



CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI

Segretariato per l'Ordine Secolare e Istituti Aggregati

Rome, January 21, 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Teresian Carmel,

The grace of the Spirit of truth and communion be with each one of you!

June the 16th of this year will mark the 10th anniversary of the approval of the OCDS Constitutions by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life.

The decade has borne fruit in the communities and Provinces of Secular Carmel. As legislation, we have *The Pastoral Assistant to Secular Carmel* (1996), and *Ratio Institutionis for the OCDS* (2009). In many Provinces, *Local Statutes* and a *Programme of Formation* have been drawn up. Other initiatives were taken, such as national, provincial or regional Conferences, which are valid and important initiatives for the sharing of experience and in order to search together for ways of meeting the challenges of our day. On the other hand, there are things that are still at the organizational stage. Over and above these initiatives, there remains the task of living prayer in a way that leads to the transformation of life, good quality formation and fraternal relations in the community, care of new vocations for the renewal of the community, as well as actively collaborating in the evangelization of the world where each one lives, in accordance with individual talents.

For all of us and as something to strive for continually, it is good to keep a right balance between autonomy and collaboration with the friars and the laity, as the Introduction to the document on *The Pastoral care of the Secular Carmel* affirms: "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 either 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".

The OCDS Constitutions of 2003 are lacking a chapter on Community. This was already noted by many of you, both because of the importance of the community in the life and doctrine of St. Teresa, and because of the very nature of the Church as a people gathered in the name of the Trinity. It is for this reason that the General Definitory during its meeting of December 2012 (cf. Letter 15 of the Definitory) requested the inclusion of a new chapter on Community in the Constitutions of 2003; they also requested a paragraph on St. Joseph (**31-a** and what is underlined in **58-j**). The new Chapter will be inserted after the current third chapter and is signified as no. **III.A** (with paragraphs **24-a, b, c, d, e**).

The numbering of paragraphs takes the last number of ch. 3, which it increases by one letter; this will allow for the insertion of a single page into the editions already printed, and to cite from the text, without causing confusing with the numbers of the already existing paragraphs. The text proposed as a basis is inserted at the end: **The Community of the Secular Order**.

However, before presenting a new text to the Definitory meeting of September 2013, I would ask your kind cooperation, for which I thank you in advance:



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1. The *Community* will study and reflect on these paragraphs between now and May of this year, suggesting any changes or additions which should then be sent to the Provincial Council of the OCDS. Where there is no Provincial Council, please send via e-mail to the address given below.

2. The *Provincial Council* will make a synthesis of the proposals or additions to the text sent to them by the Communities and will in turn forward it to the Secretary of the OCDS - ocd4ocds@gmail.com - **by June 30, 2013**. All material received up to and including this date is what will be taken into account.

3. The material will in turn be synthesized in order to present it to the Definitory for its September Meeting.

I take this occasion to thank you for sending the statistics of your Provinces and Communities. By way of information, taking also account the data sent and information going back to 2003, there are a total of about 1,506 canonically established OCDS communities and over 227 being formed; the total membership of those with definitive and temporary promises is 24,492 members, spread throughout approximately 74 countries. Sincere thanks also to the Provincial Councils for your economic assistance to the OCDS Secretariat; in this regard, I wish to bring to your attention that following from a recent European Union (EU) stipulation, all cheques are to be made out to "Casa Generalizia dei P. Carmelitani Scalzi". May the Lord bless and reward you.

In conclusion, I express in anticipation my gratitude to the Provincial and Community Councils, to the OCD Provincials, Delegates and Assistants for their contributions to this new chapter on Community.

I ask the Virgin and Mother of Carmel, Star of the New Evangelization, to intercede with the Lord, that He may guide us to true and fraternal communion among ourselves, until we arrive at total communion with the Blessed Trinity.

I greet you warmly in the Lord,

Fr. Alzinir Francisco Debastiani OCD

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(III-A) THE COMMUNITY OF SECULAR CARMEL

24-a) The Church as a mystery of communion, is "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit"¹; it is the family of God. Within this mystery, in the various vocations, "the *'identity'* of the lay faithful is made known, and their fundamental dignity revealed"². Besides, "the revelation in Christ of the mystery of God as Trinitarian love is at the same time the revelation of the vocation of the human person to love"³. The human person, in virtue of his or her spiritual nature, grows through interpersonal relationships. The more one lives authentically, the more mature also is

¹ Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 4; cf. John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici*, 19.

² John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici*, 8.

³ The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 34.



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their personal identity, through being in relationship with others and with God⁴.

Therefore, the community of the Secular Order, as bearers of the charism of the Teresian Carmel, are places to live in communion and promote a personal and communal meeting with Christ, who is present where two or three gather in his name (cf. Mt 18: 20), seek to live the commandment of love (Jn 13: 34) and practice the Christian virtues (cf. Col 3: 12-17; Phil 2: 1-5).

24 - b) St. Teresa of Jesus, aware of the importance of friendships in the search for God⁵, proposes "an ideal of community life that is composed of three factors: a community that is above all, the 'college of Christ'⁶, after the model of the early Church, because He is present in the midst of the community⁷; a community that lives the demands of equality and true love⁸ and where everything is directed in an evangelical manner by a real, free, and unselfish love⁹; a community marked by humanism: cultured, possessing the human virtues, gentleness, prudence and discretion, simplicity, friendliness and joy"¹⁰. For his part, St. John of the Cross gives precise guidelines for living in community, especially from the perspective of the purifying and unifying effect of the exercise of the theological virtues, particularly in actively loving others: "Where there is no love, put love and you will draw out love", in accordance with the Lord's own manner of acting, who in loving us, makes us capable of loving¹¹.

24 - c) The local community of the Secular Order is a visible sign of the Church¹². The faithful Christian is inserted into this community through the promise made to the community in the presence of the Superior of the Order or his Delegate¹³. Therefore, each member of Secular Carmel is called to a personal commitment to live in communion with the Church, with the Order, with the Province and especially with those whom they are close to, loving them and stimulating them in the practice of virtue¹⁴. For this reason there needs to be assiduous and active participation in the life and meetings of the community; absences shall be allowed for serious reasons only.

24- d) The communities are called to be places where the "spirituality of communion"¹⁵ plays an educational role. As formators¹⁶ of their members, let them strive clearly to create praying and fraternal communities, nourished by the Eucharist, after the manner of lay people and through their periodic meetings. In this way the members are formed in fraternity and mutual charity; they actively collaborate in the evangelization and mission of the Church and of the Order in the midst of the world by their witness, "because communion is missionary in nature and mission is for communion"¹⁷. In this regard authority, exercised as a humble and loving service to the members (Cf. Mt 20: 28; Mk 10: 43-45; Jn 13: 14), which helps to create a familial spirit, encourages dialogue, forgiveness and

⁴ Cf.: Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 54; cf. n. 34.

⁵ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Life* 15:5; 23:4.

⁶ St. Teresa of Jesus, *The Way of Perfection* (El Escorial), 20:11. (Cited in Kavanaugh/Rodriguez translation, footnote 2 of *Way*, ch. 13).

⁷ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Life* 32:11; *Way* 17:7; 1:5; 3:1

⁸ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Way* 4:7; 7:9.

⁹ St. Teresa, *Way* 4:11, 6-7; 5 *Mansions* 3:7-12.

¹⁰ Cf. S. Teresa, *Way* 41:7-8; *Vita Consecrata*, 42; *Novo Millennium ineunte*, 43. 90th OCD General Chapter, *Born for You*, Fatima, 2009, no. 30.

¹¹ Letter to M. Maria of the Incarnation, July 6, 1591; cf.: *Letter* 30, to a religious in Segovia.

¹² Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 40.

¹³ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 12.

¹⁴ Cf.: S. Teresa, 7 *Mansions* 4:14-15.

¹⁵ John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 43 (2001).

¹⁶ Cf.: *Ratio Institutionis OCDS*, 24-29.

¹⁷ *Christifidelis Laici*, 32. Cf. Benedetto XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 20.



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reconciliation, is of great importance in the community. Mutual prayer for one another, care for the sick and elderly, the suffrages for the deceased are some other concrete signs of communion. In addition, the rights of individual members must be safeguarded and respected in accordance with the laws of the Church; likewise, members must faithfully fulfill their duties towards the community. On the other hand, there should be no excessive and stubborn insistence on individual rights in a community that is devoutly seeking God.

24 -e) Our holy founders, St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross experienced living in many different communities. They both offer guidelines on living fraternal life in smaller communities. In these it is possible to establish a true and deep relationship of human and spiritual friendship, of mutual support among members in their common search for God. St. Teresa of Jesus insists on the importance of helping others in the spiritual life: charity grows through dialogue with the other¹⁸, or also, in "speaking about how we might amend our ways" to be pleasing to God, and through self-knowledge, when it is imparted "with love" by seeking to "profit"¹⁹ the brother or sister. This is possible when there is trust and mutual understanding between community members, which are the foundation for spontaneous sharing about the spiritual life²⁰. For this reason, when a community is too large, and the conditions for dividing and forming another exist, this should be done with the consent of the Council of the Community and of the Provincial or his Delegate, having listened to the opinion of the Assistant.

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31- a) For the secular Carmelite, love for the Queen and Mother of Carmel is inseparable from devotion to her spouse, St. Joseph, whom Divine Providence associated with the mystery of the Incarnation of his Son, Jesus Christ. Following the example of St. Teresa²¹, the Secular Carmelite can find in St. Joseph a model for a life of adoration and communion with Jesus through his humanity²², a teacher of prayer²³, an example of availability to God's will and care of the family. In communion with the Church and with the tradition of the Order, of which he is father and lord, Secular Carmelites can find in Saint Joseph an incomparable protector to whom they can entrust their hopes, their toils and their every-day labours²⁴.

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58 - j) the practice of mortification and expressions of devotion to Mary, to St. Joseph and the Saints of the Order.

¹⁸ In *The Book of Her Life*, 7:22 Teresa writes: "Because today there is so much sluggishness in matters having to do with the service of God that it is necessary for those who serve Him to become shields for one another that they might advance. ... (There is) need to seek companionship to defend oneself ... Through those with whom one converses God will help and increase charity while it is being shared. And there are a thousand graces I would not dare speak of if I did not have powerful experience of the benefit that comes from this sharing".

¹⁹ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Life* 16:7.

²⁰ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 18.

²¹ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Life* 6:6-7, 33:12.

²² Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 25 (15.08.1989).

²³ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Life* 6:8.

²⁴ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 24: "St. Joseph is proof that in order to be good and genuine followers of Christ, there is no need of great things – it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic " (cited from Paul VI).