

IMPEDIMENTS TO JOINING THE SECULAR ORDER

Doreen Glynn-Pawski, OCDS

Those who come to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites can be presumed to be seeking a more structured prayer life that will lead to intimacy with God for the good of the Church and the world. As a part of the Catholic Church, the Order of Carmel must require, however, certain criteria for membership, so that all can authentically live out the life in obedience to the commandments of God and the laws of the Church. This does not mean that there is a type of exclusivity in Secular Carmel; rather, it simply means that every member must be able to participate fully in the life of the Church and Carmel in the freedom of conscience that is afforded by adherence to God's law. Persons who feel they have a vocation to Carmel, but have certain impediment(s) to membership may confer with Church authorities to seek remedy or release from such impediments. It is not to exclude that Carmel must refuse membership, but to help the candidate acknowledge and understand that an impediment exists, and to assist him or her to seek God's grace in taking any possible steps to remedy the situation. Until remedied, impediments act as a bar to membership in the Order.

There are impediments to becoming a Secular Carmelite that may be self-evident, but which need to be mentioned explicitly by the formator early in the process to avoid errors, misunderstandings, miscommunication, and hurt feelings. With the assurance that it will be kept confidential, the candidate must reveal anything that may present an obstacle to entering the Secular Order to the President or Director of Formation at the beginning of aspirancy. This information will be kept within the confidentiality of the council. It is the responsibility of the council, with the help of the aspirant, to discern whether this person has or has not a potential vocation to the Secular Carmelites.

Impediments to entrance include, but may not be confined to the following:

- Under 18 years of age;
- Not able, for any reason, to participate in the sacraments;
- Not confirmed in the Church;
- If married, not married in the Church;
- Re-married outside the Church;
- Holding beliefs that are expressly in opposition to Church teaching;
and
- Living a style of life that is considered scandalous and in opposition to Church law.

Membership in any other Order would prevent a person from faithfully fulfilling the requirements of either Order. Prudence, as well as a vocation to the charism of a particular Order, should inform a lay person's decision to make a special commitment to God in just one Order. It is necessary for a candidate to inform the President or Director of Formation of any stage of membership in another Order. It is the duty of the OCDS

Council to ask if any new candidate is a member of another Order. Dialogue can then be initiated as to which Order the person is truly called. Membership in other Church associations can also raise similar concerns.