

DELEGATE'S COMMUNIO

| Dedicated to Carmelite Communion and Communication |

Scripture

The Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears (Jn 16:13).

Legislation.

The Spiritual Assistant to each community is usually a friar of the Order. His duty is to give spiritual aid to the community so that its members may be guided in their vocation and may correspond with it as perfectly as possible. He will also endeavor to promote solidarity between the secular community and the friars and nuns of the Order..... The Spiritual Assistant must be well-versed in Carmelite spirituality and well-informed in the Church's teaching concerning the role of lay people (Cons 44)

Spiritual Assistant

I desire for us to **continue to walk together**. The step I would like us to take together regards the spiritual assistant (SA).

I want to emphasize the **responsibility** of the OCDS councils in the life of their communities, and in particular, the selection of a spiritual assistant. Sec XIX 6d of the Provincial Statutes speaks of the Council which "actively work(s) together" with the Delegate in the selection of the SA.

The Order seeks to develop the "Secular Order as adult and capable of representing to the world the spirituality of Carmel (*Pastoral Care of the Secular Order - PC*). And hence seeks "collaboration under the direction of the legitimate superiors of the Order as outlined in the Constitutions".

It follows that I call you to a **mature collaboration** with the Delegate in the selection of a SA for your communities.

How to select one?

One aspect I want to emphasize is the **collaborative** approach to appointing a spiritual assistant. The statutes explain (Sec XVIII,1) that it is the Provincial Superior, or his Delegate that makes the appointment **after consultation** with the local OCDS Council. ***Consultation means that a discernment and discussion takes place.***

"**Usually**", the SA is **a friar** of the Order (Cons 44). "Preferably be a Discalced Carmelite Friar" (Pastoral Care Art 14).

The SA "**must** be well-versed in Carmelite spirituality and well-informed in the Church's teaching concerning the role of lay people in the Church" (C 44). ***Do we use these criteria in evaluating and selecting a SA?***

Charism

Holy Father
St. John of the Cross
Living Flame of Love

3,28. In the first place it should be known that if anyone is seeking God, **the Beloved is seeking that person much more.**

3.46. These directors should reflect that they themselves are not the chief agent, guide, and mover of souls in this matter, but **the principal guide is the Holy Spirit, who is never neglectful of souls**, and they themselves are instruments for directing these souls to perfection through faith and the law of God, according to the spirit given by God to each one.

Thus the whole concern of directors should not be to accommodate souls to their own method and condition, but they should **observe the road along which God is leading one**; if they do not recognize it, they should leave the soul alone and not bother it. And in harmony with the path and spirit along which God leads a soul, the spiritual director should strive to conduct it into greater solitude, tranquility, and freedom of spirit.

After consultation and an appointment *Pastoral Care Art. 16.2*, specifies, “The appointment of the Assistant is made in **writing** and for a **specified time**”. ***The appointment will be confirmed in writing by the Provincial Delegate for a determined time.***

What is the role of Spiritual Assistant?

Pastoral Care Art 15.1 states, “The principal task of the assistant is to **foster a deeper insight** into **Disalced Carmelite spirituality**...and to **cooperate** in the initial and continuing **formation** of the Secular Disalced Carmelites”. The SA is “**specifically** responsible for... **spiritual reflection**” (*PC Art 15.4*).

However, they are to “be **respectful** of the **responsibilities and role of the Secular Disalced Carmelites, giving them priority with regard to the guidance, co-ordination, and animation of the community**” (*PC art 15.2*). The Statutes (*Sec XVIII, 2*) speak of an **advisory** role when they are present at Council meetings and in the evaluation of candidates.

Furthermore, they can only be present at Council meetings by invitation and they do not have a right to vote (*Const 44*). “His duty is to give **spiritual aid** to the community” and to “**support** the formation of the community” (*C 44*). ***The SA assists but does not remove the responsibility of the Council and the community.***

What happens if no friar is available?

If no friar is available, *Pastoral Care Art. 16* explains: the Order “can entrust the service of spiritual assistance to: - **religious** of other Carmelite institutes; - **clergy** who are Secular Disalced Carmelites, **specifically prepared for such service**; - other diocesan clerics or non-Disalced Carmelite religious, **specifically prepared for such service**” (3). And he or she must have the consent of his own superior (*Sec XVIII, 1*).

What if none?

In the case where there is no viable option due to uncountable and unfavorable circumstances, then the Delegate and the Regional Representative will discern the way forward with the local community.

Legislation

“Formation is the responsibility of the Order....

“Within the bounds of the relationship between the friars and the seculars the seculars certainly have their autonomy.... The autonomy touches upon matters of formation, leadership and governance....

There are extremes that distort the autonomy given to the Secular Order: either excessive independence or excessive dependence on the part of the seculars; and on the part of the friars wither lack of interest or desire to control.

In these extremes there is a failure or impossibility of collaboration under the direction of the legitimate superiors of the Order as outlined in the Constitutions. As well, there is the failure to develop the lay members of the Order to the stature and responsibility that the Church and the Order wish them to have. The Secular Order therefore remains trapped in a model that will not serve to present the Secular Order as adult and capable of representing to the world the spirituality of Carmel. (*Pastoral Care of the Secular Order*, Prologue).

Process to appoint a SA.

Keeping all this in mind, this is the process I want to follow for this triennium.

1. **Three Months Discernment.** The local council discerns together. They include this topic in their council meeting(s). I ask that you do this by reviewing what the Constitutions and Statues say about the SA. And then discuss what options are available, what best serves your community and why. Agree together. I ask that this discussion and discernment be completed by August 15.
2. **Consultation with the Delegate.** Around August 15, the Delegate will begin (with the help of the Regional Representatives) contacting the different communities. We will consult with the local councils about their proposed SA and their reasons for the selection. For some this will be a quick process, for others a longer process. For non-friars, if it seems appropriate, a further conversation will take place with those proposed SA to ensure they are suitable. There is no strict timeline at this stage. Each community will have the time they need to appoint a SA.
3. **Official Letter.** The final step will be to send a written letter to the local community, the appointed SA, and to save a copy in the Central Office files.

Conclusion.

To conclude, I call on you to actively engage and collaborate on this matter of the spiritual assistant. Seek what is in the best interest of the formation, growth, and life of your local community. I call you to continue to be responsible, active, mature, and to take up your seat in the house of Teresa.

Fr. Juan Elias Medina, OCD

Provincial Delegate to the OCDS

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