a sister in need rather than by selfishly remaining in delightful solitude when care was needed elsewhere. (Foundations 5:3-5)</p> <p>Most of our distractions are not calls for charity. We all have to grapple with internal and external distractions during mental prayer. How do we deal with them? We don’t struggle against them. We simply acknowledge our human frailty and return to mental prayer as soon as we realize we have been distracted. We don’t think badly of ourselves, because we understand that every Carmelite experiences the same distractions. That’s why it’s so important for us to begin with determination and to persevere in prayer, regardless of the dryness and distractions that we may experience.</p> <p>Teresa provided guidance on how to begin mental prayer: “As is already known, the examination of conscience, the act of contrition, and the sign of the cross must come first.” (WP 26:1) By beginning with these three simple steps, we immediately enter into the proper disposition for prayer by practicing self-knowledge (the examination of conscience), humility (the act of contrition), and an act of faith in the Holy Trinity (the sign of the cross).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Continued)</p>

Mental Prayer, Prayer of Recollection, & Prayer of Quiet (Continued)

Teresa goes on to say: "...Since you are alone, strive to find a companion. Well, what better companion than the Master Himself who taught you this prayer? Represent the Lord Himself as close to you and behold how lovingly and humbly He is teaching you. Believe me, you should remain with so good a friend as long as you can. If you grow accustomed to having Him present at your side, and He sees that you do so with love and that you go about striving to please Him, you will not be able – as they say – to get away from Him; He will never fail you; He will help you in all your trials; you will find Him everywhere..." (WP 26:1) Teresian prayer is always Christocentric. Teresa especially recommended that we ponder episodes from the life of Jesus during our prayer time. Many of us are unable to form images in our minds, but we can all hold the episodes in our hearts with great love and attention, without imaginatively following a story line. (WP 28:5)

Teresa understood that the Prayer of Recollection can be very difficult or almost impossible during times of fatigue, illness, or emotional distress. She recommended three aids to recollection when prayer is difficult: 1) vocal prayers prayed silently with loving attention (WP 28:4 et al), 2) meditating with an inspiring book (WP 26: 10), or 3) gazing upon a beautiful image of the Lord (WP 26:9).

When we faithfully practice the Prayer of Recollection on a regular basis over a period of time, it's not uncommon for God to lead us into the Prayer of Quiet. This prayer is actually the beginning of supernatural prayer, because it can't be attained or achieved by our efforts alone. In this prayer, the intellect, memory, and imagination are stilled by God, and the will is captured and held in God. Although the Prayer of Quiet is the beginning of supernatural contemplation, it doesn't feel supernatural in any way. Rather, we simply become aware of being content to remain alone in the presence of God, without thinking, remembering, or imagining anything. It's a prayer of gentle calm and peace, and it generally doesn't last very long. The intellect, memory, and imagination soon become active again.

When we receive the blessing of the Prayer of Quiet, we may be tempted to try to prolong it after it has passed. Teresa advises: "The best way to hold on to this favor is to understand clearly that we can neither bring it about nor remove it; we can only receive it with gratitude, as most unworthy of it..." (WP, 31:6) When the Prayer of Quiet has passed, we simply use other means to remain in prayer, such as those previously mentioned: vocal prayer prayed silently with loving attention, meditation with a book, especially the Gospels, or gazing upon a beautiful image of the Lord.

There is another temptation, which is the opposite – that is to resist the Prayer of Quiet because we are unwilling to let go of our favorite prayer habits or devotions. Imagine if Jesus were knocking on your door and you refused to get up and open to Him because you hadn't finished your Rosary. Believe it or not, this is a very common temptation, and it prevents many from receiving the grace of contemplation. If God interrupts your Morning Prayer or Rosary with the gift of contemplation, don't leave Him standing outside in the cold. The Prayer of Quiet will pass soon enough, and He will provide the opportunity for you to finish your other prayers and devotions.

*The most common mistake we make is trying to put ourselves into the Prayer of Quiet when God isn't giving it. We need to be honest with ourselves. If we are trying to sit in emptiness, with no thoughts or emotions, when God is not giving us the Prayer of Quiet, we need to stop doing that. St. Teresa did not teach that. God can't be manipulated into giving us the Prayer of Quiet. He gives it where and when he wills for reasons beyond our understanding. If God *does* give the Prayer of Quiet, accept it with gratitude, remain with it as long as it lasts, and then let it go when God withdraws the experience. If you receive extraordinary experiences in prayer, such as raptures, ecstasies, or locutions, simply bring them to your confessor to make sure they are from God.*

Here is a tip that is great help in prayer. *Offer your 30 minutes of mental prayer as a gift to God. Forget about yourself. Forget about what you want to experience in prayer. Forget about what you are afraid of experiencing in prayer. Make your 30 minutes a complete self-offering with no expectations. Offer the gift of yourself to the Lord with all of your weaknesses and imperfections. If you offer yourself generously and completely, without expectations and concerns for yourself, your difficulties in prayer will soon disappear.*

The fruits of prayer are not extraordinary experiences, but rather, growth in the virtues, especially the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. Growth in prayer comes from being faithful to prayer. Just as importantly, it comes from striving to grow in virtue every day and from being faithful to the teachings of the Church and to our vocation.

As a result, it's so important how we conduct ourselves in community. Teresa wrote: "...The practice of these three things helps us to possess inwardly and outwardly the peace our Lord recommended so highly to us. The first of these is love for one another; the second is detachment from all created things; the third is true humility, which, even though I speak of it last, is the main practice and embraces all the others." (WP 4:4) In closing, Teresa also wrote: "...All must be friends, all must be loved, all must be held dear, all must be helped." (WP 4:7) We can never go wrong if we always strive to follow her most excellent advice.

Please remember and pray for our OCDS members who have died within the last year:

Rose Marie Romero, OCDS
Covina, CA

Fidela Manarang, OCDS
Annabelle Pineda, OCDS
Juanita Lacap, OCDS
Rod Thoits, OCDS
Oakville, CA

Jean Kay Schauer, OCDS
Lenore Haack, OCDS
Winifred Sophia Boyle, OCDS
Margaret Jane "Janie" Hoffner, OCDS
San Diego, CA

Judy Bok, OCDS
Denver, CO

Fr. Richard Ward, OCDS
Lumen Anulacion, OCDS
Editha Bernardo, OCDS
Irma Lobo, OCDS
Dr. Maria Orallo, OCDS
Fr. Robert J. Egan, SJ (Spiritual Assistant)
Shoreline, WA

Deby James, OCDS
Renton, WA

If you want to include an OCDS member who has died within the last 12 months in future newsletters, please email the name, city, and state to Lynn Miyake at Lkmiyake@aol.com. The names listed in our newsletters do not necessarily represent all of the members who have passed away in the last year. The list is for remembrance and prayers only, not for official notification.

Please remember to submit an official record on Form D to our OCDS Central Office for each member that has passed away in your community or group. Go to ocds.info/forms.htm for more information.