

14 December 2006

**To the Very Reverend Provincials,
To the Provincial Delegates to the OCDS,
To the Assistants to the communities of the OCDS**

My dear Fathers and brothers,

I wish you the peace and joy of the Redeemer in the holy season when we recall his birth.

It is now more than three years since the definitive approval of the Constitutions of the Secular Order. These years have been rich in experience and study. Many regions have organized meetings to deepen the knowledge of the Secular Order both for the members of the Secular Order themselves as well as for the friars. The experience of many Provinces in forming Provincial Councils and writing Provincial Statutes has been an opportunity for deeper fraternity among the OCDS and between the OCDS and the friars.

The experience of these past three years has also indicated the necessity to formulate in a concrete and unified manner some general guidelines for the pastoral care of our brothers and sisters of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites. The General Secretariat of the Secular Order offers to all the jurisdictions of the Order the enclosed document which will also be available on the Order's homepage of the internet. It is my hope that this document might deepen the good relations that exist within our Order.

With a fervent wish that the coming year be rich in graces for the entire Order of the Teresian Carmel, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Luis Arostegui, OCD
Superior General

Pastoral Care of the Secular Order

If a person looks for the history or origin of the Third Orders or Secular Orders and wants to go back to the earliest mention of those Orders, that person finds at the bottom of this search the figure of Saint Francis of Assisi. It was Francis of Assisi who understood, even if only intuitively, that the way to weave the spirituality of his new religious family into the fabric of daily life was through the establishment of an Order of lay persons or diocesan clergy who lived in the world and faced the daily struggles of Christian life. Pope Honorius III approved the first rule for the Franciscan Secular Order in 1221. They were then called "The Brothers and Sisters of Penance".

By presenting the rule to the Pope for approbation, Saint Francis recognized that what he was doing was something "ecclesial", not just something particular to his new Order. This "ecclesial" event is reflected in canon 312 of the Code of Canon Law which states that only the Holy See may establish universal or international associations. This authority of the Holy See

is delegated to the General of each mendicant Order, and specifically to the General of the Discalced Carmelite Order by the Pope Clement VIII in two Papal documents, *Cum Dudum*, 23 March 1594 and *Romanum Pontificem*, 20 August 1603.

Certainly, religious life and religious families existed before Saint Francis. Monastic life had flourished in Europe thanks to Saint Benedict. The Benedictines and other forms of monastic life had the institutions of "oblates" for centuries. The identity and structure of oblates has gone through many changes in history. They are, however, always attached to the basic identity of monastic life, that is, identified with one particular monastery for life.

Mendicant life, beginning with Orders such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, etc., had a different structure and purpose. The articles in the Catholic Encyclopedia point out the differences that exist in the spirituality and apostolate of monastic life and mendicant Orders. Basically, roughly, and only in the broadest way, one might say that the involvement of lay persons with monastic life was to bring those persons in the world into the spirituality of the monastery, and the involvement of lay persons with mendicant life was to bring the spirituality of the Mendicant Orders into the life of lay persons in the world.

The mendicant Orders sought to live a spirituality and exercise an apostolate that grew out of the spirituality that they lived. Many congregations of religious life have existed for a period of time and have gone out of existence because the reason or reasons for their existence ceased. These congregations of religious life based their identity on the specific apostolate for which they were founded. Some active congregations of Sisters today, which have made major contributions to the good of society, are actively seeking a renewed identity because their identity has changed. Some others have decided to stop seeking vocations and to go out of existence because work by them is no longer necessary. A generation or two ago Catholic hospitals always had Sisters as a mainstay of the nursing staff.

In any case, mendicant Orders do not base their identity on an apostolate, but on a spirituality, and the spirituality guides and directs the apostolates to which they dedicate themselves. The spirituality of the mendicant Orders reflects elements or an element that belong to the essence of the Church in the world. The dedication of the Dominicans to higher education is a fruit of Dominican identity of the preacher who spreads the word. Much of the Franciscan apostolate is a dedication to working with the poor. This is the fruit of the Franciscan desire to follow Jesus in the purity and simplicity of the Gospel. Augustinian spirituality is based on a desire to discover Jesus in the midst of community life which leads them to a dedication to many social apostolates. And the Teresian Carmel's charism is based on the place of the loving personal relationship between God and the person found in prayer. From that base flows the work to which Carmelites dedicate themselves.

The Secular Order of the Mendicant Orders is not just an associated laity. Through the connection to the friars of the different Orders, the Secular Order communicates the spirituality of the Orders to the world around it. It can honestly be said that if the Secular Order did not exist something would be lacking in the spirituality and presence of the Mendicant Orders.

The Secular Order is not conventual nor monastic, but definitely secular. That is, it does not exercise its responsibility in the convent or in the monastery, but in the world (saeculum). The Secular Order is definitely Order because of the essential relationship that exists between the friars and the seculars. The relationship between the friars and the seculars is not incidental. It is essential. The Secular Order is a distinct branch of the Order as the Constitutions indicate.¹ The seculars, however, do not exist as an independent branch of the Order. Distinct, yes. Independent, no. It is for that reason that the Holy See gives the faculty of establishing Secular Order communities to the Superior General of the friars.

There has been a development over the centuries of the role and identity of the Secular Orders and that includes the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites. This development is directly related to the development of the role and identity of lay persons in the Church. Of all

¹ Constitutions OCDS, Preface

the documents I might be able to quote about the role of the Secular Order in the life of the Order, the most concrete and forceful comes from a document directed to the consecrated life, not the lay persons. "Today, often as a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that *their charism can be shared with the laity*. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes. We may say that, 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."²

The new element in this text is the responsibility to "share more intensely in the spirituality and *mission*". Spirituality was always understood. But mission is new. And is specifically this directive to the Orders that made necessary a more serious commitment on the part of the Order to the development and formation of the members of the Secular Order. The necessity of the General to have a delegate became more apparent as the Secular Order was growing. Another necessity was that of placing the communities of the Secular Order that were established in places where there are no friars directly under the General Secretariat.

Remembering that the Secular Order is ecclesial and international by its own nature, it was also necessary for the Center of the Order to take a more active role in guiding and developing the formation programs of the OCDS. If a Secular Order member lives the spirituality of the Order and becomes active in the mission of the Order, then the Order better be the one to guide the formation. In a very real sense, the formation of the Secular Order members is subject to approval by the Center of the Order.³ Formation is not the private project of a particular community or even of a Province. 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. In the Discalced Carmelite Order, that autonomy has always been expressed in the various rules that existed before the Manual, in the Manual of 1922, in the Rule of Life on 1979, and in the current legislation of the Constitutions. 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 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. 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.

In summary, Saint Francis of Assisi, who initiated the idea of establishing an Order of lay persons identifiably part of the Order, and the Church, through the approbation of Honorius III, recognized that the Secular Order was indeed ecclesial. The current legislation of the Church in the Code of Canon Law, as well as the current legislation of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites, recognize the relationship that exist between the friars and the seculars. The Order as a whole, friars and seculars have a responsibility to work together, especially in the area of formation of the members so that they might represent to the world in which they live the spirit and mission of Carmel. The responsibility of the Center of the Order is to insure and guide the development of the adequate formation of the members of the Secular Order.

² Vita Consacrata, 54

³ Constitutions OCDS 58, a.

Guide for the Pastoral Care to the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites by the Discalced Carmelite Friars

I General Principles

Art. 1

The purpose of this present Guide is to define, in a unified and concrete way, the service of the spiritual and pastoral care of the OCDS by the Discalced Carmelite friars.

Art. 2

1. The spiritual and pastoral care of the OCDS, in virtue of its belonging to the same religious family, is entrusted by the Church to the Discalced Carmelite Friars.⁴

2. The Friars, Enclosed Nuns, and Secular Carmelites in fact, each in the proper circumstances of their state of life, contribute to making present the charism of Carmelite Spirituality as found in the lives and works of our Carmelite Doctors.⁵

3. In a concrete way religious superiors must assure adequate spiritual assistance to all the communities of the OCDS⁶.

Art. 3

1. The spiritual and pastoral care is provided as a service that comprises:

- the exercise of government on the part of the major Superiors;
- the spiritual assistance to the communities and their Councils.

2. The purpose of the exercise of government is to guarantee the fidelity of the OCDS to the charism of the Discalced Carmelite Order, the unity of the Order, and communion with the Church.

3. The purpose of spiritual assistance to the individual communities is to foster communion with the Church and with the Discalced Carmelite Order through witness and sharing of Carmelite spirituality, to cooperate in initial and on-going formation of Secular Discalced Carmelites and to express the relationship that exists between the religious and the seculars.

Art. 4

The service of the friars completes but does not substitute for the authority of the councils of the Secular Order communities whose responsibility it is to guide, coordinate, and animate the community.⁷

II Practical Responsibilities

The Role of the Major Superiors⁸

Art. 5

1. The spiritual and pastoral care of the OCDS, entrusted by the Church to the Discalced Carmelite Friars, is the duty above all of the General and the local Provincials.

2. The General exercises his office through:

- the establishment of local communities;
- pastoral visits;
- naming spiritual assistants to those communities that exist in regions where there are no friars.

3. The Provincial exercises his office through:

- pastoral visits;
- assigning spiritual assistants to each community in his Province;

⁴ Clement VIII, Cum dudum; Romanum Pontificem. OCD Constitutions, 103, Norms, 56

⁵ Constitutions OCDS, Preface; 1

⁶ Constitutions OCD, 103; Norms 56

⁷ Constitutions OCDS, 46

⁸ Constitutions OCDS, 41; 43; 45

- availability to those communities or persons with particular needs.
- 4. The Major Superiors may exercise this office personally or through a delegate.
- 5. The Discalced Carmelite Major Superiors remain responsible for the quality of spiritual assistance and pastoral care, even in those cases where a spiritual assistant is appointed who is not a friar of the Order.
- 6. Primary among the responsibilities of the Major Superiors is the formation of their own religious in the nature and purpose of the OCDS and specific preparation for the Assistants so that they will be suitable and well-prepared.⁹

General¹⁰

Art. 6

1. The General Superior exercises his leadership and pastoral assistance in regard to the OCDS as a whole.
2. It belongs specifically to the General and the General Definitory:
 - to conduct relations with the Holy See concerning legislative or liturgical texts requiring the approval of the Holy See;
 - to approve the Provincial Statutes of each Province, including the outline of formation programs;
 - to approve the National Statutes of those nations with more than one Province if those Provinces form a National Council.

Art. 7

1. The General Superior exercises his office towards the OCDS in accordance with
 - the universal law of the Church,
 - with the Constitutions of the Friars,
 - and with full respect for the Constitutions of the OCDS.
2. He has the faculty to establish, visit, and meet the local OCDS communities.
3. In relation to the Order, it is his responsibility to appoint the General Delegate of the OCDS, who, under the authority of the General, looks after all things regarding service to the OCDS.

General Delegate¹¹

Art. 8

1. The general Delegate must keep the General and the Order (friars, nuns and seculars) informed about the life and activities of the OCDS.
2. He shall also deal with matters regarding the pastoral care given by the Order to the OCDS, meet the local communities and keep constant fraternal contacts with the assistants of the Order.
3. The General Delegate is responsible for those communities of OCDS that exist in territories outside established jurisdictions.

Provincial¹²

Art. 9

The Provincials exercise their responsibilities towards the OCDS in the territory of their own jurisdiction.

Art. 10

It is their specific competence, in the name of their jurisdiction:

- to guarantee spiritual assistance to local communities by appointing assistants;
- to animate spiritually, to visit, and to meet the local communities in their jurisdiction;

⁹ Constitutions OCDS 44 ; 45

¹⁰ Constitutions OCDS 41 ; 42 ; 45 ; 57 ; 60

¹¹ Constitutions OCDS 41

¹² By the term Provincial is understood the major superior of all Carmelite jurisdictions. Constitutions OCDS, 43

-- to keep themselves informed about the spiritual assistance given to the OCDS.

Art. 11

The Provincial and his Council are responsible for naming the Delegate for the OCDS in the Province and communicating this to the Center of the Order.¹³

Provincial Delegates¹⁴

Art. 12

1. The Provincial Delegates to the OCDS give their service to the Provincial Council of the OCDS and see to the spiritual assistance to the communities in the jurisdiction.

2. The Provincial Delegate exercises his responsibility both to the OCDS and to the Province:

-- by collaborating with the OCDS Provincial Council in the task of spiritual and apostolic animation of the secular Discalced Carmelites in the life of the Church and of society in the Province, and in a special way in the formation of the leaders and formation directors;

-- by providing for the pastoral visits of the local communities of the OCDS;

-- by coordinating, at the regional level, the service of spiritual assistance, the formation of the Assistants and the fraternal union among them;

-- by fostering the interest of the friars of the Province in the OCDS.

Art. 13

1. The Provincial Delegate must keep the major Superior and the Province (friars, nuns and seculars) informed on the life and activities of the in the Province.

2. He shall also deal with matters regarding the service of assistance given by Province to the OCDS, meet the local communities and keep constant fraternal contacts with the local assistants.

Spiritual Assistants¹⁵

Art. 14

1. The spiritual assistant is the person designated by the competent major superior to carry out this service for a specific community of the OCDS.

2. In order to be a witness of Discalced Carmelite spirituality and of the fraternal affection of the religious towards the secular Discalced Carmelites, and to be a bond of communion between his Order and the OCDS, the spiritual assistant should preferably be a Discalced Carmelite Friar.

Art. 15

1. The principal task of the assistant is to foster a deeper insight into Discalced Carmelite spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the Secular Discalced Carmelites.

2. In the Council of the community and at the time of community elections the assistant will be respectful of the responsibilities and role of the Secular Discalced Carmelites, giving them priority with regard to the guidance, co-ordination, and animation of the community.

3. The assistant, when invited by the Council, participates actively in the discussions and decisions taken by the Council or by the Chapter.

4. The assistant is specifically responsible for the animation of liturgical celebrations and spiritual reflections during the meetings of the council or of the community.

Art. 16

1. The Assistant is appointed by the competent major Superior, after consultation with the council of the community concerned.

2. The appointment of the Assistant is made in writing and for a specified time.

3. When it is not possible to give the community a spiritual Assistant who is a member of the Order, the competent major Superior can entrust the service of spiritual assistance to:

¹³ Instructions for the Provincial Chapters

¹⁴ Constitutions OCDS, 43

¹⁵ Constitutions OCDS, 44

- religious of other Carmelite institutes;
- clergy who are Secular Discalced Carmelites, specially prepared for such service;
- other diocesan clerics or non-Discalced Carmelite religious, specially prepared for such service.

Art. 17

The local assistant fosters communion within the community and between the community and the Province. In harmony with Provincial or Provincial Delegate, the assistant sees to it that between the religious and the secular communities a real life-giving union with each other exists. He fosters the active presence of the community in the Church and in society.

Art. 18

1. The local Assistant has the very important responsibility to support the Council of the community, especially the director of formation, in the formation of the candidates. The council may invite the local assistant to express his assessment of each of the candidates at different stages of formation.

2. The Council may ask the assistant to discuss with brothers or sisters who have difficulties, who want to retire from the community or who act in serious opposition to the Constitutions.

Visitations

Art. 19

Pastoral visits, either by the General or by the Provincial, are special times of communion between the friars and the seculars. They are conducted in the name of the Church and serve to guarantee fidelity to the Discalced Carmelite charism and to foster communion with the Church and with the Discalced Carmelite Order.

Art. 20

1. Visitations may be made at the request of a community or by the decision of the General or Provincial, or at the request of the local Ordinary in response to certain situations arising in the life of the community.

2. The visitor strengthens the community in its purpose and mission in the Church and in society; affirms the relation between the secular and religious communities; gives special attention to programs of formation; gives attention to the collaboration and sense of co-responsibility among the secular leaders and the spiritual assistants; examines the quality of the spiritual assistance given to the visited community; encourages the spiritual assistants in their service and promotes their continuing spiritual and pastoral formation.

3. The visitor will communicate the object and the program of the visit to the council concerned with sufficient notice. The visitor will examine the registers and the records, including those relating to previous visits, to the election of the council and to the administration of goods. They will make a report of the visit he conducted, append it to the records in the appropriate register of the community visited, and will inform the proper authorities.

4. In the visit to the local community, the visitor will meet with the entire community and with the groups that wish to meet with the visitor. The visitor will give special attention to the brothers and sisters in formation and to those brothers or sisters who may request a personal meeting.

5. Where required, he will correct fraternally any of the shortcomings he may find either on the part of the council or on the part of an individual member. In all cases, the general law and practice of the Church must be followed in the application of any penalties.