

**ORDER OF THE DISCALCED BROTHERS
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF MOUNT CARMEL
91st GENERAL CHAPTER - 4-24 MAY 2015**

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15 MAY 2015 - OCDS

10:00 Report on the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order - OCDS (1999-2015)
(Fr. Alzinir F. Debastiani OCD) - Free Interventions.

11:30 From the collaboration of the laity with S. Teresa to the collaboration of the OCDS laity with the Order (synthetic vision in S. Teresa and the current doctrine of the Church and the Order - the Vat II, Cf L, VC, General chap. 1997, EG, Year of the Cons. Life). (Myrna Torbay OCDS). Free interventions.

16:30 Some experiences of collaboration OCD-OCDS (France-Anne Pfister OCDS), (Spain- José Manuel and Loli OCDS Andalucía), Philippines (Fr. Reynaldo Sotelo OCD, Philippines) ...

18:30 OCDS: between autonomy and collaboration in the life and mission of the Order in the provinces and Provinces. Open dialogue and free interventions.

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Proposals to the Chapter:

- 1) Set March 23 as a commemorative day of the OCDS as the symbolic date of foundation of the OCDS (in 1594 Clement VIII with the Bull *Cum Dudum* extends privileges OCarm the Order of Discalced Carmelites).
- 2) International Council of the OCDS

REPORT ON LAY DISCALCED CARMELITE ORDER - OCDS (2009-2015)

Ávila, May 15, 2015

The great Teresian Carmelite family, as we know, is composed of the Friars, Nuns and Secular Carmelite Laity. It is “one Order with the same charism” (*Const OCDS*, Preface.) where the laity contribute to the Order the richness of the *secular nature* (*Const OCDS* 1.38;. Cf : *Cf Laici* 15).

In this report on Secular Carmel I dwell on the following points:

1. The current documents governing the Secular Order;
2. Statistics of the Secular Order;
3. Some important topics for the Order
4. Concluding Remarks



1. DOCUMENTS GOVERNING THE SECULAR ORDER TODAY

1.1. The Constitutions of the OCDS (2003 and 2014)

It was the merit especially of the II International Congress of the OCDS in Mexico in 2000 for launching the preparation of the *Constitutions* which were approved in 2003, following the work of a commission composed of 10 lay people from various parts of the world and Fr. Aloysius Deeney, Delegate General from the Province of Oklahoma – who was for 15 years General Delegate for the OCDS and currently Delegate for East Asia. We wish to thank him for his tireless work in the development of almost all documents that we have today for the OCDS as well as the organization of the General Secretariat in Rome, along with Irma Estrada Franco, an OCDS of Mexico.

In 2013, following a request of some members of the OCDS and Definitory General, a chapter on *fraternal communion* (ch. 3 B) was prepared in consultation with communities and provinces of the OCDS. A number on *St. Joseph* (n. 31) was also aggregated.

What motivated this addition was the importance of these topics, community and the figure of St. Joseph, in the spirituality and writings of our Holy Mother Teresa. We may say that it is also a result of reading her writings in preparation for the V centenary of her birth. These texts were approved by the Definitory in September 2013 and by the CIVCSVA on January 7, 2014 (Prot. NC228 2003).

1.2. *Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Carmel* (2006)

The *Spiritual assistance*, approved by the Definitory General on December 14, 2006, provides elements for pastoral service to the OCDS in the Order and in the Provinces by friars, describing their functions at various levels of government of the Secular Order.

1.3. *The Ratio Institutionis for Secular Order* (2009)

This develops the formation aspect of the Secular Carmel, with this main objective: to “prepare the person to live the charism and spirituality of the Teresian Carmel at the service of the Church and the Order” (*Const OCDS* 32; *Ratio* 4-6). This document was presented at the 90th General Chapter and subsequently approved by the General Definitory on September 17, 2009.

All these documents are available on the website of the Order in the main languages.

1.4 The Ritual for the OCDS (1991)

Contains liturgical rites and ceremonies for use in the Admission, Promises and Vows of the Secular Order. They were approved by the Congregation for the Divine Worship and Sacraments on 22 February 1991.

Other documents for the Circumscriptions and Provinces are:

- Local Laws;
- Formation program.

They are prepared by the Provinces or Circumscriptions and approved by the General Definitory. They concretize the *Constitutions* and the *Ratio* in the various geographic areas.



2. STATISTICS OF THE SECULAR ORDER

I refer here to the data collected for the 2013 edition of *Conspectus Ordinis*.

Total members with temporary and final promises is about 25,407. I think this number can reach to about 30,000 as compared to the data of *Conspectus* 2003, since almost a third part of the provinces did not send answers.

The total number of canonically erected communities is around 1590. In this sexennium, until March 19, 2015, 91 new communities of the OCDS have been canonically erected. There are currently about 250 new communities or groups in formation.

The Secular Order is present in about 74 countries.



3. SOME TOPICS OF IMPORTANCE TO THE ORDER

In September 2014 a questionnaire was sent to the Communities and Provinces of the OCDS with six questions on different topics. Provincial Councils of the OCDS made a summary of the responses of the Communities of their respective Provinces and sent it to the General Secretariat in the month of January 2015.

The total number of responses received was: 49 (46 provinces and 3 Communities). We thank all those who collaborated, either as OCDS Provincial Councils or Provincial Delegates for this work and generosity. I believe it was enriching for everyone.

I present here a summary of the responses to each question, with the conviction that the *sensus fidei* present in all the baptized help you to discern in today's world the *signs of the times*¹ and priorities

¹ International Theological Commission, *Sensus Fidei in the Life of Church* (2014), writes at no. 127: "The Vatican II has been a new Pentecost, which prepared the Church to New Evangelization that, after the council, the Popes have not ceased to call upon. The Council has placed the notion of Tradition in a new light, according to which all the baptized are provided with a *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidei* resource is one of the most important for the new Evangelisation. Thanks to it the faithful are not only able to recognize what is in accord with the Gospel and what is refusing Contrary, but also to perceive what Pope Francis Has called "New ways to walk the 'faith of the whole pilgrim people. In the reasons for which bishops and presbyteri must be near the parrot people on the way and have to walk with it you can parrot PRECISELY because both recognize these "new ways" that people perceive. The discernment of these new ways, that the Holy Spirit opens and lights, will be vital for the new Evangelisation".

for the service of evangelization we offer to those who have been called to participate as lay members in our own religious family.

3.1. Fraternal relations

1) The testimony of fraternal communion is a “light that attracts” and evangelizes (Cf: EG 100). How are the fraternal interactions between members of your community and among the three expressions of the same Order: Friars - Nuns - Laity - in your Circumscription or province?

A large majority of the responses indicated that there are good relations of mutual help between the Nuns, friars and the Secular Order, although not profound, due to respect for the diverse lifestyles of the laity. The seculars are well received in the convents of friars for their meetings; they feel included in the communications from the Provincial or Delegate or from the center of the Order.

There are examples of good experiences of days of spirituality and recreations with friars and nuns, sharing also in common fraternal meals.

The nuns are present with their prayers; one feels their proximity and support; their work of translating the works of our saints is well appreciated. There have been occasions when some representatives of the OCDS were present in assemblies of associations of Nuns or in the provincial chapters of the friars.

From the overall responses we can see that the relations with the nuns are of sympathy and affection. The OCDS communities that gather in the monasteries are very grateful for this contact which, although limited by the lifestyle of the monastery, is highly valued.

With the nuns: there are good individual initiatives of fraternal relations with the monasteries of other countries. In countries with few Catholics, nuns are a great support for the Laity.

There are provinces that publish a single Newsletter for the Friars, Nuns and the OCDS, which helps communion / fraternal communication.

Initiatives in common, OCDS-Friars-Nuns, in the reflections and celebrations of V Centenary, have favored a deepening of fraternal interaction between the 3 branches.

Limitations, due to little interaction or fraternity with friars, are present in countries where there are long distances between the OCDS Communities among themselves and among the friars in the same region. The small number of friars does not facilitate better fraternal relationship; this is often reduced to the Provincial Delegate’s visit to communities once or twice a year or to retreats preached by the friars. In these cases communications are given via internet, Skype, etc.

Within the communities there are generally good relations between the members themselves (except in about 2 Provinces that reported difficulties in this, but are looking towards becoming more fraternal).

Some communities feel they require more time *to share the Word of God* and the themes developed in formation, combining them with the concrete family life and work.

There are cases – few, thank God – of *no good fraternal relationship with the friars*. There are cases of friars who don’t recognize seculars as members of the Order and are practically ignored. Two OCDS Provinces say they feel displaced from the life of the Friars (except the Assistants); others favor other Movements and do not consider the OCDS part of the Order; when they do seek the OCDS, it is out of interest in the economic assets of the members or Community ...

Other problems that are mentioned are clericalism and indifference; they still keep calling “Third Order”; in these same provinces, they say, there are no interactions with the nuns either.

3.2. Formation

2) What do you think of the formation received in your community? Do you have any suggestions to improve it, so that members of the OCDS can live more fully their lay Carmelite identity and contribute more to evangelization in the family, at work and in the social world?

The formation is partly good and they see the monthly formation meetings of the community as essential to living the charism and vocation on other days of the month.

The meetings for the study of St Teresa's Works in preparation for the V Centenary of Birth were very valuable for formation.

The *provincial formation program* is appreciated. This has helped to organize and unify the formation in Communities. In the provinces where there is also a Manual for formation in various stages, it is a great help to members, either as printed newsletters or on web.

Fraternal sharing in Communities on topics of formation is very well valued; it should be given more time at meetings;

The formation conferences or lectures via the Internet are of great importance and help for communities in some Provinces and Circumscriptions with vast distances between the Communities or where the friars are reduced in number.

We need to train the formators in the communities; in some provinces there are initiatives underway to this. The aim is to deepen prayer life and insertion of spirituality in everyday family life and work.

We need to continue formation after the final promises and we must insist on the responsibility of each one in continuing self-education or formation.

We feel the need of better formation and knowledge of the Bible and current documents of the Church in order to live the apostolic life and face the challenges of evangelization in the midst of the world.

As **desires expressed about formation**, we have:

Having a book written by the Seculars themselves on how to live their vocation in the midst of the world.

The need to have a unique formation program in the Communities of some Provinces;

Members with final promises should also take responsibility in initial formation, assisting the Formator in charge.

In some cases the formative methods in Communities are not suitable for our days and there is resistance by older members to any change. Human formation is required.

Make it a preparation for living the charism in life and not merely intellectual;

There are certain experiences of lay persons still waiting for and value formation by the friars; in this case the very friars hinder an update on formation or they do not follow the formation program according to the Ratio.

It is important to promote among the laity the responsibility for formation in their provinces;

There are problems in some communities due to the lack of works of our Saints and formation materials in native languages;

A better vocational discernment is necessary, as well as a deeper preparation of formators and to the promises;

A *formation commission* in the provinces was suggested to help the Communities with formation visits as well as editing a book for formation with basic material, according to the model of the “100 Sheets ... on formation in the OCDS ...”

3.3. Examples of apostolate

3) Give some significant examples of the works of specific apostolate (individual or in community) made by the laity in your Community.

Individual *parish ministry* is the majority of the OCDS members’ activities (extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist or in catechesis, liturgy, sacristy, acolytes; preparing parents and godparents at Baptism and Marriage, etc.); participation in parish choirs;

Visiting the sick in hospitals, nursing; helps to pilgrims and the sick in trips to shrines. Pastoral work in prisons; among drug addicts and alcoholics; in schools; assistance to the poor; listening the needy; Voluntaries in Caritas and the Red Cross; Apostolate in personal professions as doctors, dentists, teachers, etc. ...;

Adoption of orphans and distant adoptions; Support groups in defense of life.

Specific ministries:

Promoting Teresian Prayer Groups (GOT); Preaching retreats or days of prayer; help in churches and retreat houses of the Friars; Offering days of spirituality about the Saints of the Order to others who don’t feel the call to the Secular Order;

Exhibitions on St. Teresa in various churches with: calendars and materials on the V Centenary; Divulgation of spirituality through internet (Blogs, Facebook, conferences, etc. ...)

Promoting monthly visit of the image of the Mother of Carmel to houses of our members to expand devotion in families; triduums in honour of Saints of the Order in parishes; nocturnal adoration; weekly prayer group animation for vocations; Spiritual assistance to Carmel Fraternities; Catechesis on the Scapular;

Organization for monetary help to the Missions of the Order and monasteries of nuns; financial help or books for poor OCDS Communities.

There are examples of cooperation with other Christian Churches in the liturgy and ecumenical pilgrimages, study groups on Saints of the Order, publications in local languages;

Quetzal (Barcelona) Foundation made by a Secular to aid donations (Construction of houses, child clinic and dining room) in Central America and other initiatives in India, Ethiopia and now plans to go to Zambia;

3.4. Vocation promotion

4) What are the means used by your community to make the OCDS known and to promote vocations?

Personal witness to friendship with Jesus and among the members is the first way. Calling individual persons to join the Community or even inviting people to participate in any meeting of the Community;

Participation in liturgical events, ordinations, religious professions, promises, feasts of the saints of the Order wearing large Scapular or other external signs (pin, medal, etc.), organizing together with

the friars talks about the saints in various parishes, including assistance in receiving them using the Scapular are the most common means of propagation of the vocation to the OCDS.

Promotion of retreats open to all by the OCDS Communities in parishes during Lent or Advent; Holy Hour in parishes organized by the OCDS.

V Centenary celebrations make the Teresian Carmel more known; we distribute also small “vocational” leaflets.

Publication of articles about the Saints and the Order in diocesan and parish bulletins; Posters in parishes;

Promotion of occasional events (exhibitions, lectures, or even weeks of spirituality) in the monasteries and parishes on the spirituality of the Order, to arouse interest in spirituality of the Teresian Carmel;

Celebrations of the Promises in parishes, not isolating the Community from other existing groups therein;

Promotion of prayer groups in prisons or in parishes, as well as lectures on the saints and Spirituality;

Monthly newsletters published and sent via internet on the spirituality of Carmel;

Through participation in ‘Radio Maria’ programs and others in local TV;

Participation in events of the Diocese with the outward signs of the OCDS; invitations at Mass;

Gift books of our Saints to friends or people with possible vocational interest;

Blogs and web sites in many provinces, with telephone contact or e-mail so that persons with interest can be welcomed and oriented;

3.5. International Advisory Council of the OCDS

5) What do you think of forming an International Council of the OCDS for consultation? How should it be organized?

This was a topic with many answers ... was generally well received by more than half of the provinces; there were, however, a good number of negative answers or seen as unnecessary...

Those in favour of the International Council see its function as assisting in the formation of Communities, in helping to resolve conflicts, in elaborating the statutes and developing pastoral spiritual initiatives.

Other responses indicated that before creating the Council, we must define the role and means of communication and interaction among members; suggestions on this point are to use Skype or video conferencing;

Should be organized with representatives of laity and friars who are committed to the development of the Secular Order: a representative of the National or Provincial Councils; others say they should be elected by the General Definitory after consultation with the Provincial.

It could be organized by linguistic regions;

Many are of the opinion that it would be better to first create regional councils, which would help in economic and linguistic question.

Those who are not in favour say they need further clarification on the purpose of the International Council of the OCDS. They see it unnecessary when there is a good organization in the Provinces; perhaps a periodical international meeting...

Some responses were not in favour, for it would only be more bureaucracy and paperwork...

Many showed concern for the economic costs the provinces would incur and the challenge of communication between the members of the Council...

3.6. The message of the OCDS to the Order

6) What would you have to say or suggest to the Chapter Fathers and the whole Order, looking at the challenges the world faces today and the needs of evangelization (“signs of the times”) present in the society in your country?

To submit suggestions and messages of this issue I tried to make thematic blocks under common headings, as far as possible, leaving their own words.

1. Acknowledgement and prayers

Almost all appreciate the opportunity to speak to the Friars in the General Chapter. They want them to know that the OCDS pray for the friars, they esteem them and manifest it through their prayers and sacrifices for the General Chapter.

2. They expect the witness to the values of Consecrated Life

Profound prayer life is the source for a consistent witness to the Gospel; friars should be men of God encouraging the laity in the same search for God and to “speak more with deeds than words” and lead a simple life;

Community engagement with life of prayer and apostolate, of compassion and love for the poor.

Communities of friars shouldn't close in “ghettos”, only preaching to the converted (there is a tendency today to flee, to escapism from the world); they need to go preaching as mendicants...

More opening and proximity to the laity and their problems; Internet communication is valid, but the presence of the other (Assistant) is very important in the life of the Community.

3. Recognition of their lay dignity and vocation as an integral part of the Order

They expect recognition of their lay state and not be treated as half-friars or half-nuns; they are part of the same family with the same call to holiness and mission and expect to be recognized as such in the different provinces;

They want to be treated as adults and walk along with the religious in pastoral and evangelizing work, and not only receiving orders. They expect more awareness that the laity of the OCDS belong to the same family as the friars and nuns;

4. They expect greater communication and collaboration with the 3 branches of the Order

Increased presence, collaboration and communication among the Friars - Nuns - OCDS;

Young friars in formation should be introduced to the importance of the Secular Carmelite vocation; promote a real knowledge of the OCDS among Friars and Nuns in the circumscriptions;

Promotion of meetings with members of the Secular Order for spiritual direction, sharing the challenges facing the laity to help better live Secular Carmelite vocation in the midst of the world.

Friars must show greater confidence in the laity (in some parts of the world the future of the Church is in their hands);

They want to be taken into account by the friars when they organize pastoral work where there are OCDS Communities;

5. Need for formation to help them to be authentic evangelizers in the family and society

The Order has a great spiritual wealth that needs to be taken to the world that is hungry for a meaning of life; ignorance makes the people lose their sense of faith.

We need a return to the sources of Charism, as well as taking time to listen to people in their needs. The OCDS needs to grow in the knowledge of the spirituality of the Order;

They hope to be instructed on how to live the Christian message and face the challenges of today's world, in the Church, family and society, such as secularization, coexistence in multiethnic societies, rejection of the Christian faith, cases of abuse in the Church that reflect and affect more secular environments;

They expect concrete proposals from the General Chapter in view of the formation and mission of the OCDS² in the circumscriptions of the Order, as well as help in promoting vocations for aging communities;

Increased use of technical means for evangelization; Promotion of links between the spirituality of the Order and the ones on psychology and other social sciences and humanities;

Promoting a global day of silence and prayer as an expression of unity in the Order.



4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

We know that vocations are a gift from God, both for the Friars and for the Nuns and the Seculars. And the gifts are to be received with gratitude and responsibility, as they are for the good of the Church, the Order and the very person who is called.

This 91st General Chapter is a time of grace for us. Besides, it falls in the *V Centenary* of the Birth of our Holy Mother and the *Year of Consecrated Life*. One of its tasks is to listen where God is leading us to. With this conviction, listening to the message that comes to us from the OCDS helps us to “recognize the signs of the times” (*Const. OCDS* 38).

From my experience in these three years as General Delegate, I have noted in the provinces where I have been that when there is support and encouragement by the friars, the OCDS is progressing and are a major presence along with the friars and nuns (although there are the usual common problems that we all know ...). On the contrary and in general, where such support is lacking, the Communities go towards aging and death.

Therefore, looking at the responses to the questionnaire sent to the Secular Carmel, I leave some conclusions for your consideration.

⇒ 1. Vocation and mission of the Laity in the Church is founded on the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Marriage and on the communion with the whole People of God (cf LG 9.37). Thus the OCDS members have the same vocation as ours to the Teresian Carmel and also participate in the mission of the Order (*Const. OCDS* 27-28). Hence, it is important **to know the doctrine of the Church on the lay Christians and acknowledge their secular identity and their role** in the Order and form the OCDS accordingly.

⇒ 2. This leads us to recognize and promote a **healthy autonomy of the Secular Order** (not independence from the Order) with an effective collaboration in common initiatives of apostolate and evangelization, taken with **mutual fraternal respect, sincerity and honesty**.

² *OCDS Constitutions* 103: "We have a similar fraternal duty [to be available for the spiritual guidance and formation] towards the members of our Secular Order"; Cf. NA 56.

⇒ 3. Thus, we can see realized what was said in the Definitory of Ariccia in its final document, which spoke of “**sharing the charism with our sisters and laity**”³ as a result of the renewal of our religious life⁴.

Something has been done, and in some places the preparation for the V Centenary of the birth of the Holy Mother helped in this; but it is important to move forward in the search for a **more effective communion and collaboration with the OCDS in our Circumscriptions in the fields of formation, the charism and mission**⁵. Evaluated periodically, these initiatives encourage fraternal communion that is attractive and evangelizing (cf. EG 92-100) and at the same time a stimulus towards authenticity in living their vocation (cf. EG 150).

The fruits will benefit all the branches of the Order: friars, nuns and lay people. The latter, “**moved by the example of holiness of consecrated persons, will be introduced in the direct experience of the spirit of the evangelical counsels and encouraged to live and witness the spirit of the Beatitudes to transform the world according to the heart of God**” (VC 55).

PROPOSALS

- ⇒ Commemorative date of the foundation of OCDS (March 23?)
- ⇒ International Advisory Council for the OCDS / Regional Councils

Thank you very much.

Fr. Alzinir Francisco Debastiani OCD
General Delegate for Secular Carmel

Rome, March 11, 2015

³ “A deepening of our relationship with the nuns, our sisters, and with associated laity, in particular the Secular Order, is to be part of the overall renewal. The weakening of these relationships, or, reducing them simply to pastoral services, effectively impoverishes our identity by losing sight of the fact that we are united by sharing the same charism. In fact, to live an authentic brotherly relationship with the nuns and with the laity means drawing strength and stimuli for growth in the aspects of teresian Carmelite vocation that are closest to us, friendship with the Lord Jesus and loving care of the community, whose centre He is. It is in this climate of sharing and of deep unity, in the complementarity of the gifts received and of the different ways of building up the church, that Teresa wanted her Carmel to increase and develop as a joyful community in which the relationship with Christ did not take from, but rather strengthened the humanity of each one and moulded it as a member of that same body” (*How are we to live?*” *Teresian community for the Church and world of today*. Document of the OCD Extraordinary General Definitory, Ariccia, 5-12 September 2011, n. 6, p. 22).

⁴ The Apostolic Exhortation *Vita consecrata* (1996) expressed this saying: “... in the light of certain historical experiences such as those of the Secular or Third Orders, a new chapter, rich in hope has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity” (VC 54). “These new experiences of communion and cooperation should be encouraged for various reasons. They can in fact give rise to the spread of a fruitful spirituality beyond the confines of the Institute, which will then be in a position to ensure the continuity in the Church of the services typical of the Institute. Another positive consequence will be to facilitate more intense cooperation between consecrated persons and the laity in view of the Institute’s mission. Moved by the examples of holiness of the consecrated members, lay men and women will experience at first hand the spirit of the evangelical counsels, and will thus be encouraged to live and bear witness to the spirit of the Beatitudes, in order to transform the world according to God’s design” (VC 55).

⁵ I urge you, as laity, to live this Year for Consecrated Life as a grace which can make you more aware of the gift you yourselves have received. Celebrate it with your entire “family”, so that you can grow and respond together to the promptings of the Spirit in society today. On some occasions when consecrated men and women from different Institutes come together, arrange to be present yourselves so as to give expression to the one gift of God. In this way you will come to know the experiences of other charismatic families and other lay groups, and thus have an opportunity for mutual enrichment and support. (Francis, *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated people on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, III,1)