

# Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

## Formation I

### Year B

**“I am the Way  
the Truth  
and the Life.”**

Jn. 14:6



*“The Promise made as Secular Carmelites is not to live our poverty, our chastity, or our obedience, but to live the Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience of Jesus.”*

*(Fr Aloysius Deeney, Welcome to the OCDS).*

*The Beatitudes are a way of life. By living the Beatitudes, Carmelites bear witness to Christ.*

*See Const. art. 16*

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**California-Arizona Province of St. Joseph · Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse**

**Washington Province of the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

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## Foreword

### **“And I brought you into the land of Carmel” (Jer 2:7).**

The present formation program is intended for all members of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites in the United States. It is the result of a careful collaboration between OCDS members from the provinces of California-Arizona, Oklahoma and Washington who make up this “Task Force,” a commission that was created for its development. The structure and topics of the program are the fruit of many hours of hard work, research, composition, consultation, collaboration, evaluation, discernment, writing and revision.

The different modules of the program accompany Secular Carmelites in all stages of formation and guide them progressively to a better knowledge and understanding of their vocation as lay people living out the Carmelite charism in the many environments in which they find themselves.

Formation is an essential part in the life of the secular members of the Discalced Carmelite Order. According to the *Ratio Institutionis* of the Secular Order, it is essential that formation programs include the areas of human, Christian and Carmelite formation (Cfr. 13-15). These areas prepare OCDS members to “live the charism and spirituality of Carmel in its following of Christ, and in service to its mission” (*OCDS Const.* 32).

The Discalced Carmelite Order promotes an integral formation that helps people to harmoniously integrate the different dimensions of their being. Human formation is the base of all formation. Saint Teresa of Avila says that no matter where we are in our spiritual life, self-knowledge is essential and should never be neglected (Cfr. *Life* 13,15). A good human formation helps people to know themselves and others better as they develop the capacity to be more aware of the dynamics that play an important role in their relationships with themselves, others, God, and their environment.

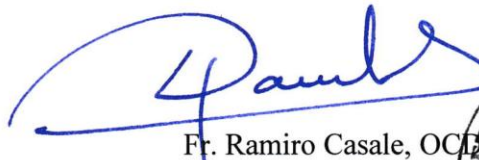
Christian formation is “the solid basis of Carmelite and spiritual formation” (*OCDS Const.* 33). The catechism and the official documents of the Catholic Church are a great resource to acquire the necessary knowledge about the faith and how to put it into practice. It is important that Secular Carmelites learn the teachings of the Catholic Church so that they may hold fast to the truths that inform and guide the spiritual life.


## OCDS Formation I, Year B

Carmelite formation confirms the identity of those called to be Secular Carmelites in the Discalced Carmelite Order (Cfr. *Ratio Institutionis* 15). The history of the Order, its spirituality and tradition, and the life and teaching of its saints are a continual source of inspiration and knowledge, especially those of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross (Cfr. *OCDS Const.* 7-8).

May this formation program help all Secular Carmelites in the United States to prepare themselves to become witnesses of the experience of God in the world, to “live in allegiance with Jesus Christ” (*Rule of St. Albert* 2), and to grow in their friendship and communion with Him (Cfr. *Life* 8,5) as they deepen their knowledge and cherish the vocation they have received.

From Rome, January 1, 2023, Solemnity of Holy Mary, Mother of God.

  
Fr. Ramiro Casale, OCD  
General Delegate of the Secular Order  
of the Discalced Carmelites



## **SYLLABUS FOR FORMATION I, Year B**

### **Preparation for making the First Promise**

The purpose of this stage of formation is to steep the candidate in the Teresian tradition of prayer as the foundation and basic activity of his/her daily life. Studying the legislative documents within the context of the evangelical counsels and beatitudes imbues the candidate with a deeper understanding of the Discalced Carmelite charism and community life. With emphasis given towards preparation for the First Promise, the candidate should commit him/herself to meditating upon and assimilating the writings of the Carmelite saints, the teachings of the Church, and Holy Scripture. The discernment process continues as the candidate integrates the experience of God with the experience of life.

This stage of formation normally takes two years.

#### **Requirements**

Each candidate will work toward gradually implementing the following requirements in his/her life, practicing them consistently by the end of the formation period:

- Attend and participate in monthly community meetings and formation sessions.
- Be diligent in the study and internalization of assigned materials and topics.
- Practice meditative (silent) prayer daily for at least half an hour (Ratio 90).
- Develop proficiency in praying the Liturgy of the Hours (Morning and Evening Prayer), individually and with the community. Recite Night Prayer when possible (Const. 24).
- Learn to serve as reader and cantor in community recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours (unless excused by the Council for valid reasons).
- Continue the habit of studying the OCDS Constitutions and Statutes.
- Continue to use Sacred Scripture regularly as an aid to meditation.
- Participate in daily Mass when possible.
- Engage in a daily examination of conscience.
- Participate in the community apostolate.
- Participate in community retreats and days of recollection.

## Introduction to Formation I, Year B

Taking into account the origins of Carmel and the Teresian charism, the fundamental elements of the vocation of Secular Carmelites is to seek “mysterious union with God” by way of contemplation and apostolic activity, indissolubly joined together for service to the Church (see OCDS Constitutions 9.b). In her later writings, Teresa vividly recalls the origin of Carmel and its purpose:

“So I say now that all of us who wear this holy habit of Carmel are called to prayer and contemplation. This call explains our origin; we are descendants of men who felt this call, of those holy fathers on Mount Carmel who in such great solitude...sought this treasure, this precious pearl of contemplation...” (Interior Castle 5:1.2).

As we can see, we are the descendants of men who gave up everything to search for “this precious pearl of contemplation.” In order to more easily understand the origin, traditions and the reform of Carmel, this year of formation is divided into two parts:

Part I) History and Traditions: A deeper understanding of the Carmelite charism.

Part II) OCDS Constitutions and Statutes: A deeper understanding of our formation, community and the Promise.

### PART I

This part includes the early history of Carmelite spirituality and the representatives of the pure and prophetic spirit of the early Carmelites.

Equally important are the historical events and personal struggles that led to St Teresa’s reform movement in 16<sup>th</sup> century Spain. It is not an exaggeration to state that St Teresa was the only religious to fully document the founding of her first monastery, St Joseph in Avila, and subsequent foundations. Certainly, she describes honestly and openly the joys and roadblocks of such an endeavor: “My Lord, how is it You command things that seem impossible? For if I were at least free, even though I am a woman! But bound on so many sides, without money or the means to raise it or to obtain the brief or anything, what can I do, Lord?” (The Book of Her Life ch. 33:11).

Teresa didn’t have to wait long. It seems that some mysterious hand was at work throughout her project and the initial objections and barriers from a variety of sources for the foundation were removed. The papal brief was obtained. Her confessor gave her permission to go ahead with the project. A house was given to set up her first foundation and much needed financial help came from her brother: “Your honor should know that some very good persons who are aware of our secret – our new undertaking – have considered it a miracle that you sent so much money at such a time. I hope that when there is need for more, God will put it into your heart to help me, even though you may not want to” (The Collected Letters of St. Teresa of Avila, Vol. 1 Letter 2, para. 15). Most importantly, the Bishop of Avila, Don Álvaro de Mendoza, gave his whole-hearted support to the project.

“When everything was ready the Lord was pleased that on St. Bartholomew’s day the habit was received by some and the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, and with all due authority and

power our monastery of our most glorious father St. Joseph was founded, in 1562” (The Book of Her Life ch. 36:5). Amazing Grace indeed that the well-intended initiatives of Our Holy Mother St Teresa paved the way for a new and separate order – the Discalced Carmelite Order. When the City of Avila objected to the newly founded monastery, the Bishop of Avila had this much to say:

“This newly founded monastery of Carmelites is a reform of the ancient community. It picks up what has fallen. It renews a weakened *Rule*. It strives for the formation of people for the glory of the holy faith. For these reasons it must not only be tolerated by the powers of the state and of the city, but favored and protected” (The Collected Works of Edith Stein: The Hidden Life, II.12 Love for Love: Life and Works of St Teresa of Jesus, page 56).

## **PART II**

The second half of the year covers the study of the OCDS legislative documents in order to understand and experience the vocation to Carmel within the context of a community.

The Secular Order is governed by its own Constitutions and Local Statutes. It is “basically structured on the local community as a visible sign of the Church” (Const. art. 40).

Faithful attendance and participation in the monthly meetings are integral to the vocation to Carmel. Carmelite Seculars are privileged to live an authentic spirituality in a community setting, learning from each other and sharing the responsibilities and benefits of community life. “A community that devoutly seeks God will find the balance between individual rights and the good of the community as a whole. Thus, the rights and needs of each of the members must be respected and safeguarded according to the laws of the Church, but likewise members must faithfully fulfill their duties in relation to the community, as laid down in the Constitutions” (Art. 24e).

Toward the end of this year of formation, the primary focus is on the Beatitudes in the context of the Promise. “Following Jesus as members of the Secular Order is expressed by the promise to strive for evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and through the beatitudes” (Const. art. 11).

In conclusion, let us remember the words of St. Paul:

“May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, grant you a spirit of Wisdom and insight to know him clearly. May he enlighten your innermost vision that you may know the great hope to which he has called you, the wealth of his glorious heritage to be distributed among the members of the church, and the immeasurable scope of His power in us who believe” (Eph 1:17-19).



## The Essential Themes for Formation I, Year B

**Required Reading:** Candidates will need to have their own copies of LOTH/Christian Prayer, The Carmelite Tradition: Spirituality in History, by Fr Steven Payne, Liturgical Press, available from ICS; and The Book of Her Life, by St Teresa of Avila, in The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila Volume One, published by ICS Publications. Candidates should already have Welcome to the Secular Order by Fr Aloysius Deeney from their Aspirancy year. All other required reading (except for legislative documents) is included in the appendices.

**Assigned Meditative Readings:** Various bible passages, selections from Carmelite writings, and other materials are listed. One day a week, the candidate chooses one of these as material for his/her daily mental prayer. Meditative readings are for private use only; they are not intended to be discussed in the sessions.

**Additional/optional Reading:** Excerpts from Carmelite writings are included in the appendices. These are for personal enrichment and not intended for discussion during the formation sessions. However, important points relevant to the formation sessions could be mentioned during the discussion.

**PART 1**

**History and Traditions: A Deeper Understanding of the Discalced Carmelite Charism**

**Session 1: The early history of Carmelite spirituality, traditions, greatest saints and teachers (continued in session 2)**

*“For love of our Lord, I beg you to remember how soon everything comes to an end, to remember the favor our Lord has granted us in bringing us to this order... fix your eyes always on the ancestry from which we come, those holy prophets.”*

— St Teresa of Avila

**Required Reading:** The Carmelite Tradition: Spirituality in History, pgs. xii-xxxiii and pgs. 1-23.

**Additional Reading:** Excerpt from The Collected Works of Edith Stein: The Hidden Life, I.1 *Before the Face of God: On the History and Spirit of Carmel*, pgs. 1-6. (Appendix A)

**Essential Points to Discuss:**

- Mount Carmel: “Place from which this tradition takes its name” (Carmelite Tradition, pg. xxi).
- Mount Carmel is forever linked with the memory of the prophet Elijah, whose mission was to summon the people back to single-hearted fidelity to the one true God (see xxi).
  - Elijah suddenly bursts onto the pages of Scripture with the powerful declaration: “As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word” (1 Kgs 17:1) (pg. xxi).
  - A group of hermits settled on the western slope of Mount Carmel and built an oratory in the midst of the cells, which they dedicated to Our Lady. Gradually, Christian pilgrims and the Church at large came to identify this little community of hermits, according to the name of their chapel, as the “Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel” (see xxii-xxiii).
- The earliest historical spiritual documents of the Carmelite tradition are:
  - *Rule of St Albert* (1207) – the earliest surviving document related to the Carmelites (see Carmelite Tradition, pgs. 1-9).
  - *The Flaming Arrow* (1270) – also called *The Fiery Arrow* – represents the pure and prophetic spirit of the early Carmelites (see Carmelite Tradition, pgs. 10-20).
  - *The Book of the Institution of the First Monks* (1380) – brings together the Order’s Elijah and Marian spirit, as well as the prophetic and contemplative dimensions of its spirituality (see Carmelite Tradition, pgs. 21-25).

**Assigned Meditative Reading:** (use the following reading once per week for meditation)

1 Kings 17:1-22:40 – the story of Elijah, our spiritual father. Read slowly and with attention; pause often for reflection as the Spirit inspires.

## Session 2: Loss of original home; Carmel in the West (continued from session 1)

*"I understand and I know from experience 'that the Kingdom of God is within you.' Jesus has no need of books or teachers to instruct souls; he teaches without the noise of words."*

— St Thérèse of the Child Jesus (Lisieux)

**Required Reading:** The Carmelite Tradition: Spirituality in History, pgs. xxi – xxxiii.

### **Essential Points to Discuss:**

- The Rule of St Albert becomes the foundational document for the entire Carmelite spiritual tradition (pg. xxiii).
- "... the Carmelites began migrating westward, making foundations in Cyprus, Sicily, southern France, England, and other parts of Europe" (xxiii).
- In 1247, at the Carmelites' request, Pope Innocent IV promulgated the "Innocentian" version of the Carmelite Rule, which included minor alterations to St Albert's text (see xxiii-xxiv).
- "With the collapse of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem in 1291, the Carmelites lost all physical contact with their original home" (xxv).
- In 1432, Pope Eugene IV granted further modifications of the Rule (see xxvi-xxvii).
- In 1452, Blessed John Soreth, prior general of the Carmelites, obtained papal approval (the papal Bull, *Cum Nulla*) to formally accept laity into the Order as "tertiaries," and communities of women as Carmelite nuns (see xxvii).
- The Incarnation in Avila, founded in 1479, was the earliest Carmelite women's community in Avila, Spain (see xxvii).
- In 1535, a lively and outgoing twenty-year-old by the name of Teresa de Ahumada y Cepeda left her father's home to join the nearby Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila (see xxvii).

**Assigned Meditative Reading:** (use the Book of Habakkuk over four weeks)

Habakkuk – the heartbreak of exile, God's presence and protection, serving God in all situations, detachment and peace. Read slowly and with attention, pause often for reflection as the Spirit inspires.

### Session 3: Reform of St Teresa of Avila (continued in sessions 4 and 5)

*"This dark, loving knowledge is the surrender of the soul through the will  
to the loving approach of the still-concealed God: love,  
which is not feeling, but rather a readiness for action and sacrifice ..."*

— St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

**Required Reading:** The Book of Her Life, chapters 32-35

**Additional Reading:** Excerpts from The Collected Letters of St Teresa of Avila: Volume One:  
*Letter 2* (Letter to her brother, Don Lorenzo de Cepeda concerning her first foundation)  
(Appendix B) and *Letter 3* (To the Lords of the town council of Avila. This letter speaks of the  
consolation the sisters find in their hermitages.) (Appendix C)

**In Context:** Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Their World, chapter 6. *The Monastery of the  
Incarnation*. (Appendix D)

#### **Essential Points to Discuss:**

- Referring to the papal bull of Pope Eugene IV and his further modification of the Rule of St Albert – "...the rule was not kept in its prime rigor, but was observed the way it was in the whole order, that is, according to the bull of mitigation" (Life 32:9).
- "One day after Communion, His Majesty earnestly commanded me to strive for this new monastery with all my powers, and He made great promises that it would be founded and that He would be highly served in it" (32:11).
- There was so much talk and outcry at the Monastery of the Incarnation that the provincial changed his mind and didn't want to accept the foundation under his jurisdiction (see 32:15). "I was very much disliked throughout my monastery because I had wanted to found a more enclosed monastery" (33:2).
- "One day, while I was greatly troubled with the thought that my confessor didn't believe me, the Lord told me not to be anxious, that the affliction would soon end" (33:8).
- "My Confessor gave me permission again to dedicate myself entirely to this foundation. I saw clearly the toil it would bring upon me since I was very much alone and had hardly any means. We [St Teresa and her companions] agreed to carry on in total secrecy..." (33:11).
- "My Lord, how is it You command things that seem impossible?" (33:11).

#### **Side Notes – Reasons for Reform:**

1. A central and important part of the community's common prayer was prayer for deceased donors and their families. It provided an important source of income. But at the same time, it provided an overlay of prayers and devotions that could require a great deal of time beyond the communal and personal prayer of the nuns. In her reform, Teresa wanted none of this kind of entanglement with the wealthy, nor added layers of required prayers.

## The Monthly Sessions

2. What concerned Teresa especially was the concern for personal honor based on class distinction, so rampant in society at the time, which remained prominent in the monastery. Teresa would react strongly by eliminating all titles in the monasteries of the Reform and mandating a spirit of egalitarianism.
3. The nuns took a vow of obedience to the Carmelite general, the prioress, and their successors. There was no formal vow of poverty.
4. The spirit of enclosure – so essential for a life of tranquility, silence, and contemplation – likewise suffered. All of this was bound to undermine the broader sense of observance and spirit of recollection in the monastery.

### **Assigned Meditative Reading:**

- Psalm 1 – Meditate day and night
- Romans 8:24-27 – “For in hope we were saved...”
- Romans 12:1-2 – “Do not conform yourself to this age...”
- 1 Chronicles 22: 17-19 – “Is not the Lord your God with you?”

## Session 4: The new monastery of the glorious St. Joseph, an expression of the Discalced Carmelite Charism

*Silence is precious; by keeping silence and knowing how to listen to God, the soul grows in wisdom and God teaches it what it cannot learn from men.*

— Blessed Anne of St Bartholomew

**Required Reading:** The Book of Her Life, chapter 36

**Additional Reading:** Excerpt from The Collected Works of Edith Stein: The Hidden Life, Saint Joseph's of Avila, the First Monastery of the Reform, pgs. 53-58. (Appendix E)

### **Essential Points to Discuss:**

- Friar Peter of Alcántara (a Franciscan friar/hermit) and Don Juan Balazquez (a layman), succeeded in getting Don Alvaro de Mendoza, the bishop of Avila, to accept the new foundation under his jurisdiction (see 36:1-2).
- “Everything was done in deep secrecy...” (36:3). “When everything was ready the Lord was pleased that on St. Bartholomew’s Day the habit was received by some and the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, and with all due authority and power our monastery of our most glorious father St Joseph was founded, in 1562” (36:5).
- “...it was a great delight for me to see that His Majesty had used me ...as an instrument for such a marvelous work. Thus I was so intensely happy that I was as though outside myself, in deep prayer” (36:6).
- “We observe the rule of our Lady of Mt. Carmel (St Albert Rule) and keep it without mitigation as ordained by the Friar Cardinal Hugo of Saint Sabina and given in 1248, in the fifth year of the pontificate of Pope Innocent IV” (36:26).

**Explanatory note:** St Teresa is referring to their giving up the text mitigated by Eugene IV, which was observed in the Monastery of the Incarnation. They substituted for this text the rule as approved by Innocent IV. This was the juridical and spiritual point of departure for her reform (see ch. 36 endnote #27).

### **Assigned Meditative Reading:** (choose one per week)

- Psalm 127 – unless the Lord builds the house
- Matthew 7:13-14 – enter by the narrow gate
- Matthew 7:24-27 – the house built on rock
- Matthew 13:18-23 – parable of the sower
- Luke 6:43-45 – a good tree bears good fruit
- John 15 – Christ is the vine, we are the branches
- John of the Cross – first three stanzas of *The Dark Night* (Appendix F)

## Session 5: Foundation of the first monastery for Discalced Carmelite Friars.

*“O my Jesus, what a soul inflamed in Your love accomplishes!  
How highly we must esteem such a soul  
and how we must beg the Lord to let it remain in this life!  
Whoever has this same love must follow after these souls if he can.”*  
— St Teresa of Avila

**Required Reading:** Excerpts from The Foundations by St Teresa of Avila. (Appendix G):

Chapter 2: Paragraphs 5, 6 and 7

Chapter 3: Paragraph 17

Chapter 13: Paragraphs 1-7

Chapter 14: Paragraph 6, 11

**Additional Reading:** Excerpt from The Collected Works of Edith Stein: The Hidden Life, Saint Joseph's of Avila, the First Monastery of the Reform, pgs. 58-61. (Appendix E) Excerpt from Journey to Carith pgs. 157-169. (Appendix H)

### Essential Points to Discuss:

- “After some days passed, I was thinking about how necessary it would be if monasteries of nuns were to be founded that there be friars observing the same rule” (F 2:5).
- St. Teresa received permission from Father General Fray Juan Bautista de Ravena for the foundation of Discalced Carmelite monasteries for friars (see F 2:5). “Everything now seemed very possible, and so I set to work” (F 2:6). “O greatness of God! How You manifest Your power in giving courage to an ant!” (F 2:7).
- An important meeting took place in Medina del Campo between St Teresa and St John of the Cross (see F 3:17).
- Don Rafael, a gentleman from Avila, offered St Teresa a home he owned in a little town named Duruelo (see F 13:2).
- While St Teresa was waiting for the workmen to get the house ready, she had an opportunity to teach St John of the Cross about the Discalced Carmelite way of life so that he would have clear understanding of everything (see F 13:5).
- “...in the year 1568, the first Mass was said in that little stable of Bethlehem...” (F 14:6).
- “I experienced the greatest interior joy, for it seemed to me that I saw a beginning that would be of much benefit to our order and service to our Lord. May it please His Majesty that things will continue as they are now, and that my plan will indeed be realized” (F 14:11).

**Side note:** The Discalced Carmelites were established as a separate province within the order in 1581. Finally, on Dec. 20, 1593, Pope Clement VIII established the Discalced Carmelites as an independent religious order with their own superior general and administration.

**Assigned Meditative Reading:**

- John 17:6-12 – Jesus’ prayer for his disciples
- John 17:13-19 – “that they may be sanctified”
- John 17:20-26 – and for those who will believe through them “that they may be one in us”
- Psalm 133: – “How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!”



## Session 6: Origin and Basic Identity of the Secular Order

*“Let us live with God as with a friend, let us make our faith a living faith in order to be in communion with Him, through everything, for that is what makes saints.”*  
— St Elizabeth of the Trinity

**Required Reading:** Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, *Origin and Basic Identity of Secular Order*, pgs. 58-62. *A Touch of OCDS History*, para. 7-15 (Appendix I). OCDS Constitutions: Articles 1-3

**Additional Reading:** The rest of *A Touch of OCDS History*, Elizabeth M Korves OCDS (Appendix J); Message of John Paul II to the Carmelite Family (Appendix K).

### **Essential Points to Discuss:**

- “Our membership of the Order goes back to the relationship established between laity and members of religious Orders born in the Middle Ages” (Const. art. 2).
- “...the involvement of laypersons with mendicant life was to bring the spirituality of the mendicant Orders into the life of laypersons in the world” (Welcome pg 59).
- “...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” (Welcome pg 59).
- “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*)” (Welcome pg 60).
- The evolution of the OCDS Constitutions – The Manual of 1921; The Rule of Life, 1979; The Constitutions, 2003 (*A Touch of History* para. 7-15)

### **Assigned Meditative Reading:** (weekly)

Meditate on one or more of the Beatitudes, which are a pattern of life for all the faithful – ordained, religious, and laity.

## PART II

### **OCDS Constitutions and Statutes: A Deeper Understanding of Our Formation, Community, and the Promise**

**Note to the formator:** Cross-reference the corresponding sections of the local Provincial Statutes when discussing related topics in the OCDS Constitutions, and vice versa. For example, when discussing what the Constitutions say about the local Council, also direct the candidates' attention to what the Statutes say about the Council.

### **Session 7: Formation in the School of Carmel**

*"Awaken and enlighten us, my Lord, that we might know and love the blessings which you ever propose to us, and that we might understand that You have moved to bestow favors on us and have remembered us."*  
— St John of the Cross

**Required Reading;** OCDS Constitutions, articles 32-36; Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, *The Role of Study in the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites*, pgs. 78-80.

#### **Essential Points to Discuss:**

- "The central object of the process of formation in the Secular Order is to prepare the person to live the charism and spirituality of Carmel in its following of Christ and in service to its mission" (Const. art. 32).
- "Both initial and ongoing formation in the teachings of Teresa and John of the Cross help to develop in the Carmelite Secular a human, Christian, and spiritual maturity for the service to the Church..." (Const. art. 34).
- "... study in formation of the OCDS is not reduced to some sort of academic pursuit of knowledge..." (Welcome pg 79).
- "...study in formation of the OCDS does not have a point at which one says, 'The End'" (Welcome pg 79).
- A basic definition of "study in formation of OCDS": the process whereby, with the help of others, we attempt to deepen our understanding of the relationship with God in the light of Catholic and Carmelite doctrines, traditions and teachings (see Welcome pg 79).

#### **Assigned Meditative Reading:** (weekly)

The Rule of Saint Albert – one or more provisions each week; reflect on how each applies to secular life.

## Session 8: Organization and Government of the Order/Community

*“Our Life in Carmel is to love – that is our vocation.”*

— St Teresa of the Andes

**Required Reading:** OCDS Constitutions articles 37-50 and the corresponding local Statutes relating to Community.

**Additional reading:** *Pastoral Care of the Secular Order, Spiritual Assistants* (Appendix L). The entire document is available here:

[http://www.carmelitaniscalzi.com/en/documents/ocds/pastoral-care\\_ocds\\_en/](http://www.carmelitaniscalzi.com/en/documents/ocds/pastoral-care_ocds_en/)

### **Essential Points to Discuss:**

- “The Secular Order is basically structured on the local community as a visible sign of the Church and ... enjoys juridical personality” (Const. art. 40)
- “The Secular Order is juridically dependent on the Discalced Carmelite Friars. The Superior General establishes the local communities...” (Const. art. 41)
- “The Provincial Superior, usually aided by the Provincial Delegate, is the Superior of the Secular Order within his territory” (Const. art. 43)
- Local communities are governed by the Council. The Council, composed of the President, three Councilors, and the Director of Formation, constitutes the immediate authority of the community (see Const. art. 46).
- “The General Superior, the Provincial Superior and the Council of the community are the legitimate superiors of the Secular Order” (Const. art. 48).
- “Every three years, each local community of the Secular Order elects its President and three Councilors” (Const. art. 50).
- “These four officers, after consulting the Assistant, elect the director of formation from those who have made definitive promises” (Const. art. 50). Note: The Formation Director is not elected by the community.
- The Council then names a Secretary and a Treasurer (Const. art. 50). There may be a secretary for the Council and a different secretary for the community, if need be.
- “The Spiritual Assistant to each community is usually a friar of the Order. His duty is to give spiritual aid to the community... He will also endeavor to promote solidarity between the Secular Community and the friars and nuns of the Order” (Const art. 44). He is appointed by the Provincial for a set term of office (*Pastoral Care of the OCDS* art. 16 – this excerpt is in Appendix L).
- The President must be definitively professed (Const. art 51); except under special circumstances, councilors are elected from the definitively professed members (art. 52).
- The procedure for the elections is to be determined by the Provincial Statutes (art. 50). A brief introduction to the procedure for election as outlined in the provincial statutes.
- To be eligible to vote, a member must be professed (at least in First Promise). “By the promise made to the community ... the person becomes a full member of the Secular Order” (art. 12).

- Professed members are eligible to serve on the Nominating Committee (see Provincial Statutes).

Election to a position in the Community is for the purpose of service. In the religious life, no one has a vocation to hierarchy. Our structure is completely on a rotational basis. One is a Councilor or President, and then goes back to being a regular member. Carmelites are always a visible sign of the Church because they are members of the Order, not because they are a President, Councilor or Formation Director (see Welcome Election, pgs. 92-93).

“... [the Council’s] character as a temporary shared authority, renewed every three years, indicates that the Council receives an authority of mediation and delegation from the community that elects it. It must therefore lead it according to the spirit and charism of the Teresian Carmel, according to what is defined in the OCDS constitutions” (*Letter to OCDS*, Appendix M).

**Assigned Meditative Reading:**

- Philippians 2 – humility in leadership roles
- Heb 13:17 – humility toward and cooperation with leaders
- Mark 9:35 – humility as leader and servant of all
- Eph 4:2 – humility and bearing one another in love
- Luke 17:10 – unworthy servants, only doing what we are obliged to do

## Session 9: The Local Council: Understanding the function of the Council within the context of the Community

**Note to the Formator:** Every professed member may be expected to serve on the Council at some time. Given the lasting harm caused by a dysfunctional Council, it is extremely important that the candidates thoroughly understand the points discussed in this session.

**Note to the Council:** It would be appropriate to use parts of this session for community formation periodically, especially in the months before the triennial elections.

*“In order to be an image of God, the spirit must turn to what is eternal,  
hold it in spirit, keep it in memory, and by loving it, embrace it in the will.”*  
– St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

**Required Reading:** Const. art. 46-55. Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, How Ought the Council Function, pgs. 81-96. *Letter to OCDS Communities* nos. 3-8, Fr. Saverio Cannistra, OCD, Superior General, Rome March 6, 2019 (the entire letter is in Appendix M).

**Additional Reading:** Entire *Letter to OCDS Communities*, Fr. Cannistrà. Ratio 11, on the Council’s role in formation.

### **Essential Points to Discuss:**

#### **Duties, Responsibilities and Characteristics of the Local Council:**

- The Council is comprised of the President, Formation Director and three Councilors. The authority of the Council is shared among these five members. The entire Council shares responsibility for the community, not just one or two members of the Council. “It should be an authority lived ‘with a mother’s love’ and with ‘discretion’...Its exercise requires *active co-responsibility*, both within the Council itself in the choices and decisions to be taken, and in encouraging the active and responsible participation of each member of the community in decisions concerning the good of the community” (*Letter to OCDS*, no. 4).
- In Carmel – as in Christian life – authority is not about control, it is about service to the community. “Control is not service. Guidance, instruction, leadership – that is service, but not controlling” (Welcome pg. 94).
- “The primary responsibility of the Council is the formation and Christian and Carmelite maturing of the members of the community” (Const. art. 46). Every member of the Council is expected to get to know the candidates as individuals in order to aid their formation and properly discern for the Promise. “Today more than ever, in the face of social and ecclesial reality, a solid formation is necessary that leads to the practice of discernment in community. The community is then the fertile sphere of this; it should lead each member to be co-responsible for the community, its formation and its mission” (*Letter to OCDS*, no. 4).

- Council members are obliged to respect the confidential nature of meetings and council business.
- The President is not the superior of the community or of the Council. He or she is a spokesperson and is at the service of the community. The President:
  - convokes and presides over meetings of the community and the Council
  - shows fraternal service to all the members of the community
  - is careful to avoid any demonstration of preference for some members over others
  - aids the Formation Director and Spiritual Assistant in carrying out their responsibilities (See Const. art. 51)
- “Formation Director ...has the responsibility of preparing the candidates for first and definitive promises” (Const. art. 53). The formators cooperate as a team with the Formation Director to carry out the directions given by the Council.
- The three Councilors:
  - share responsibility for the community equally with the President and Formation Director
  - attend and participate in the council meetings, taking an active role in the discussions and decision-making
  - participate in implementing the formation program of the Province
  - take an active interest in the wellbeing and formation of the community and the individual members
  - participate in discernments for the Promise
- “From these duties, we see that the Council carries out a fundamental role of accompanying and leading the Community in its mission. For this reason, it ought to walk together towards it, encouraging the *communal character of the Christian Carmelite vocation* and look upon each of the members with God’s eyes” (*Letter to OCDS*, no. 3).
- In the practical exercise of dialogue, all must have the patience of listening – which requires humility, patience, willingness to understand, and an effort to respond in new ways. So, it is not a question of tenaciously defending one’s ideas, but of seeking the truth together with others in humility. In this form of dialogue, conflicts in the community are harmonized by the unity of the spirit. There is a need for training in communion which helps to move from the selfish “I” of the old person to the “we” of the new person (see *Letter to OCDS*, no. 6).
- “Humility also requires having our eyes fixed on God, the true centre of each and every one, not considering oneself the center of the world and of oneself. ... Only with humility and detachment from self can we overcome the temptations of factions, rivalries and vainglory in the community” (*Letter to OCDS*, no. 7).
- Fellowship is an integral part of the community meetings and the Council is responsible for fostering the sense of “togetherness” in the community. While study and prayer are important, meetings also need to include time to relax together as friends (see Welcome pgs. 94-95).

## The Monthly Sessions

- “...the members of the Council must know well the documents that govern the OCDS and let themselves be guided by them... To carry out this service, the members of the Council must look to Jesus, who came to serve and give his life for others. This leads authority to be respectful towards the community, understanding it as a gift from above that must be guarded and as a place where the Risen One is present” (*Letter to OCDS*, no. 4-5).

### **Assigned Meditative Reading:**

- Luke 22:24-27 – “let the greatest among you become as the youngest”
- Matt 23:10-12 – the greatest must serve the rest
- Philippians 2:1-4 – be united in love
- Heb 13:17 – confidence in superiors
- The Collected Letters of St. Teresa of Avila, Vol. II, Letter 321. To Madre Maria Bautista, Valladolid: “You should know that I am not the same when it comes to governing. Everything is done with love. I don’t know whether this is because I have no reason for acting otherwise, or because I have come to understand that things are better dealt with in this way.”

## Session 10: OCDS Members' responsibilities to the Community and the Order

*"The Devil chooses to deceive some people in the following way. He will marvelously inflame their brains with the desire to uphold God's law and destroy sin in everyone else. ... They will rebuke everyone for their faults ... and it seems to them that they dare not do otherwise for God's sake. They tell them of the faults they see, claiming to be impelled to do so by the fire of charity and the love of God in their hearts; but in truth they are lying, for it is by the fire of hell surging in their brains and their imaginations."*

— The Cloud of Unknowing, chapter 55

**Required Reading:** Constitutions 15, 24a-d, Ratio 24-29; Provincial Statutes and policies on roles and responsibilities in the community; Community policies (if any) on community roles and responsibilities.

**Additional Reading:** *Our First Duty as Carmelites*, Fr. David Centner, OCD (Appendix N).

### Essential Points to Discuss:

- The need for mutual support in the spiritual life
- The need for shared responsibility and cooperation in community life
- Developing interpersonal skills and attitudes

### Further Points to Cover:

- All members have the responsibility to:
  - Attend the meetings – prepared for the discussions, on time, and present for the entire meeting (unless excused by the local Council for valid reason)
  - Help with various tasks during the meeting, as the need arises
  - Foster an attitude of charity toward the other members
  - Develop an attitude of cooperation toward the local Council and the Superiors of the Order
  - Pay dues to the community and the province (unless excused by the local Council for valid reason)
- Professed members also have the responsibility to:
  - Take an active interest in the wellbeing of the community and the other members
  - Safeguard the harmony of community life by their friendliness and charity toward all members
  - Take turns with the roles of the Liturgy of the Hours
  - Cooperate with the local Council when asked to take on extra responsibilities – e.g., Secretary, Treasurer, infirmarian, librarian, liturgist, webmaster, retreat coordinator, assistant, etc. (every member has a job unless excused by the local Council for valid reason)
  - Actively participate in the community apostolate (unless excused by the local Council for valid reason)
  - Take an interest in activities of the Order beyond the local community



## The Monthly Sessions

- Be willing to serve on the Council, if needed (see Const 52)
- Definitively professed members have the added responsibility to:
  - Be willing to serve as formators or on the Council
  - Be willing to help with community and ongoing formation sessions
  - Promote vocations to the OCDS

**Note to the formator:** By this time in their formation, candidates should be well on their way from mostly being nurtured to wanting to help and support others. It would be appropriate to begin discussing the various roles of service and which ones the candidates feel drawn to.

**Note to the Council:** Community responsibilities should be shared among the members as much as possible. Every professed member should be responsible for some ongoing service to the community (unless excused by reason of age or illness). Continuously nurturing leadership skills and experience in all the members ensures that most will be equipped and confident to take a turn on the Council. It is unhealthy for a community to always rely on just a few individuals, however gifted they may be.

## **Session 11: The promise in the spirit of the evangelical counsels (chastity, poverty and obedience) and the Beatitudes – the vocation to Carmel**

*“Let your desire be to see God; your fear lest you lose Him;  
your joy in that which will take you to Him and thus shall you live in great peace.”*

— St Teresa of Avila

**Required Reading:** Constitutions articles 10-16. Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, *The Beatitudes and Your Vocation to Carmel*, pgs. 63-77.

**Additional Reading:** The Promise and Vows, by Fr Alzinir Debastiani (Appendix O). *The Evangelical Counsels* by Gerald Alford (Appendix P).

### **Essential Points to Discuss:**

- By the Promise made to the community, the person becomes a full member of the Secular Order and may use the OCDS designation after his/her name within the context of Carmel (see Const. art. 12).
- This Promise is renewed once a year during the Easter Season (see Const. art. 12; OCDS Ritual ch. 5).
- The Promise is an ecclesial act. One becomes more part of the Church by the Promise and membership in the Order. Our Promise as members of the Discalced Carmelite Order deepens our baptismal commitment to live as disciples of Christ in communion with His Church. We participate fully in the liturgical life of the Church through Mass, the sacraments, and the Liturgy of the Hours. We take part in the Church’s mission of evangelization by taking part in the Order’s mission of “knowing Christ that Christ may be known.”
- Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience are part of Jesus’ life in the Gospel. These three virtues become the measuring stick for one’s relationship with the members of the community, families, co-workers and the world. Jesus becomes the standard by which we evaluate ourselves.
- The Promise made as seculars is not to live *our* poverty, *our* chastity, or *our* obedience, but to live the Poverty, Chastity and Obedience of Jesus.
- The Beatitudes are a way of life. By living the Beatitudes, Carmelites bear witness to Christ (see Const. art. 16).
- We live in Jesus, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Through Jesus we are taken up into the life of the Trinity.

### **Assigned Meditative Reading:**

- CCC 2544-2547 – poverty of heart
- CCC 2337-2349 – chastity and the perfection of charity
- CCC 612-618 – the obedience of Christ; uniting oneself with the suffering Christ
- Constitutions 11-16 – our commitment in Carmel

**At the end of this period of formation the candidate should have:**

1. A sincere appreciation of the history of the Order.
2. A basic understanding of the OCDS role in the mission of the Church through the study of the Rule of St Albert, OCDS Constitutions and Provincial Statutes.
3. A heightened desire for fidelity to a life of prayer in keeping with the teachings and example of Our Holy Mother St Teresa, demonstrated by faithfulness to daily mental prayer and the Liturgy of the Hours.
4. An understanding of Poverty, Chastity, Obedience and the Beatitudes within the context of the Promise appropriate to this stage of formation.
5. A desire to be of service to the community and ongoing development of the attitudes necessary for harmonious community life.

**Note to the Council:** Refer to the Ratio Institutionis 59-68 for basic qualities that indicate a vocation to Carmel.

## Session 12: Rites of Admission and Ritual

### Instructions for Council and Formators:

After the first stage of formation, the candidate makes a personal promise and commits himself or herself before God and the local community (fraternity) to follow the Constitutions of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites for three years. During this new state, the Secular Carmelite lives in accord with the Constitutions in a spirit of fidelity to the prescribed daily program of liturgical and contemplative prayer, in faithful participation in the meetings of the community, in formation, and in ongoing discernment. He or she does this with a view to making a life-long commitment at the end of three years (Ritual, 7-8).

The Rite of the First Promise may be celebrated during a Eucharistic Liturgy, during the common recitation of the Morning or Evening Prayer of the Church, or in the context of a Liturgy of the Word (Ritual, 7).

This Ritual has been officially approved by the Holy See and it is the only text authorized for the liturgical ceremonies of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites. The prayers of the officiating minister who presides, and the formulas of acceptance and of commitment must be kept whole and unchanged (Ritual, 3-4).

The Formation Director will meet with the candidates who have been approved for the Promise to prepare them for the Ritual, including the particular rites that will be used, the formulas of acceptance and of commitment, and the annual renewal of the Promise.

**Required Reading:** Ritual for the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, sections applicable to the ceremony to be used.

### Essential Points to Discuss:

- The making of the Promise confers membership in the Secular Order and establishes spiritual and juridical ties with the Discalced Carmelites. By the promise of obedience, Secular Carmelites pledge themselves to cooperate with the legitimate Superiors of the Order and the governing council of the community, and to obey them, within the limits of the OCDS Constitutions (Ritual, Instruction of the Superior General).
- Rites of Admission to the First Promise during the celebration of the Eucharist/Divine Office/Liturgy of the Word, according to the rite that will be used. Special emphasis should be given to the formula of the Promise itself.
- When making the First Promise, the candidate's given name is retained, to which the candidate may add a title of devotion (in those provinces where this is allowed). The Formation Director should help candidates understand the purpose and meaning of this title of devotion, and when and how it is used.
- Candidates should understand when it is appropriate to publicly use the OCDS designation. (Refer to provincial policy or best practices, according to what is used in the local province.)
- Review the formula for the Renewal of the Promise and when and how it is to be made (Ritual 84).

**Recommended Meditative Reading:**

The Promise:

I \_\_\_\_\_, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in response to God's call, sincerely promise to the Superiors of the Order of the Teresian Carmel and to you my brothers and sisters, to tend toward evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, obedience, and of the Beatitudes, according to the Constitutions of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites, for three years. I confidently entrust this, my Promise, to the Virgin Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendix A: Session 1,**

#### **Excerpt from The Collected Works of Edith Stein Vol 4, the Hidden Life**

Pg. 1-6

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#### ***Before the Face of God***

##### **I.1. On the History and Spirit of Carmel**

Until a few years ago, very little from our silent monasteries penetrated into the world. It is different today. People talk a lot about Carmel and want to hear something about life behind the high walls. This is chiefly attributable to the great saints of our time who have captivated the entire Catholic world with amazing speed, for instance *St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus*. Gertrud von le Fort's novel about Carmel has vigorously directed German intellectual circles to our Order, as has her beautiful foreword to the letters of Marie Antoinette de Geuser.

What does the average Catholic know about Carmel? That it is a very strict, perhaps the strictest penitential order, and that from it comes the holy habit of the Mother of God, the brown scapular, which unites many of the faithful in the world to us. The whole church celebrates with us the patronal feast of our Order, the feast of the scapular, on July 16. Most people also recognize at least the names of "little" Thérèse and "great" Teresa, whom we call our Holy Mother. She is generally seen as the founder of the Discalced Carmelites. The person who is a little more familiar with the history of the church and monasteries certainly knows that we revere the prophet Elijah as our leader and father. But people consider this a "legend" that does not mean very much. We who live in Carmel and who daily call on our Holy Father Elijah in prayer know that for us he is not a shadowy figure out of the dim past. His spirit is active among us in a vital tradition and determines how we live. Our Holy Mother strenuously denied that she was founding a new Order. She wanted nothing except to reawaken the original spirit of the old Rule [of St. Albert].

Our Holy Father Elijah succinctly says what is most important in the first words of his that Scriptures give us. He says to King Ahab who worshipped idols (1 Kgs 17:1), "As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

To stand before the face of the living God—that is our vocation. The holy prophet set us an example. He stood before God's face because this was the eternal treasure for whose sake he gave up all earthly goods. He had no house; he lived wherever the Lord directed him from moment to moment: in the loneliness beside the brook of Carith, in the little house of the poor widow of Zarephath of Sidon, or in the caves of Mount Carmel. His clothing was an animal hide like that of that other great penitent and prophet, the Baptist. The hide of a dead animal reminds us that the human body is also subject to death. Elijah is not concerned about his daily bread. He lives trusting in the solicitude of the heavenly Father and is marvelously sustained. A



raven brings him his daily food while he is in solitude. The miraculously increased provisions of the pious widow nourish him in Zarephath. Prior to the long trek to the holy mountain where the Lord was to appear to him, an angel with heavenly bread strengthens him. So he is for us an example of the gospel poverty that we have vowed, an authentic prototype of the Savior.

Elijah stands before God's face because all of his love belongs to the Lord. He lives outside all natural human relationships. We hear nothing of his father and mother, nothing of a wife or child. His "relatives" are those who do the will of the Father as he does: Elisha, whom God has designated as his successor, and the "sons of the prophets," who follow him as their leader. Glorifying God is his joy. His zeal to serve God tears him apart: "I am filled with jealous zeal for the Lord, the God of hosts" (1 Kgs 19:10, 14; these words were used as a motto on the shield of the Order). By living penitentially, he atones for the sins of his time. The offense that the misguided people give to the Lord by their manner of worship hurts him so much that he wants to die. And the Lord consoles him only as he consoles his especially chosen ones: He himself appears to Elijah on a lonely mountain, reveals himself in soft rustling after a thunderstorm, and announces his will to him in clear words.

The prophet, who serves the Lord in complete purity of heart and completely stripped of everything earthly, is also a model of obedience. He stands before God's face like the angels before the eternal throne, awaiting God's sign, always ready to serve. Elijah has no other will than the will of his Lord. When God bids, he goes before the king and fearlessly risks giving him bad news that must arouse the king's hatred. When God wills it, he leaves the country at the threat of violence; but he also returns at God's command, though the danger has not disappeared.

Anyone who is so unconditionally faithful to God can also be certain of God's faithfulness. He is permitted to speak "as someone who has power," may open and close heaven, may command the waters to let him walk through and remain dry, may call down fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice, to execute punishment on God's enemies, and may breathe new life into a dead person. We see the Savior's predecessor provided with all the graces that he has promised to his own. And the greatest crown is still in reserve for Elijah: Before the eyes of his true disciple, Elisha, he is carried off in a fiery carriage to a secret place far from all human abodes. According to the testimony of the Book of Revelation, he will return near the end of the world to suffer a martyr's death for his Lord in the battle against the Antichrist.

On his feast, which we celebrate on July 20, the priest goes to the altar in red vestments. On this day the monastery of our friars on Mount Carmel, the site of Elijah's grotto, is the goal of mighty bands of pilgrims. Jews, Moslems, and Christians of all denominations vie in honoring the great prophet. We remember him in the liturgy on still another day, in the epistle and preface of the *Feast of Mount Carmel*, as we usually call the feast of the scapular. On this day we give thanks that our dear Lady has clothed us with the "garment of salvation." The events providing the occasion for this feast did not occur until much later in the Western world. In the year 1251 [according to tradition] the Blessed Virgin appeared to the general of the Order, Simon Stock, an Englishman, and gave him the scapular. But the preface reminds us that it was our dear Lady of Mount Carmel who bestowed this visible sign of her motherly protection on her children far from the original home of the Order. It was she who manifested herself to the

prophet Elijah in the form of a little rain cloud and for whom the sons of the prophets built the first shrine on Mount Carmel. The legend of the Order tells us that the Mother of God would have liked to remain with the hermit brothers on Mount Carmel. We can certainly understand that she felt drawn to the place where she had been venerated through the ages and where the holy prophet had lived in the same spirit that also filled her from the time her earthly sojourn began. Released from everything earthly, to stand in worship in the presence of God, to love him with her whole heart, to beseech his grace for sinful people, and in atonement to substitute herself for these people, as the maidservant of the Lord to await his beckoning—this was her life.

The hermits of Carmel lived as sons of the great prophet and as “brothers of the Blessed Virgin.” St. Berthold organized them as cenobites, and at the instigation of St. Brocard, the spirit they had received from their predecessors was laid down in our holy *Rule*. Around 1200, it was given to the Order by St. Albert, the patriarch of Jerusalem, and authorized by Pope Innocent IV in 1247. It also condenses the entire meaning of our life in a short statement: “All are to remain in their own cells..., meditating on the law of the Lord day and night and watching in prayer, unless otherwise justly employed.” “To watch in prayer”—this is to say the same thing that Elijah said with the words, “to stand before the face of God.” Prayer is looking up into the face of the Eternal. We can do this only when the spirit is awake in its innermost depths, freed from all earthly occupations and pleasures that numb it. Being awake in body does not guarantee this consciousness, nor does the rest required by nature interfere. “To meditate on the Law of the Lord”—this can be a form of prayer when we take prayer in its usual broad sense. But if we think of “watching in prayer” as being immersed in God, which is characteristic of contemplation, then meditation on the Law is only a means to contemplation.

What is meant by “the Law of the Lord”? Psalm 118, which we pray every Sunday and on solemnities at Prime, is entirely filled with the command to know the Law and to be led by it through life. The Psalmist was certainly thinking of the Law of the Old Covenant. Knowing it actually did require life-long study, and fulfilling it, life-long exertion of the will. But the Lord has freed us from the yoke of this Law. We can consider the Savior’s great commandment of love, which he says includes the whole Law and the Prophets, as the Law of the New Covenant. Perfect love of God and of neighbor can certainly be a subject worthy of an entire lifetime of meditation. But we understand the Law of the New Covenant, even better, to be the Lord himself, since he has in fact lived as an example for us of the life we should live. We thus fulfill our Rule when we hold the image of the Lord continually before our eyes in order to make ourselves like him. We can never finish studying the Gospels.

But we have the Savior not only in the form of reports of witnesses to his life. He is present to us in the most Blessed Sacrament. The hours of adoration before the Highest Good, and listening for the voice of the eucharistic God, are simultaneously “meditation on the Law of the Lord” and “watching in prayer.” But the highest level is reached “when the Law is deep within our hearts” (Ps 40:8), when we are so united with the triune God, whose temple we are, that his Spirit rules all we do or omit. Then it does not mean we are forsaking the Lord when we do the work that obedience requires of us. Work is unavoidable as long as we are subject to nature’s laws and to the necessities of life. And, following the word and example of the apostle Paul, our holy Rule commands us to earn our bread by the work of our hands. But for us this

work is always merely a means and must never be an end in itself. To stand before the face of God continues to be the real content of our lives.

Islam's conquest of the Holy Land drove the hermit brothers from Carmel. Only for the past 300 years has our Order again had a shrine of the Mother of God on the holy mountain. The transition from solitude into the everyday life of Western culture led to a falsification of the original spirit of the Order. The protective walls of separation, of rigorous penance and of silence fell, and the pleasures and cares of the world pressed through the opened gates. The Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila, which our Holy Mother entered in the year 1535, was such a monastery of the mitigated Rule. For decades she endured the conflict between the snares of worldly relationships and the pull of undivided surrender to God. But the Lord allowed her no rest until she let go of everything that bound her and really became serious about recognizing that *God alone suffices*.

The great schism of faith that was tearing Europe apart during her time, the loss of so many souls, aroused in her the passionate desire to stop the harm and to offer the Lord recompense, whereupon God gave her the idea of taking a little flock of selected souls and founding a monastery according to the original Rule and of serving him there with the greatest perfection. After innumerable battles and difficulties, she was able to found the monastery of St. Joseph in Avila. Her great work of reform grew from there. At her death she left behind 36 monasteries of women and men of the strict observance, the new branch of the Order, the "Discalced" Carmelites. The monasteries of the reform were to be places where the spirit of the ancient Carmel was to live again. The reestablished original Rule and the Constitutions drawn up by the saint herself form the fence by means of which she intended to protect her vineyards against the dangers from without. Her writings on prayer, the most complete and most animated presentation of the inner life, are the precious legacy through which her spirit continues to work among us. ... It is the ancient spirit of Carmel. However, influenced by the battles over faith raging in her time, she gave stronger emphasis than did the primitive Carmel to the thought of reparation and of supporting the servants of the church who withstood the enemy in the front lines.

As our second father and leader, we revere the first male discalced Carmelite of the reform, St. John of the Cross. We find in him the ancient eremitical spirit in its purest form. His life gives an impression as though he had no inner struggles. Just as from his earliest childhood he was under the special protection of the Mother of God, so from the time he reached the age of reason, he was drawn to rigorous penance, to solitude, to letting go of everything earthly, and to union with God. He was the instrument chosen to be an example and to teach the reformed Carmel the spirit of Holy Father Elijah. Together with Mother Teresa, he spiritually formed the first generation of male and female discalced Carmelites, and through his writings, he also illumines for us the way on the "Ascent of Mount Carmel."

The daughters of St Teresa, personally trained by her and Father John, founded the first monasteries of the reform in France and Belgium. From there the Order also soon advanced into the Rhineland. The great French Revolution and the Kulturkampf in Germany tried to suppress it by force. But as soon as the pressure abated, it sprang to life again. It was in this garden that the "little white flower" [i.e. Thérèse of Lisieux] bloomed, so quickly captivating

hearts far beyond the boundaries of the Order, not only as a worker of miracles for those in need, but also as a director of “little souls” on the path of “spiritual childhood.” Many people came to know this path through her, but very few know that it is not really a new discovery, but the path onto which life in Carmel pushes us. The greatness of the young saint was that she recognized this path with ingenious deduction and that she followed it with heroic decisiveness to the end. The walls of our monasteries enclose a narrow space. To erect the structure of holiness in it, one must dig deep and build high, must descend into the depths of the dark night of one’s own nothingness in order to be raised up high into the sunlight of divine love and compassion.

Not every century produces a work of reform as powerful as that of our Holy Mother. Nor does every age give us a reign of terror during which we have the opportunity to lay our heads on the executioner’s block for our faith and for the ideal of our Order as did the sixteen Carmelites of Compiègne. But all who enter Carmel must give themselves wholly to the Lord. Only one who values her little place in the choir before the tabernacle more highly than all the splendor of the world can live here, can then truly find a joy that no worldly splendor has to offer.

Our daily schedule ensures us of hours for solitary dialogue with the Lord, and these are the foundation of our life. Together with priests and other ancient orders of the church, we pray the Liturgy of the Hours, and this Divine Office is for us as for them our first and most sacred duty. But it is not for us the supporting ground. No human eye can see what God does in the soul during hours of inner prayer. It is grace upon grace. And all of life’s other hours are our thanks for them.

Carmelites can repay God’s love by their everyday lives in no other way than by carrying out their daily duties faithfully in every respect—all the little sacrifices that a regimen structured day after day in all its details demands of an active spirit; all the self-control that living in close proximity with different kinds of people continually requires and that is achieved with a loving smile; letting no opportunity go by for serving others in love. Finally, crowning this is the personal sacrifice that the Lord may impose on the individual soul. This is the “little way,” a bouquet of insignificant little blossoms that are daily placed before the Almighty—perhaps a silent life-long martyrdom that no one suspects and that is at the same time a source of deep peace and hearty joyousness and a fountain of grace that bubbles over everything—we do not know where it goes, and the people whom it reaches do not know from whence it comes.

**Appendix B: Session 3, Letter 2, from The Collected Letters of St. Teresa of Avila Vol One**

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Letter 2. To Don Lorenzo de Cepeda, Quito (Ecuador)  
Avila, 23 December, 1561

*Teresa is living outside her monastery in the home of Doña Guiomar de Ulloa in Avila. From there she is supervising the renovation of the house bought for her first foundation. She is in dire financial need. Unexpectedly, several Indians who were Lorenzo's friends brought letters and money. A mysterious promise made by St. Joseph is fulfilled. Deeply moved, Teresa writes in haste before Lorenzo's messenger leaves.*

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1. Jesus. Señor. May the Holy Spirit be always with your honor, amen, and repay you for the care with which you have so diligently come to the help of all. I hope in the majesty of God that you will gain much in his eyes. Certainly all those to whom you sent money received it at such an opportune moment that I was greatly consoled. I believe it that was God who stirred you to send me so much. The amount of money brought by Juan Pedro de Espinosa and Varrona (which I think is the name of the other merchant)—would have been enough to keep a poor worthless nun like myself who goes about in patches—which I now consider an honor, glory to God—out of need for some years.

2. I have already written you a long letter about a matter that for many reasons I could not escape doing, since God's inspirations are the source. Because these things are hard to speak of in a letter, I mention only the fact that saintly and learned persons think I am obliged not to be cowardly but do all I can for this project—a monastery of nuns. There will be no more than fifteen nuns in it, who will practice very strict enclosure, never going out or allowing themselves to be seen without veils covering their faces. Their life will be one of prayer and mortification as I have written more at length in a letter to you. I will write another for Antonio Morán to bring when he leaves.

3. That lady, Doña Guiomar, who is also writing to you, is a help to me. She is the wife of Francisco Dávila, of Salobralajo, if you recall. Her husband died nine years ago. He had an annual income of 1,000,000 maravedis. She, for her part, has an entailed estate in addition to what she has from her husband. Although she was left a widow at the age of twenty-five, she has not married again but has devoted herself very much to the Lord. She is deeply spiritual. For more than four years we have been devoted friends, closer than if we were sisters. She still helps me very much, for she contributes a good portion of her income. At present she is without funds, so it is up to me to buy and prepare the house. With God's favor, I have received two dowries beforehand and have bought the house, although secretly. But I did not have the means to pay for the work that still needed to be done. So trusting in God alone (for God wants it to be done and will provide), I entered into an agreement with the workers. It seemed a foolish thing to do. But then His Majesty comes along and moves you to provide for it. And what amazes me is that the forty pesos you added was just what I needed. I believe that St.

Joseph—after whom the house will be named—wanted us to have the money, and I know that he will repay you. In sum, although the house is small and poor, the property has a field and some beautiful views. And that's sufficient.

4. They have gone to Rome for the papal bulls, for although the house belongs to my own religious order, we are rendering our obedience to the bishop. I hope the foundation will give the Lord much glory, if he allows it to come about. I believe without a doubt that it will, for the souls who are planning to enter will give an excellent example of humility, as well as penance and prayer. They are choice souls. Will you all pray to God for this project, for by the time Antonio Morán departs, everything will be completed with God's favor.

5. Antonio Morán came here and was a great consolation to me. He seemed to be a loyal and highly gifted man. I was especially consoled to learn about all of you, for one of the great favors the Lord has granted me is that he has given you understanding of what the world is, and so you have chosen to live quiet lives. Now I know, too, that you have taken the path of heaven. This is what I wanted most to know, for up until now I was always in dread. Glory to the One who does all. May it please him that you always advance in His service. Since there is no measure to his remunerations, we should never stop trying to serve the Lord. Each day we will advance at least a little further, and with fervor. It seems, and so it is, that we are always at war, and until we are victorious, we must not grow careless.

6. All those with whom you have sent money have been reliable men, but Antonio Morán has surpassed them all. He has sold the gold at a higher price without charge, as you will see, and has brought the money here from Madrid despite his poor health—although today he is better, for it was caused by an accident. I notice that he thinks highly of you. He also brought the money from Varrona and did so with great care. Rodríguez came here too, and has done everything well. I will write to you through him, for perhaps he will be the first to leave. Antonio Morán showed me the letter you had written him. Believe me, I think that all this care is not only the fruit of his virtue, but also the result of God's inspiration.

7. Yesterday my sister María sent me the enclosed letter. When they bring her the other money she will write again. The help came just in time for her. She is a very good Christian and undergoes many trials. If Juan de Ovalle initiates a lawsuit, it would destroy her children. Certainly he doesn't have as much a claim as he thinks he does, even though the sale of everything went badly and proved a disaster. But Martín de Guzmán also had good intentions—God rest his soul—and the judge ruled in his favor, even though not well enough. I cannot bear that anyone should now claim what my father—may he enjoy eternal glory—sold. And the rest, as I say, would only kill María, my sister. God deliver me from the self-interest that brings so much harm to one's relatives. It has reached the point here that it's a wonder if there's a father who cares about his son or a brother who cares about his brother. Thus I'm not surprised by Juan de Ovalle; rather, he has done well by setting this litigation aside for now out of love for me. He is by nature good, but in this case it would be unwise to trust in that. When you send him the 1,000 pesos, you should ask him for a written promise to be given to me; and the day that he reintroduces the lawsuit, 500 ducats will go to Doña María.

8. The houses at Gotarrendura are still not sold, but Martín de Guzmán received 300,000 maravedis from them, and it was only right that this amount went to Juan de Ovalle. Along with

the 1,000 pesos you sent, he is taken care of and will be able to live here. For this is what he has done, he has come here and now needs to remain. He would be unable to live here other than badly and for only short periods of time without help from over there.

9. His marriage is a good one. But I must tell you that Doña Juana is so honorable and trustworthy that she makes you want to praise God, and she has the soul of an angel. I've turned out to be the worst sister; the way I am, you ought not even acknowledge me as your sister. I don't know why you're all so fond of me. I say this in all truthfulness. Juana has undergone many trials and borne them well. If you can send the money without placing yourself in need, do so quickly, even if little by little.

10. The money you sent was allocated as you will see from the letters. Toribia is dead as is also her husband. It was a great help for her children, who are poor. The Masses have been said according to your intentions—some of them before the money arrived—and by the best persons I could find, all of them excellent. I was edified by the intentions for which you had them said.

11. I am staying in the house of Señora Doña Guiomar during these business affairs. It makes me happy to be with persons who speak to me about you; indeed, it is my pleasure. One of this lady's daughters, who is a nun in our monastery, had to come out and stay with her mother, and our provincial ordered me to be her companion. Here, more than at my sister's house, I am at liberty to do the many things I need to do. All the conversation here is about God, and we live in great recollection. I will remain here until given other orders, even though it would be better for me to stay here so as to handle the above business matters.

12. Now to speak of my dear sister, Señora Doña Juana, for although I mention her last, she is not so in my heart. That is certain, for I pray to God for her as intensely as I do for you. I kiss both your hands a thousand times for all the kindnesses you have shown me. I don't know how to repay you other than by praying fervently for our little boy. And this is being done, for the saintly friar Peter of Alcántara has promised to do so (he is the discalced friar about whom I wrote you), and the Theatines and other persons whom God will hear are doing so. May it please His Majesty to make the child better than his parents, for good as you are, I want more for God. Continue writing to me about your joy and resignation to God's will, for that makes me very happy.

13. I mentioned that when Antonio Morán leaves I will send along for you a copy of the patent letters of nobility, which they say couldn't be better. I'll take great care in doing this. And if this time it gets lost on the way, I'll keep sending others until one arrives. For some foolish reasons it was not sent (it was the responsibility of a third party who did not want to—I'll say no more). I'll also send you some relics, for the reliquary isn't worth much. I kiss my brother's hands a thousand times for what he has sent me. If it had come at a time when I wore gold jewelry, I would have been very envious of the medal, for it is extremely beautiful. May God keep you and your wife for many years. And may he give you a happy new year, for tomorrow is New Year's Eve for 1562.

14. Since I spent a long time with Antonio Morán, I began this letter late; otherwise I would say more, but he wants to leave tomorrow. I will write again through Jerónimo de Cepeda, and

since I'll be doing so soon, it doesn't matter that I don't say more here. Always read my letters yourself. I went to great lengths to use good ink. This letter was written so quickly; and, as I say, it is so late that I cannot take time to read it over. My health is better than usual. May God give you health in body and soul, as I desire, amen.

15. I'm not writing to Hernando de Ahumada or Pedro de Ahumada for lack of time; I will do so soon. Your honor should know that some very good persons who are aware of our secret—our new undertaking—have considered it a miracle that you sent so much money at such a time. I hope that when there is need for more, God will put it into your heart to help me, even though you may not want to.

Your devoted servant,

Doña Teresa de Ahumada



**Appendix C: Session 3, Letter 3, from The Collected Letters of St. Teresa of Avila Vol One.**

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3. To the Lords of the Town Council, Avila  
Avila, 5 December 1563

*This letter speaks of the consolation the sisters find in their hermitages, places of solitude in their garden where they can praise God and pray for the city. A lawsuit was initiated against the nuns because one of the hermitages was constructed at a site harmful to the city's water supply.*

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Most Honorable Lords:

1. Since we received information that the little hermitages constructed on our property would cause no damage to the city's water ways, and the need was very great, we never thought your honors would be disturbed. What we did only serves for God's praise and provides us with a place apart for prayer, for it is in these hermitages that we beg God in a special way to preserve this city in his service.
2. Aware that your honors are displeased—which distresses us all—we beg you to come and see. We are prepared to comply with all the documents, promises, and pledges your lawyers might require so as to be sure that no damage will be done at any time; and we have always resolved to act in this way.
3. If despite this your honors are not satisfied and want the hermitages removed, may you first consider the benefit and not the harm that may come from them. What we want most to avoid is that you be displeased. We would be distressed if we had to go without the consolation we find in them, for it is spiritual.
4. May our Lord keep and preserve you, most honorable gentlemen, in his service, amen.

Your unworthy servants who respectfully kiss your hands,

The poor sisters of San José

**Appendix D: Session 3, In Context by Fr Mark O’Keefe, OSB,  
chapter 6, *The Monastery of the Incarnation***

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Teresa of Jesus had been a nun of the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila for twenty-seven years (1535—1562) when she began the Discalced Reform with the foundation of the Monastery of St. Joseph in the same city. In the *Life*, she speaks with great affection of the community and praises the religious spirit and sanctity of many of its nuns. In fact, she had known some truly exemplary nuns (L 7.3). Even when Teresa reluctantly returned as prioress and worked to bring some reform to the monastery—without trying to bring her own Discalced vision—she spoke with affection and respect of the nuns. But she was not without criticism. And it has been somewhat traditional—at least in more popular presentations—to take her more critical comments “and run with them” to suggest that the Incarnation was somehow decadent or in scandalous need of reform. But this does not seem at all to be the case.

It is true that the monastery had its areas of laxness in observance. As we will see, in the visitation of the monastery by the Carmelite general Rubeo (Giovanni Battista Rossi) in 1566-1567, many of its nuns said the same. But as we have seen, Teresa and Rubeo—and with him, many of the nuns of the Incarnation—seem to have had different views of what Carmelite reform would mean. Rubeo’s aim was to bring the Incarnation more fully into conformity with the mitigated rule of 1432 and subsequent reform decrees. Teresa, on the other hand, wanted her reform to return more fully to the eremitical and contemplative focus of the mitigated rule of 1247 with an eye to the founding vision of the Carmelites, as she understood it. This was consistent as well with the wider “observant” reform of religious orders at the time and with the more contemplative spirituality that was partnered with it. This wider reform and spirituality were embedded in Teresa’s reading of Francisco de Osuna and others as well as in her many contacts with observant Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits. As we have seen, all of the reform movements in the religious communities of the time were directed to the reclaiming of their primitive rules without subsequent mitigations.

Teresa of Jesus did not launch her reform because the monastery of her profession and early religious life was decadent. She did share many of the concerns that other nuns of the community themselves expressed to their prior general at the time of his visitation. But Teresa wanted something more than what the Incarnation, even in a more fully reformed state, could provide her. Unless we see this, we do a disservice to the monastery of the Incarnation that Teresa herself never intended—and we would fail to see the true nature of Teresa’s own reform. We would further misunderstand the initial displeasure of many of the nuns of the Incarnation when Teresa was later appointed prioress there. They were not decadent nuns, fearful of reform, but they did not share the specifically Discalced vision of reform that had been initiated elsewhere by their new prioress.

### A Little Village in Itself

The feminine branch of the Carmelites was only formally established in 1452—only sixty years before Teresa’s birth. The monastery of the Incarnation was founded first in 1479 as a *beaterio*—that is, as a community of pious women living together without formal religious profession. As was not unusual in the time, it was founded by a wealthy widow, Doña Elvira Gonzalez, together with women drawn from family and friends. Both the Dominican and the Augustinian convents in Avila had a similar history. In 1485, it moved to another location and became more formally a monastery of women. Ten years later, in 1495, the community received the deed to what had been a Jewish cemetery before the expulsion, outside the city walls. The little community moved to that location and was formally accepted as a Carmelite monastery of women in 1515, the year of Teresa’s birth. This was the location that Teresa came to know (and that is still its location to this day).

The monastery subsequently grew quickly, and it became a favored place for the daughters of the prominent families of Avila. Its prioresses were generally drawn from the nobility of the area. It had a good reputation in the city, and the ever-increasing size of the community lent it a certain sense of prominence. When Teresa entered the monastery in 1535, there were about forty nuns. Only five years later, in 1540, there were 120. In 1545, the number had increased to 165. By 1566, there were almost two hundred nuns—in addition to the personal servants and boarders living in the monastery. Already in 1547, the prioress had noted overcrowding. After all, the community had grown by almost five times in only thirty years.

There were many reasons that a young woman would choose to enter the monastery, and girls as young as twelve could be admitted. Some, of course, were drawn by a sincere sense of personal vocation. But others were unable to marry for a variety of reasons—whether simply unable to find a suitable husband in a time when men were being drawn into foreign wars and to the New World, because a wealthy family could not afford adequate dowries for the marriage of multiple daughters in keeping with their sense of social rank, or because the woman’s reputation was tarnished through some supposed indiscretion. In any case, except for widows, nuns, and *beatas*, single women were the exception in Spanish society of the time. Perhaps, as Teresa herself suggests, some women had an unconscious sense that the life of a nun would bring greater freedom than that of a married woman in the culture. (See, for example, the insight that Teresa describes in L 34.4.)

In addition to the nuns and others living in the monastery itself, many other individuals were housed on the monastery precincts and grounds. There were homes for the lay administrators of the nuns’ properties; for those who collected the rents/income from the nuns’ lands, servants, gardeners, and caretakers of the monastery’s livestock; for those who processed the nuns’ grain and produce; and for chaplains, confessors, a doctor, a surgeon, and a notary. The presence of assorted mules, pigs, goats, sheep, and chickens virtually made of the monastery and its grounds a small village of its own.

### **The Spiritual and Liturgical Life of the Monastery**

It appears that the Divine Office and Eucharist were celebrated by the nuns of the Incarnation faithfully and reverently. There was a devout Marian and eucharistic piety in the community. The nuns received Communion once or twice a month—which was considered frequent at the time. In fact, there were fifteen to twenty days per year set for the nuns to receive Communion, and they were all generally expected to receive on those days. Teresa herself followed this practice for many years at the Incarnation, but later in her time there she began to receive daily. In order to avoid notoriety for this at-the-time unusual practice, she often received at an earlier Mass rather than at the conventual Mass where she would have been more likely to be noticed.

The nuns ate only one meal a day, three days a week, from September 14 until Easter. They observed abstinence from meat on four days per week and fasted during Advent and Lent. They had public reading in their refectory. They took the discipline (self-flagellation) three times a week, a common ascetical practice among serious religious of the period. There was mandated silence in the church, the choir, the cloister, the refectory, and the cells (though, as we shall see, this was not always well observed).

The nun's constitutions mandated that each nun confess each week or at least every other week. For this purpose they had two regular Carmelite confessors (John of the Cross and another Discalced friar would replace their two Calced counterparts when Teresa later became prioress—much to the consternation of the Calced and, initially, to many of the nuns who feared they would be too harsh). But the nuns could also avail themselves of several other approved confessors from among the city's secular and religious clergy. It appears that many of the nuns actually preferred these outside confessors, feeling that they were better formed, showed a better religious spirit, and perhaps were less prone to show favoritism among the nuns. In Rubeo's visitation, for example, he reports that one of nuns opined that the friars would do well to read more spiritual books.

A central and important part of the community's common prayer was prayers for deceased donors and their families. The community sometimes contracted with wealthy families for specific prayers and devotions over many years, and these agreements would be witnessed by a notary. This practice typical of the time, more tightly tied the monastery to the wealthy families of the city and to its culture. It provided an important source of income, especially for special projects like repairs and building. But at the same time, it provided an overlay of prayers and devotions that could require a great deal of time beyond the communal and personal prayer of the nuns.

A particularly glaring example of the institutionalization of this practice involved a wealthy landowner, Bernardo Robles, who, in 1530, made a very sizeable donation to the monastery in order to build a much needed church and choir with the promise of more funds upon his death. In return, the nuns agreed that, upon his death, his body could be interred in their church. And in perpetuity, day and night, a nun would kneel before the Blessed Sacrament with a lighted candle in her hand, praying for his soul. Robles died in 1531, and the nuns faithfully fulfilled the agreement for a year and a half. This meant, of course, that a different nun would have to be awakened each hour through the night. Eventually feeling overburdened, the nuns petitioned

Rome for and received a mitigation—against the strong objections of the deceased man’s family. The conflict between the nuns and the family dragged on until 1545 when the final compromise was reached that the nuns agreed to pray the seven penitential psalms in choir and to offer Mass once a week for the deceased as well as keeping a special lamp burning before the Blessed Sacrament. In 1574, while prioress of the Incarnation, Teresa was able to obtain a further mitigation that required offering the regular psalms of the Divine Office for Robles and to reverently keep the special lamp burning before the Blessed Sacrament. In her reform, Teresa wanted none of this kind of entanglement with the wealthy, nor the added layers of required prayers.

### **Social Hierarchy**

The social hierarchy so prevalent in society was mirrored within the monastery. Nuns who came from prominent and wealthy families, like Teresa, were addressed by the title Doña (Lady) and retained their claim on their illustrious family names. And so, Teresa was “Doña Teresa Sánchez de Cepeda y Ahumada.” Their former status in the world was recognized by more prominent places in choir. They were able to live in ample private cells, sometimes with more than one room. Teresa herself had a cell with two separate levels. This allowed her, like other nuns, to provide accommodations even for an extended time to female family members (as she did for several years for her sister Juana). These cells could, in fact, be bought and sold between nuns. The nuns with the necessary means could prepare—or have prepared by personal servants—their own meals in their cells with food provided by family. One nun was reported to maintain a slave.

Meanwhile the nuns from poorer backgrounds lived in common dormitories and shared the common recreation space of the monastery. They ate whatever it was that the monastery provided in the common refectory. And their upkeep and sustenance were subject to the economic ups and downs of the community.

There was no precise uniformity in habit. This was a source of some complaint during Rubeo’s visit. The nuns of humbler origins wore simple habits provided by the monastery. In times of financial difficulty for the community, they might find it difficult to have adequate shoes. Meanwhile, the nuns from families of means could wear habits of finer cloth, sometimes with fancy collars, lace, decorated belts, rings, and even colored petticoats.

What concerned Teresa especially was the concern for personal honor, so rampant in society, which remained prominent in the monastery. Nuns could take great offense if their family status and rank were not recognized appropriately by being offered the correct greeting or their proper place. Teresa would react strongly by eliminating all titles in the monasteries of the reform and mandating a spirit of egalitarianism.

### **Dire Economic Circumstances and Its Impact on Observance**

During Rubeo’s visitation of the monastery in 1566-1567, the nuns reported severe financial difficulties. He found some deficiencies in the community’s financial administration, but clearly

the main problem was that the large number of members seriously taxed the monastery's financial resources.

The income from the monastery's extensive lands was significant. Such lands came to the monastery through dowries or inheritance by individual nuns. But much of what they received was not in the form of money but rather in grains and vegetables, which had to be transported and processed. On the days that the nuns ate meat, they required about 110 pounds of it, plus a large sack of potatoes and about one hundred loaves of bread. The income from their lands could only cover about a third of the regular budget of the monastery—and this only if the income were not decimated by bad harvests (which were frequent in the mid-sixteenth century). The nuns from wealthier families also brought ample dowries, and there were many of them. But beyond just the salaries of the many employees and servants and the maintenance of the nuns, there were costly expansions and constant repairs to be made. The monastery was forced to sell some of its lands, and still the community accrued a large debt. In 1565, the monastery petitioned the city government for financial assistance.

An extant vow chart from the time of Teresa shows that the nuns took a vow of obedience to the Carmelite general, the prioress, and their successors according to the Rule. There was no formal vow of poverty or of enclosure, though these would have been general expectations, to some degree, flowing from the rule and constitutions. Although the nuns did not vow poverty, they were expected to give up the right to disposition over any money or property received—using them only with the permission of their superior. But because of the monastery's economic situation, even these restrictions were only loosely enforced. It became virtually necessary for individual nuns to seek help from outside for their own upkeep.

The nuns from wealthy families did not themselves feel so acutely the privations caused by economic problems. They could depend on income from family or even from their own properties. But those without outside assistance experienced poverty even in the cloister. Nuns complained to Rubeo that the monastery lacked the funds to provide them with adequate medical treatment or relief. Individually, some nuns sought additional income themselves through educating girls in their cells, taking in sewing, or even personally seeking alms.

The structures and spirit of poverty were not the only casualties of the economic circumstances. The spirit of enclosure—so essential for a life of tranquility, silence, and contemplation—likewise suffered. It became necessary for the nuns to be able to come and go more frequently and for longer periods in order to relieve the monastery of the burden of their upkeep or to seek the goodwill of wealthy family and other donors toward the monastery and its needs. When the Council of Trent mandated strict cloister for nuns, it was practically impossible to realize because of the very real need for the nuns to be able to seek outside assistance. King Philip II was opposed to implementing this conciliar ruling precisely for this reason.

One response to the Incarnation's financial distress was to have nuns leave the cloister in order to eat with families and friends or even to live with them for a time. Between 1560 and 1565, as many as fifty nuns—about a third of the community—were living outside the cloister. Or nuns were sent out as companions to wealthy women who had lost husbands or children—as Teresa was ordered to do for Luisa de la Cerda in 1561. This relieved the monastery of providing for

them but also served as a way to promote good relations with wealthy donors. Such visiting outside the monastery would rather naturally slip into comings and goings for more frivolous reasons.

The monastery maintained visiting parlors in which the nuns could conduct the monastery's business with the outside world, speak with their confessors, and visit occasionally with family and friends. But in hard economic times, it was especially important for the nuns to maintain good relations with wealthy family and friends. But these visiting parlors became places for frequent, more frivolous visits—a social pastime for the upper classes of Avila to pay a call on the nuns. Teresa herself confesses to being a frequent participant in such conversations in the parlors. It appears that men who were not family members—people of less than good repute or intention—would also come calling on the nuns. (Here we must recall that not all of the nuns entered the monastery because of a personal sense of vocation but were rather forced by other circumstances into the community.) The visiting and idle conversations extended beyond the visiting parlors to conversations from the lower windows of the monastery to people on the street below, at the door of the sacristy, or through the water conduits that allowed water to flow from outside the monastery walls into the nuns' gardens.

All of this—much of it begun or necessitated by economic stress—was bound to undermine the broader sense of observance and the spirit of recollection in the monastery.

### **But Neither Decadent nor Scandalous**

Although the nuns themselves complained to Rubeo about some of the abuses or failures in observance mentioned above, they judged the community in general to have a good spirit and a solid, if sometimes shaky, observance. Rubeo's final overall evaluation too was positive.

The fact is that the nuns of the Incarnation had neither strict cloister nor a vow of strict poverty. Their unfortunate financial circumstances allowed this fact to open the door to a serious loosening of observance and even abuses in a number of areas. The majority of nuns, along with Rubeo, saw this reality. Teresa too saw it. And in her reformed monasteries, there would be both strict cloister and poverty. But the reform of Teresa was aimed at something more fundamental than bringing the monastery of her profession into better conformity with the mitigated rule of 1432. Her sisters in the community saw for themselves the same problems that Teresa saw, but she wanted something more fundamental than most of them did: a deeper reform, a return to an earlier form of the rule, and the broader and deeper reclaiming of the contemplative and eremitical spirit of the first Carmelites.

## **Appendix E: Session 4, Excerpt from *Love for Love: Life and Works of St. Teresa of Jesus*, 12-16. Saint Joseph's of Avila, the First Monastery of the Reform**

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[L=Life, W=Way of Perfection, F=Foundations, ST=Spiritual Testimonies, C=Interior Castle]

### **12. Saint Joseph's of Avila, the First Monastery of the Reform**

A small group of nuns and visitors present for worship on the feast of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel on July 16, 1560, were discussing the obstacles to a life of prayer presented by the large number of nuns living in the monastery and the many visitors. María de Ocampo, a young relative of the saint and a celebrated beauty, suggested that someone should establish a monastery in which the life of the ancient hermits could be revived. In all seriousness she offered her dowry for this. The next day Teresa told her trusted friend Doña Guiomar de Ulloa (a young widow who like her led a life of prayer under the strict direction of Fr. Baltasar Alvarez) of this conversation. Doña Guiomar enthusiastically took up the idea. But what was decisive was that the Lord himself was calling for the project. "He assured me that he would be very well-served in a monastery I might found, that this house would become a star shedding the brightest light. God added that, even though they had lost some of their earlier enthusiasm, the orders were nevertheless of great service to him. What would the world be if there were no more monasteries?" [see L, 32, 11]. According to the will of the Lord, the new house was to be consecrated to St. Joseph.

Now Teresa no longer hesitated. First she turned to her confessor. He made his consent dependent on the consent of the provincial of the Carmelites, Fr. Angel de Salazar. This consent was easier to get than expected because of the mediation of Doña Guiomar. Three very devout religious, whose advice Teresa sought, gave encouraging replies: Jesuit Francis Borgia, Dominican Luis Beltrán, and Franciscan Peter of Alcántara. Now the next task was to find a house. But before that could happen the public scented Teresa's plans, and this aroused a storm of indignation against her and her friends. One can certainly understand that the nuns of the Monastery of the Incarnation would take it as malicious arrogance for one of their own to want to leave their house to live in greater perfection than the community in which she had been formed. And people in the city shared this view. The two women received their first strong support from the scholarly and highly respected Dominican, Fr. Pedro Ibáñez. When the provincial withdrew his consent under the pressure of Teresa's sisters and compelled the saint to inaction, her friends continued with the work of preparation: Doña Guiomar, directed by Fr. Ibáñez, Don Francisco de Salcedo, and Gaspar Daza (the two who had once by their doubt caused her so much soul searching, but were now entirely won over to her). A little house was discovered. Her brother-in-law, Juan de Ovalle, the husband of her youngest sister Juana, who herself had been raised in the Monastery of the Incarnation and loved Teresa greatly, bought it and moved in to protect it until it could be given over to its real purpose.



It seemed like a great hindrance to her plans when the saint received the surprising order from her Father Provincial to go to the palace of Duchess Luisa de la Cerda in Toledo, because this influential lady sought the comfort of the saint in her grief over the death of her husband. Teresa's friends hated to see her leave Avila. But the stay in Toledo was to be richly blessed. Doña Luisa became a powerful and faithful patroness of the reform. In the circle of women and girls that gathered around Teresa at the palace to seek her advice, there was someone soon to be one of her strongest supporters, the young María de Salazar (later María of St. Joseph, prioress of Seville). Above all, Teresa found the leisure here to write the story of her interior life, a project given to her the previous year by Fr. Ibáñez. This book was to make her name known in all Catholic lands, and down through the centuries would become a guide for countless people.

Even in regard to her foundation in Avila the time was not wasted. In the house of the Duchess de la Cerda, she was sought out by María of Jesus, a Carmelite from Granada who had reform ideas similar to Teresa's and wanted to talk them over with her. She also found occasion for a consultation with St. Peter of Alcántara, who on an earlier occasion had tested the state of her soul and consoled her greatly. Now he encouraged her to found the Monastery of St. Joseph without an income, as the primitive Rule prescribed.

Teresa was permitted to return to Avila only in June of 1562, after a six-month stay. Good news that came on the day of her arrival awaited her there: the papal brief that permitted Doña Guiomar and her mother to establish a Carmelite monastery according to the primitive Rule, placing it under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop, giving it the same rights as other monasteries of the same order, and prohibiting anyone from disturbing it in any way. Teresa's name was not mentioned in the document. By a lucky coincidence, Peter of Alcántara was just then in Avila—for the last time, for he died shortly thereafter. His efforts succeeded in winning the bishop of Avila, Don Alvaro de Mendoza, for the foundation. From then on the bishop was one of the most enthusiastic promoters of the reform.

The illness of her brother-in-law, Juan de Ovalle, resulted in her gaining the permission of her provincial to move into his house, her future monastery, to care for him. This gave her the opportunity to supervise the construction personally. When the workers left the house, the patient was also healed and the monastery could become what it was meant to be. Now the most important thing was to find suitable living stones for the new foundation. There were four postulants about whom the Holy Mother herself said, "My first daughters were four orphans without dowries, but great servants of God. I found just what I had wished for, because my most ardent desire was that the first to enter would by their example be suitable building blocks of the spiritual edifice, would fulfill our intentions and lead lives of contemplation and perfection" [see L, 36, 6]. On August 24, the feast of St. Bartholomew, these first four Carmelites of the reform arrived at the little monastery where the saint awaited them. The friends who had helped to make the foundation made their appearance. By commission of the Bishop of Avila, Gaspar Daza celebrated the first Mass and reserved the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel. Thereby the foundation was completed. Then Teresa clothed her daughters in the robe of the discalced Carmelites ("discalced," or "without shoes," because instead of shoes they wore the footwear of the poor, sandals made of hemp). Their habits and scapulars were made of coarse brown frieze; the mantles of white frieze; the toques of linen; and over them for the

time being they wore the white novice's veil. Overjoyed, the mother remained behind with her daughters in the quiet of the holy place when the visitors departed. But people did not leave her in peace for long. The rumor of the accomplished foundation quickly spread to the entire city. The opposition stirred up all the townspeople. A monastery without any income would consume the alms of the poor. The prioress of the Incarnation, pressured by the indignant sisters, sent Teresa an order to return to her monastery immediately. The Saint obeyed at once. She left the four novices behind under the protection of St. Joseph and the direction of the oldest, Ursula of the Saints. On August 26 the city's municipal judge summoned the mayor and the cathedral chapter to a meeting in the city hall. The consensus was that the monastery was to be suppressed, and the municipal judge himself went there. But Teresa's young daughters did not allow themselves to be intimidated. When threatened with force, they answered through the grille, ". . . You may use force. But... such actions are judged here on earth by his Majesty Philip II, and in heaven by another judge, whom you should fear a great deal more, the almighty God, the champion of the oppressed." The city magistrate left without doing anything and called another, larger gathering for the next day. In an inflammatory speech he explained that this foundation was an innovation and as such suspect. The maintenance of the nuns would excessively burden the nobility of Avila. Opening the house without the permission of the city was illegal. Therefore, one must conclude that it be suppressed. The speaker already had the majority on his side when a Dominican asked to speak. It was Fr. Domingo Báñez who had only been in Avila for a short time, but was famous for his scholarship. He did not know Teresa, but his love for justice impelled him to become a spokesman for her cause.

Is it a sufficient reason to destroy something because it is new? Were not all societies of orders innovations when they arose from the bosom of the Church? And when our Lord and God founded the Church, did his work not bear the mark of innovation? ...This newly founded monastery of Carmelites is a reform of the ancient community. It picks up what has fallen. It renews a weakened *Rule*. It strives for the formation of people for the glory of the holy faith. For these reasons it must not only be tolerated by the powers of the state and of the city, but favored and protected.

...How can anyone believe that poor women confined in a corner who pray to God for us could become such a heavy burden and a danger to the people? ...The frightening specter that is the entire cause of the disturbance in Avila is that of four humble, peace-loving Carmelites living at the outermost end of a suburb.... It seems to me of little use to Avila to call a council for such an insignificant reason.

The existence of the monastery is inviolable, since the Most Reverend Bishop Alvaro de Mendoza has taken it under his protection and the Holy See has given its approval in a brief, against which all of Avila can do nothing.... [cf. L, 36, 15]

In response to his speech, the gathering broke up and the little monastery was rescued. However, it took several more months of negotiations and the sacrificial efforts of all the friends to overcome the rest of the hindrances. Finally, on December 5, 1562, the provincial Angel de Salazar gave Teresa permission to go to her daughters. She was even allowed to take

along four nuns from the Monastery of the Incarnation. In overflowing thanks to the Lord, she once again consecrated herself and her little religious family to his service. Now she and those accompanying her put on the rough habit of the reform and exchanged their shoes for coarse sandals. At the same time, in order to bury all reminders of rank and status in the world, they gave up their family names and chose a noble title that came from heaven. From that day on, Teresa de Ahumada was called *Teresa of Jesus*.

The chaplain, Julián de Avila, the first confessor at St. Joseph's and a faithful assistant to the saint in the work of reform, wrote a history of the founding of this house after the saint's death. He gives us a picture of heavenly life in this solitude: "God wanted...to have a house where he could recreate, a dwelling for his consolation. He wanted a garden with flowers, not those flowers that grow on the earth, but those that unfold in heaven..., a flower garden with these selected souls in whose midst he could take his repose, to whom he could disclose his secrets and open his heart." "Because our Lord and Savior has so many enemies and so few friends, at least the latter must be very good," said the saint herself [see W, 1, 2]. And she educated the young souls entrusted into her hands to be such good friends of the Lord. Girls of youthful beauty, rich and sparkling with talent, rushed to St. Joseph's in order to discard all finery, in order to consecrate themselves to the Lord in unlimited self-forgetfulness and humble submission. Postulants also came without any dowries and were received just as joyfully, in fact, even more lovingly. For the Holy Mother was concerned with having the real spirit of the order in her house, not with external goods. Soon the number reached thirteen, which Teresa originally did not want to exceed. (Later it was raised to twenty.) She regulated life in the house with the greatest wisdom. Each sister received an office in which she served the requirements of the little monastic family. The day was strictly apportioned between work and prayer. And this work, which was to contribute support, had to be simple and modest, not giving rise to pride, and thereby preserving their recollection in God. The work was carried out in solitude and silence. Only during the hour of recreation did the sisters come together in heartfelt and spontaneous conversation. Teresa made this hour into a required practice and set great store by it, to allow the spirit the relaxation that nature demands and to give sufficient opportunity for the practice of sisterly love. But even during this hour of recreation there was no idleness. During lively conversation or joyful song, busy hands raced as fast as they could.

Her little family's spirit was Teresa's greatest reward for all her efforts and sacrifice. She herself stood in wonder before her daughters:

Oh how I recognize all the superiorities of these sisters over me! No sooner had God given them some understanding, some love, than for his sake they disdained the lives to which they used to be attached and sacrificed themselves for him. They find their delight in solitude. All their happiness lies in thoughts of making progress in serving God. Their blessedness is to live alone with him. Many of them spent their youth in the vanity of the world. They intended to find their happiness there and to make decisions according to the world's standards. But precisely these are the most joyful. God rewards them with true joy for the false delights they have left for him. I cannot say how much comfort I feel living in the company of such innocent souls who have renounced everything. [see L, 35, 12]

The saint also had no other desire than to live in this separation from the world with her little family, to lead them ever more deeply into the spirit of prayer, into the heroic exercise of virtues—humility, obedience, complete giving of oneself, poverty, the most heartfelt love for God and for people—and to consecrate with them this whole life of prayer, sacrifice, voluntary penance (on which, however, she set a wise limit and so obviated an unhealthy enthusiasm) to the glory of God and his church, for the salvation of souls and as a support for priests who were doing battle with the great errors of the time. But she was not to conclude her life in the quiet of St. Joseph's.

### **13. Spread of the Reform**

Again, it was her burning desire for the salvation of souls that led Teresa to new action. One day a Franciscan from the missions visited her and told her about the sad spiritual and moral condition of people in heathen lands. Shaken, she withdrew into her hermitage in the garden. "I cried to the Savior, I pleaded with him for the means of winning souls for him because the evil enemy robs him of so many. I asked him to help himself a little by my prayers, because that was all I could offer him" [F, 1, 7]. After petitioning like this for many days, the Lord appeared to her and spoke the comforting words, "Wait a little while, my daughter, and you will see great things" [F, 1, 8]. Six months later came the fulfillment of this promise.

In the spring of the year 1567 she received news of an upcoming visit to Spain by the Carmelite General, Giovanni Battista Rossi (Rubeo). "This was something most unusual. The generals of our order always have been situated in Rome. None had ever come to Spain before" [F, 2, 1]. The nun who had left her monastery and founded a new one had reason to be afraid of the arrival of her highest superior. He had the power to destroy her work. With the consent of the bishop of Avila who had jurisdiction of her house, Teresa invited the general to visit. He came, and Teresa gave him a completely candid account of the entire history of the foundation. What he saw convinced him of the spirit that ruled in this little monastery and he was moved to tears. It was evident that here was a perfect realization of the goal for which he had come to Spain. He was considering a reform of the entire Order, a return to the old traditions, but he had not risked proceeding as radically as Teresa. King Philip II had called him to Spain to renew discipline in the monasteries of his land. Fr. Rubeo had found little friendly reception in other places. Now he confided his concerns to Teresa. For her part, she responded with love and a daughter's trust. When he departed from Avila, he left Teresa with permits to found additional women's monasteries of the reform. All these monasteries were to be directly under the general. No provincial was to have the right to hinder their foundation or to involve himself in their affairs. When he returned to Madrid, Fr. Rubeo spoke enthusiastically to the king about Teresa and her work. Philip II asked for her prayers and those of her daughters, and was from then on the most powerful friend and protector of the reform. After returning to Rome, the Father General gave the saint even more power: to found two monasteries for men according to the primitive Rule if she could obtain the permission of the present provincial and that of his predecessor. This permission was obtained for her by the bishop of Avila, who himself had been the first to express the wish for monasteries of friars of the reform. Teresa now found herself in an unusual position. Instead of a quiet little monastery to which she could retreat with a few selected souls, she was now to found an entire order for men and women. "And only a poor, unshod Carmelite was there to accomplish this, even though furnished with permits and the

best wishes, but without any means for initiating the work and without any other support than that of the Lord [F, 2, 6]. But this support sufficed. Before long, what was most important for a monastery of men appeared: the first friars. While she was making the first foundation for nuns in Medina del Campo, the prior of the Carmelite monastery of the mitigated rule there, Fr. Antonio de Heredia, energetically stood by Teresa's side. When she told him of her plan, he declared himself ready to be the first male discalced Carmelite. Teresa was surprised and not absolutely happy, because she did not fully credit him with having the strength to sustain the primitive Rule. However, he stayed firm in his decision. A few days later, a companion for him appeared who was most satisfactory to the saint: a young Carmelite at that time called John of St. Matthias, who from his early youth had lived a life of prayer and the strictest self-denial. He had gained the permission of his superior to follow the primitive Rule personally. Not satisfied with this, he was thinking of becoming a Carthusian. Teresa persuaded him, instead, to become the living cornerstone of the Carmelite Order of the primitive Rule.

Some time later a little house in Duruelo, a hamlet between Avila and Medina del Campo, was offered to her for the planned foundation. It was in miserable condition, but neither Teresa nor the two fathers were taken aback by it. Fr. Antonio still needed some time to end his priorship and put all his affairs in order. In the meantime, Fr. John joined Holy Mother to acquaint himself with the spirit and rule of life of the reform under her personal direction. On September 20, 1568 he went to Duruelo, having been clothed by Teresa in the habit of the reform, which she herself had made for him. As the Holy Mother had anticipated, he divided the single room of the pitiful little hut into two cells, an attic room into the choir, a vestibule into a chapel where he celebrated the first Mass the next morning. Soon he was considered a saint by the peasants in the neighborhood. On November 27, Fr. Antonio joined him. Together they now committed themselves to the primitive Rule and changed their names. From then on they were called Anthony of Jesus [Antonio de Jesús] and John of the Cross [Juan de la Cruz].

A few months later the Holy Mother could visit them and get to know their way of life. She says about this:

I came there during Lent in the year 1569. It was morning. Father Antonio in his always cheerful mood was sweeping the doorway to the church. "What does this mean, my father," I said, "and where is your self-respect?" ... Oh, cursed be the time when I paid attention to that," he answered chuckling. I went into the chapel and was seized by the spirit of fervor and poverty with which God had filled it. I was not the only one so moved. Two merchants with whom I was friendly and who had accompanied me from Medina del Campo looked at the house with me. They could only weep. There were crosses and skulls everywhere. I will never forget a little wooden cross over a holy water font to which an image of the Savior had been glued. This image was made of simple paper; however, it flooded me with more devotion than if it had been very valuable and beautifully made. The choir, once an attic room, was raised in the middle so that the fathers could comfortably pray the Office. But one still had to bow deeply when entering. At both sides of the church, there were two little hermitages where they could only sit or lie down and even so their heads would touch the roof. The floor was so damp that they had to put straw on it. I learned

that the fathers, instead of going to sleep after matins, retreated to these little hermitages and meditated there until prime. In fact, they once were praying in such recollection that when snow fell on them through the slats in the roof, they did not notice it at all, and returned to the choir without it occurring to them even to shake their robes. [F, 14, 7]

Duruelo was the cradle of the male branch of the reformed Carmel. It spread vigorously from there, always directed by the Holy Mother's prayer and illuminating suggestions, but nevertheless relatively independent. The humble little John of the Cross, the great saint of the church, inspired it with the spirit. But he was entirely a person of prayer, of penance. Others took on the external direction. Besides Fr. Antonio, there were the enthusiastic Italians, Fr. Mariano and Fr. Nicolás Doria. But, above all, the most faithful support for the Holy Mother during her last years was, as she was convinced, the choice instrument of the reform, the youthful, brilliantly gifted Fr. Jerónimo Gracián of the Mother of God.

Teresa herself had hardly any time for quiet monastic life after she left the peace of St. Joseph's upon founding the first daughter house in Medina del Campo. She was called now here, now there, to establish new houses of the reform. Despite her always fragile health and increasing age, she indefatigably undertook the most difficult journeys as often as the Lord's service required. Everywhere there were hard battles to endure: Sometimes there were difficulties with the spiritual and civil authorities, sometimes the lack of a suitable house and the basic necessities of life, sometimes disagreements with upper-class founders who made impossible demands of the monasteries. When finally all obstacles had been overcome and everything organized so that the true life of Carmel could begin, she who had done it all had, without pause, to move on to new tasks. The only consolation she had was that a new garden was blooming for the Lord to enjoy.

#### **14. Prioress at the Monastery of the Incarnation**

While the spiritual gardens of Mother Teresa were spreading their lovely fragrance over all of Spain, the Monastery of the Incarnation, her former home, was in a sad state. Income had not increased in proportion to the number of nuns, and since they were used to living comfortably and not (as in the reformed Carmel) to finding their greatest joy in holy poverty, discontent and slackening of spirit spread. In the year 1570, Fr. Fernández of the Order of St. Dominic came to this house. He was the apostolic visitor entrusted by Pope Pius V with examining the disciplinary state of monasteries in Castile. Since he had already become thoroughly acquainted with some monasteries of the reform, the contrast must have shocked him. He thought of a radical remedy. By the authority of his position, he named Mother Teresa as prioress of the Monastery of the Incarnation and ordered her to return to Avila at once to assume her position. In the midst of her work for the reform, she now had to undertake a task that for all intents and purposes appeared impossible. Exhorted by the Lord himself, she declared her readiness. However, with the agreement of Fr. Fernández, she gave a written statement that she personally would continue to follow the primitive Rule. One can imagine the vehement indignation of the nuns who were to have a prioress sent to them—one not elected by them—a sister of theirs who had left them eight years earlier and whom they considered an adventuress, a mischief-maker. The storm broke as the provincial led her into the house. The

provincial, Fr. Angel de Salazar, could not make himself heard in the noisy gathering. The “Te Deum” that he intoned was drowned out by the sounds of indignation. Teresa’s goodness and humility finally brought about enough quiet for the sisters to go to their cells and to tolerate her presence in the house.

They were saving the decisive declarations for the first chapter meeting. But how amazed they were when they entered the chapter room at the sound of the bell to see in the prioress’ seat the statue of our dear Lady, the Queen of Carmel, with the keys to the monastery in her hands and the new prioress at her feet. Their hearts were conquered even before Teresa began to speak and in her indisputably loving manner presented to them how she conceived and intended to conduct her office. In a short time, under her wise and temperate direction, above all by the influence of her character and conduct, the spirit of the house was renewed. Her greatest support in this was Fr. John of the Cross, whom she called to Avila as confessor for the monastery.

This time of greatest expenditure of energy when Teresa, along with being prioress of the Monastery of the Incarnation, retained the spiritual direction of her eight reformed monasteries, was also a time of the greatest attestation of grace. At that time she had a vision that she herself described as a “spiritual marriage.” On November 18, 1572, the Lord appeared to her during Holy Communion. “He offered me his right hand and spoke, ‘See this nail. It is the sign of our union. From this day on you are my bride. Up to now you had not earned it. But now you will not only see me as your Creator, your King, your God, but from now on you will care for my honor as my true bride. My honor is yours; your glory is mine” [ST, 31]. From that moment on, she found herself united blissfully with the Lord, a union that remained with her for the entire last decade of her life, her own life mortified, “full of the inexpressible joy of having found her true rest, and of the sense that Jesus Christ was living in her.” She characterized as the first result of this union “such a complete forgetfulness of self that it truly seems as if this soul had lost its own being. It no longer recognizes itself. It no longer thinks about heaven for itself, about life, about honor. The only thing she cares about any longer is the honor of God” [C, 7, 3, 2]. The second result is an inner desire for suffering, a desire, however, that no longer disturbs her soul as earlier. She desires with such fervor that God’s will be fulfilled in her that everything that pleases the divine Master seems good to her. If he wants her to suffer, she is happy; if he does not, his will be done.

But the following surprised me the most. This soul whose life has been martyrdom, because of her strong desire to enjoy the vision of God, has now become so consumed by the wish to serve him, to glorify his name, and to be useful to other souls that, far from wishing to die, she would like to live for many years in the greatest suffering....

In this soul there is no more interior pain or dryness, but only a sweet and constant joy. Should she for a short time be less attentive to the presence of God, he himself immediately awakens her. He works to bring her to complete perfection and imparts his doctrines in a completely hidden way in the midst of such a deep peace that it reminds me of the building of Solomon’s temple.

Actually, the soul becomes the temple of God where only God alone and the soul mutually delight in each other in greatest quiet. [C, 7, 3, 6-11]

### **15. Doing Battle for Her Life's Work**

The greatest grace that can befall a soul was probably necessary to strengthen the saint for the storm that was soon to break over the reform. Even during her term as prioress, she had to resume her journeys of foundation and leave a vicaress in charge in Avila. At the end of her years as prioress it was only with some effort that she stopped the nuns from re-electing her. Those who had so struggled against her assuming the position clung to her with such great love. Her humility and goodness, her superior intelligence and wise moderation in this case had been able to bridge the rift between the "calced" and the "discalced." Her spiritual sons were not so lucky. They had founded new monasteries in addition to the two for which the general of the Order, Fr. Rubeo, had previously given Teresa authorization. They had the permission of the apostolic visitor from Andalusia, Fr. Vargas, but no arrangement with the Order's superiors. Their extraordinary penances (which often caused the saint herself concern) and their zeal soon aroused the admiration of the people. This, along with the apostolic visitor's evident preference for the monasteries of the reform, made those not of the reform fear they themselves would soon be pushed entirely into the background, even that the reform might be imposed on the entire Order. Their envoys turned the general in Rome completely against the discalced as disobedient and as agitators. To suppress their "revolt," Fr. Tostado, a Portuguese Carmelite with special authority, was sent to Spain. A clash between the two branches of the Order ensued, which must have filled the heart of the humble and peace-loving Holy Mother with the greatest pain. In addition, it appeared that her entire work was threatened. She herself was called "a gadabout" by the new papal nuncio in Spain, "disobedient, ambitious, who presumes to teach others like a doctor of the church despite the prohibition of Saint Paul." She was ordered to choose one of the reformed monasteries as her permanent residence and to make no further trips. How grateful she would have been for the quiet in the monastery of Toledo, which Fr. Gracián suggested to her, had there not been such a hostile design behind the command! All the monasteries of the reform were prohibited from taking in novices, condemning them to extinction. Her beloved sons were reviled and persecuted. Fr. John of the Cross, who had always kept himself far from all conflict, was even secretly abducted and kept in humiliating confinement in the monastery of the calced in Toledo. He was cruelly abused until the Blessed Virgin, his protectress since childhood, miraculously freed him. In this storm that finally made everyone lose courage, Holy Mother alone stood erect. Together with her daughters, she stormed heaven. She was indefatigable in encouraging her sons with letters and advice, in calling her friends for help, in presenting the true circumstances to the Father General who had once been so good to her, in appealing to her most powerful patron, the king, for protection. And finally she arrived at the solution that she recommended as the only possible one: the complete separation of the calced from the discalced Carmelites into two provinces. The Congregation of Religious in Rome had been occupied with the unfortunate conflict for a long time. A well-informed cardinal, whom Pope Gregory XIII questioned concerning the state of affairs, responded, "The Congregation has thoroughly investigated all the complaints of the Carmelites of the mitigated Rule. It comes down to the following: Those with the mitigated Rule fear that the reform will finally reform them also." The pope then



decided that the monasteries of Carmelite friars and nuns of the reform were to constitute a province of their own under a provincial chosen by them. A brief dated June 27, 1580 announced this decision. In March of 1581, the chapter of Alcalá elected Fr. Jerónimo Gracián as its first provincial in accordance with the Holy Mother's wishes.

## 16. The End

Teresa greeted the end of the years of suffering with overflowing thanks. "God alone knew in full about the bitterness, and now only he alone knows of the boundless joy that fills my soul, as I see the end of these many torments. I wish the whole world would thank God with me! Now we are all at peace, calced and discalced Carmelites, and nothing is to stop us from serving God. Now then, my brothers and sisters, let us hurry to offer ourselves up for the honor of the divine Master who has heard our prayers so well" [F, 29, 31-32]. During the short span of time still given to her, she herself sacrificed her final strength for new journeys to make foundations. The erection of the monastery in Burgos, the last one that she brought to life, cost her much effort and time. She had left Avila on January 2, 1582, to go there. It was July before she could begin the trip home, but she was not to reach the desired goal any more. After she had visited a number of other monasteries of the nuns, Fr. Antonio of Jesus brought her to Alba to comply with a wish of the Duchess María Henríquez, the great patroness of that monastery. Completely exhausted, Teresa arrived on September 20. According to a number of witnesses, she had predicted some years earlier that she would die at this place and at this time. Even though the attending physician saw her condition as hopeless, she continued to take part in all the monastic exercises until September 29. Then she had to lie down. On October 2, in accordance with her wish, Fr. Antonio heard her last confession. On the third she requested Viaticum. An eyewitness gave this report: "At the moment when the Blessed Sacrament was brought into her cell, the Holy Mother raised herself without anyone's help and got on her knees. She would even have gotten out of her bed if she had not been prevented. Her expression was very beautiful and radiated divine love. With a lively expression of joy and piety, she spoke such exalted divine words to the Lord that we were all filled with great devotion." During the day she repeated again and again the words from the "Miserere" (Psalm 51): *Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, no despicies* ("A broken and contrite heart, God, you will not despise"). In the evening she asked to be anointed. Concerning her last day, October 4, we again have an eyewitness account by Sr. María of St. Francis:

On the morning of the feast of St. Francis, at about 7 o'clock, our Holy Mother turned on her side toward the nuns, a crucifix in her hand, her expression more beautiful, more glowing, than I had ever seen it during her life. I do not know how her wrinkles disappeared, since the Holy Mother, in view of her great age and her continual suffering, had very deep ones. She remained in this position in prayer full of deep peace and great repose. Occasionally she gave some outward sign of surprise or amazement. But everything proceeded in great repose. It seemed as if she were hearing a voice that she answered. Her facial expression was so wondrously changed that it looked like a celestial body to us. Thus immersed in prayer, happy and smiling, she went out of this world into eternal life.

The wondrous events that occurred at the Saint's burial, the incorrupt state of her body that was determined by repeated disinterments, the numerous miracles that she worked during her life and then really in earnest after her death, the enthusiastic devotion of the entire Spanish people for their saint—all of this led to the initiation of the investigations preparatory to her canonization, already in the year 1595. Paul V declared her blessed in a brief on April 24, 1614. Her canonization by Gregory XV followed on March 22, 1622. Her feast day was designated as October 15, because the ten days after her death were dropped (October 5-14, 1582) due to the Gregorian calendar reform.

Luis de Leon said of Teresa: "I neither saw nor knew the saint during her lifetime. But today, albeit she is in heaven, I know her and see her in her two living reflections, that is, in her daughters and in her writings..." Actually, there are few saints as humanly near to us as our Holy Mother. Her writings, which she penned as they came to her, in obedience to the order of her confessor, wedged in among all of her burdens and work, serve as classical masterpieces of Spanish literature. In incomparably clear, simple and sincere language they tell of the wonders of grace that God worked in a chosen soul. They tell of the indefatigable efforts of a woman with the daring and strength of a man, revealing natural intelligence and heavenly wisdom, a deep knowledge of human nature and a rich spirit's innate sense of humor, the infinite love of a heart tender as a bride's and kind as a mother's. The great family of religious that she founded, all who have been given the enormous grace of being called her sons and daughters, look up with thankful love to their Holy Mother and have no other desire than to be filled by her spirit, to walk the way of perfection hand in hand with her to its goal.

## Appendix F: The Dark Night

### STANZAS OF THE SOUL

1. One dark night,  
fired with love's urgent longings  
—ah, the sheer grace!—  
I went out unseen,  
my house being now all stilled.
2. In darkness, and secure,  
by the secret ladder, disguised,  
—ah, the sheer grace!—  
in darkness and concealment,  
my house being now all stilled.
3. On that glad night,  
in secret, for no one saw me,  
nor did I look at anything,  
with no other light or guide  
than the one that burned in my heart.
4. This guided me  
more surely than the light of noon  
to where he was awaiting me  
—him I knew so well—  
there in a place where no one appeared.
5. O guiding night!  
O night more lovely than the dawn!  
O night that has united  
the Lover with his beloved,  
transforming the beloved in her Lover.
6. Upon my flowering breast  
which I kept wholly for him alone,  
there he lay sleeping,  
and I caressing him  
there in a breeze from the fanning  
cedars.
7. When the breeze blew from the turret,  
as I parted his hair,  
it wounded my neck  
with its gentle hand,  
suspending all my senses.
8. I abandoned and forgot myself,  
laying my face on my Beloved;  
all things ceased; I went out from myself,  
leaving my cares  
forgotten among the lilies.

## **Appendix G: Session 5, Excerpts from Foundations, on the first friars**

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Chapter 2:5, 6, 7

5. After some days passed, I was thinking about how necessary it would be if monasteries of nuns were to be founded that there be friars observing the same rule. Seeing how few friars there were in this province, making me even wonder whether or not they were going to die out, I prayed to the Lord over the matter very much and wrote to Father General. In the letter, I begged him for this permission as best I knew how, giving him the reasons why it would be a great service to God. I pointed out how the difficulties that could arise were not sufficient to set aside so good a work, and suggested to him what service it would render to our Lady, to whom he was very devoted. She must have been the one who arranged it. This letter reached him while he was in Valencia, and from there he sent me the permission for the foundation of two monasteries because he desired the best religious observance for the order. So that there wouldn't be any opposition, he made his permission subject to the approval, difficult to obtain, of both the present and the former provincial. But since I saw that the main thing was accomplished, I had special hope the Lord would do the rest. And so it happened that through the kindness of the bishop, who took up this matter as his own, both provincials gave their permission.

6. Well then, being consoled in having the permissions, my concern grew in that there was no friar in the province that I knew of who could begin this work, nor any layman who desired to make such a start. I didn't do anything but beg our Lord that he would awaken at least one person. Neither did I have a house or the means to get one. Here I was, a poor discalced nun, without help from anywhere—only from the Lord—weighed down with patent letters and good desires, and without there being any possibility of my getting the work started. Neither courage nor hope failed, for since the Lord had given the one thing, He would give the other. Everything now seemed very possible, and so I set to work.

7. O greatness of God! How You manifest Your power in giving courage to an ant! How true, my Lord, that it is not because of You that those who love You fail to do great works but because of our own cowardice and pusillanimity. Since we are never determined, but full of human prudence and a thousand fears, You, consequently, my God, do not do your marvelous and great works. Who is more fond than You of giving, or of serving even at a cost to Yourself, when there is someone open to receive? May it please Your Majesty that I render You some service and that I not have to render an accounting for all that I have received, amen.

Chapter 3:17

17. A little later it happened that a young Father came there who was studying at Salamanca. He came along with another, as his companion, who told me great things about the life this Father was leading. The young Father's name was Fray John of the Cross. I praised our Lord. And when I spoke with this young friar, he pleased me very much. I learned from him he also

wanted to go to the Carthusians. Telling him what I was attempting to do, I begged him to wait until the Lord would give us a monastery and pointed out the great good that would be accomplished if in his desire to improve he were to remain in his own order and that much greater service would be rendered to the Lord. He promised me he would remain as long as he wouldn't have to wait long. When I saw that I already had two friars to begin with, it seemed to me the matter was taken care of; although I still wasn't so satisfied with the prior, and thus I waited a while, and waited also for the sake of finding a place where they could begin.

#### Chapter 13:1-7

1. Before making the foundation of Valladolid, I had already agreed with both Father Fray Antonio de Jesús, who was then prior of the Carmelite monastery of St. Anne in Medina, and Fray John of the Cross, as I have already mentioned, that they would be the first to enter if a monastery for disclaled friars were founded for the observance of the primitive rule. Since I had no resources for acquiring a house, I did nothing but commend the matter to our Lord. For, as I have said, I was now satisfied with these Fathers. The Lord had indeed exercised Father Fray Antonio de Jesús in trials during the year since I had spoken with him; and he suffered them with much perfection. As for Father Fray John of the Cross, no trial was necessary. Even though he had lived among the calced friars, those of the cloth, he always lived a life of great perfection and religious observance. Since the Lord had given me the chief requirement for a beginning, which was friars, He was pleased to arrange the rest.

2. A gentleman from Avila, named Don Rafael, with whom I had never spoken, found out, I don't know how (for I don't remember), about my desire to make a foundation for disclaled friars. He came and offered me a house he owned in a little town of very few inhabitants (I don't think even twenty, but I don't remember now). He kept the house there for an administrator who collected the revenue from his grain fields. Although I imagined how it might look, I praised our Lord and thanked this gentleman very much. He told me it was on the direct route to Medina del Campo and that since I had to pass by there to make the foundation in Valladolid I could see it. I told him I would, and indeed that is what I did. I left Avila with a nun companion and with Father Julián de Avila, the chaplain at St. Joseph's in Avila, the priest I mentioned who helped me in these travels.

3. Although we left in the morning, we got lost because we didn't know the road; and since the place is little known, we couldn't get much information about where it was. Thus, our traveling that day was very trying and the sun was very hot. When we thought we were near, we discovered we had just as far to go. I always remember the tiredness we felt and the wrong roads we took on that journey. The result was that we arrived shortly before nightfall.

When we entered the house it was in such a state that we dared not remain there that night; it wasn't at all clean and was filled with vermin. It had a fairly good entrance way, a room double in size, a loft, and a small kitchen. This was all we had for our monastery. I figured that the entrance way could serve as the chapel, the loft as the choir, which would adapt well, and the room for sleeping.

My companion, although much better than I and very fond of penance, couldn't bear the thought of my planning to found a monastery there and said to me: "Surely, Mother, there isn't

a soul, however good, that could put up with this. Don't even consider it." The Father who came with me, although he agreed with my companion, did not oppose me since I had told him my intentions. We went to spend the night in the church, although not in vigil because we were exhausted.

4. When we arrived in Medina, I spoke immediately with Father Fray Antonio, and I told him what took place and that if he would have the courage to stay there for a while, I was certain God would soon provide a remedy, and that the important thing was to begin. It seems to me I was most aware of what the Lord had done and was feeling sure, so to speak; just as I do now from what I see and even much more so because of what up till now I have seen, for at the time of my writing this there are, through the goodness of God, ten monasteries of discalced friars. And I told him he should realize that neither the provincial at that time nor the previous one would give permission—for the foundation needed their consent, as I said at the beginning — if we were seen living in a well established house. This was apart from the fact that we did not have the means for such a house. And I pointed out that in that little place and house the foundation would not attract attention. God had given him more courage than he had given me. And so Fray Antonio told me that he would be willing to live not only there but in a pigsty. Fray John of the Cross was of the same mind.

5. Now what remained was to obtain the consent of the two Fathers I mentioned because this was the condition under which our Father General granted the permission. I hoped in our Lord to obtain it, and so I told Father Fray Antonio to take care to do all he could to gather something together for this house. I went with Fray John of the Cross to the foundation of Valladolid about which I have written. And since we spent some days before establishing the enclosure on account of the workmen who were getting the house ready, there was an opportunity to teach Father Fray John of the Cross about our way of life so that he would have a clear understanding of everything, whether it concerned mortification or the style of both our community life and the recreation we have together. The recreation is taken with such moderation that it only serves to reveal the Sisters' faults and to provide a little relief so that the rule may be kept in its strictness. He was so good that I, at least, could have learned much more from him than he from me. Yet this is not what I did, but I taught him about the lifestyle of the Sisters.

6. It pleased God that the provincial, Fray Alonso González, from whom I had to obtain approbation, was there. He was elderly, good natured, and without malice. I told him many things, and reminded him of the account he would have to give if he hindered a work as good as this when asked by God to carry it out. His Majesty, wanting the foundation, put him in the right disposition, for he mellowed very much. When Doña María de Mendoza and the bishop of Avila, her brother (who is the one who always favored and protected us) came, they convinced both him and Father Fray Angel de Salazar, the previous provincial, the one from whom I feared all the difficulty. Moreover, a certain need arose at the time for which the latter provincial had need of assistance from Doña María de Mendoza. This fact, I believe, helped a great deal, although even if this opportunity had not been present, our Lord would have moved the provincial's heart just as He did the heart of Father General which was anything but inclined to the idea.

7. Oh, God help me, how many obstacles I have seen in these business matters that seemed impossible to overcome, and how easy it was for His Majesty to remove them. And how ashamed I am not to be better after seeing what I have seen. For now as I am writing, I am growing fearful and want our Lord to make known to everyone how in these foundations we creatures have done next to nothing. The Lord has directed all by means of such lowly beginnings that only His Majesty could have raised the work to what it now is. May He be always blessed, amen.

Chapter 14: 6, 11

6. On the First or Second Sunday of Advent (I don't remember which of these Sundays it was), in the year 1568, the first Mass was said in that little stable of Bethlehem, for it doesn't seem to me the house was any better. The following Lent, while on my way to the foundation in Toledo, I passed by there. When I arrived in the morning, Father Fray Antonio was sweeping the doorway to the church with that joyful expression on his face that he always has. I said to him: "What's this, my Father; what has become of your honor?" Telling me of his great happiness, he answered with these words: "I curse the day I had any."

When I entered the little church, I was astonished to see the spirit the Lord had put there. And it wasn't only I, for the two merchants, my friends from Medina who had accompanied me there, did nothing else but weep. There were so many crosses, so many skulls! I never forget a little cross made for the holy water fount from sticks with a paper image of Christ attached to it; it inspired more devotion than if it had been something very expertly carved.

11. I couldn't thank our Lord enough when I saw that little house, which shortly before was uninhabitable, with such a spirit that everywhere I looked I found something edifying. And by the way they were living, I learned of the mortification, prayer, and good example they were giving. A gentleman and his wife, whom I knew and who lived in a nearby town, came to see me there, and they never stopped telling me about the sanctity of these Fathers and the great good they were doing in those towns. I experienced the greatest interior joy, for it seemed to me that I saw a beginning that would be of much benefit to our order and service to our Lord. May it please His Majesty that things will continue as they are now, and that my plan will indeed be realized.

The merchants who had accompanied me told me that not for all the world would they have missed having gone there. What a thing virtue is, for that poverty pleased those merchants more than all their riches, and their souls were left satisfied and comforted.

## **Appendix H: Session 5, Excerpt from Chapter V The Reform, pp 157-169 of Journey to Carith,**

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### **On the founding of the reform monasteries for the friars**

It is not quite clear how much precise thinking Teresa had been doing about additional convents before Rossi's visit. The multiplication of convents following the primitive rule was beyond her original scope, and yet after his visit, and armed with his permissions, she began to plan other foundations. And something else, too:

After some days, I began to think how necessary it was, if convents for women were to be founded, that there should be friars following the same rule, and seeing how few there were in this province—it even seemed to me that they were dying out—I commended the matter earnestly to our Lord, and wrote a letter to our Father General, begging him as well as I could to grant this permission.

Teresa's letter, which outlined her reasons for friars who would follow the primitive rule and which concluded by "representing to him what a service it would be to our Lady," reached Rossi in Barcelona. He replied immediately, granting her request and allowing her to establish two monasteries of friars who were to be called "contemplative Carmelites"; and he prudently sent a copy of the permission to the Carmelite provincial. Teresa, however, was preoccupied with making the second convent of reformed nuns, and she had chosen the city of Medina del Campo, fifty miles north of Avila; she thus put the question of the friars aside for a moment: "Here was a poor Discalced nun, without help from anyone except the Lord, loaded with patents and good wishes but devoid of either courage or hope."

The Jesuits at Medina del Campo made the preliminary arrangements for her foundation, and in the summer of 1567 she set off in three lumbering, creaking carts to establish the second house of the reform. She took six nuns with her, two from St. Joseph's and four from the Incarnation who wanted to join the movement. They spent the night at Arévalo, and in the morning the prior of the Carmelite monastery in Medina, Anthony de Heredia, came out to escort them into the city. The prior offered Mass in the new monastery, but a close inspection afterward showed that the building needed extensive repairs before it would be fit for habitation. A wealthy merchant offered the nuns the upper story of his home while they waited for the repairs to be completed, and Teresa gladly accepted the offer. The nuns remained in these temporary quarters for about two months. During that time Teresa had the opportunity to discuss her reform with the prior and she revealed to him the permission she had from the general to found two houses of reformed friars. She was startled when he volunteered to become the first friar of the new reform. Anthony de Heredia was an esteemed Carmelite from Valencia who had entered the Order at the age of ten, later graduated from Salamanca University, and served as prior in three different monasteries. But he was now fifty-seven years old, and his health was not good. Teresa later wrote about Anthony's offer: "I thought it was a joke, and told him so." But the prior protested, even stating that he had been planning to leave



the Carmelites and join the Carthusians so he could find a more dedicated form of life. However, Teresa felt uneasy about him: “Nevertheless I was not very well satisfied, although it made me happy to hear him, and I asked him to let us wait awhile.”

The following month Anthony brought another Carmelite to meet Teresa at her temporary dwelling. He was a newly ordained priest, twenty-five years old, and he had confided to the prior that he too wanted to leave the Order and join the Carthusians. Anthony felt that the young man had better speak to Teresa. His name was John de Yepes.

St. John of the Cross, one of the original group of reformed Carmelite friars, occupies a major position in the history of Christian thought—as a doctor of the church, the “mystical doctor”; and as perhaps the Church’s most outstanding writer on mystical theology. In association with St. Teresa he was a key figure in the reform movement within the Carmelite Order, although his role was a far different one from hers. Teresa was the organizer, the administrative genius who was able to wrest permissions and donations from the proper people and thus move the work of reform relentlessly forward; John was never considered a major administrative force in the work of reform, although he did for a while occupy a number of important administrative positions: his contribution to reform, rather, was in the area of inspiration, where he stood as a blinding symbol of dedication and fidelity to original Carmelite ideals.

Temperamentally, he presented a striking contrast to the voluble, outgoing Teresa. He was basically a quiet man, deeply reflective, somewhat withdrawn, but nevertheless a friendly, approachable person, who put people immediately at ease. Despite his own personal uncompromising asceticism and austerity, he was extremely kind and sympathetic with others, understanding of their problems and eager to help. But above all, this quiet Carmelite friar, this man of deep prayer and profound mystical experience, presented a vivid image of complete commitment and, if necessary, grim determination.

John was born at Fontiveros, a small town some twenty-five miles northwest of Avila, about the year 1542, the third child of Gonzalo de Yepes and Catalina Álvarez.<sup>1</sup> Gonzalo de Yepes came from a good family in Toledo, and after both his parents died when he was still quite young he was sponsored by his uncles who were wealthy silk merchants. Gonzalo kept the accounts for his uncles and performed a number of tasks of a general business nature. His work frequently took him to Fontiveros, where he met Catalina Álvarez, an attractive young woman from an impoverished background who worked as a silk weaver. They fell in love and soon married, but Gonzalo’s uncles were so infuriated at him because he had married beneath his station that they discharged him from their employment and banished him from their homes. Suddenly deprived of his position, the young man was forced to learn his wife’s trade of silk weaving. But he apparently had little success at it because the family lived in dire poverty. Shortly after John’s birth, Gonzalo died, leaving his almost destitute widow with three small children.

Catalina trudged to Toledo, carrying John in her arms, seeking some assistance from her late husband’s relatives, but they all refused to help, except a doctor who agreed to take care of one of the three boys, Francis. However, the doctor’s wife abused the young boy, and he soon

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<sup>1</sup> His full legal name, therefore, was Juan de Yepes y Alvarez. The records of his birth have been lost, and the year 1542 is an approximation.

returned to his mother. The second child died about this time, and Catalina desperately began to hunt for the most advantageous place to rear her two other sons. She chose Medina del Campo, where she taught Francis to assist her in silk weaving and sent John, then age nine, to the catechism school, a residential institution for poor boys. John lived at the school for eight years, and he was apprenticed to a number of different artisans, notably a carpenter and a tailor, but he was completely inept at any of these trades. He was a serious and upright boy, however, and he came to the attention of Don Alonso Álvarez, the governor of the plague hospital in Medina, who invited him to live and work at the hospital. John acted as a nurse and a collector of alms, but Álvarez also allowed him to attend the new Jesuit college in the city, where he received an excellent education in the classics for four years.

John expressed a desire to become a priest, and Álvarez volunteered to defray the cost of his education, in the hope that he would one day serve as chaplain in the hospital. But John had become acquainted with the recently founded Carmelite community in Medina, and he was preparing to enter the Order. Álvarez apparently protested this decision so much that when the young man of twenty-one entered the monastery he had to steal away from the hospital secretly at night, and thus both he and his future associate Teresa joined the Order by fleeing furtively from their homes.

After his profession of vows in 1564, he was sent to the Carmelite College of St. Andrew at the University of Salamanca where he attended classes in philosophy and theology at both the university and St. Andrew's. During his years as a student he was carefully evaluating his position as a Carmelite, and he requested permission from his superiors to follow the primitive rule without mitigation, insofar as he could in the framework of the actual situation. This did not seem too practicable, because we soon find him planning to leave the Order and join the Carthusians. In 1567, while he was still pondering all these personal problems, he was ordained, and in September of that year he returned to Medina for the purpose of offering his first Mass. It was then that he met Teresa of Avila.

The young priest of twenty-five whom Teresa saw was an extremely short man, about five feet in height, thin, with a swarthy complexion and dark eyes. His face was slightly oval, his forehead broad, and his hairline was receding into early baldness. Teresa was then fifty-two, and still attractive in her middle age, despite the fact that she was becoming slightly plump. The nun and the priest presented an interesting study in contrasts—the vivacious middle-aged nun from an affluent family, and the quiet young priest from an impoverished background who had worked his way tenaciously through school.

“When I spoke to the friar I liked him very much,” Teresa said, and she explained her project to him, asking him to put off his plan to enter the Carthusians until she had obtained a monastery for reformed friars. She told him that if he wanted to lead a more perfect life “he should lead it within his own Order.” Teresa’s singular persuasiveness worked again, and John agreed to her proposal, “provided there were no long delay.” John had to return to Salamanca for a final year of theology, and Teresa promised to do something about finding a house suitable for a monastery of friars during that time.

Teresa was immediately enthused with John de Yepes. “Although he is small in stature,” she later wrote, “I believe he is great in the sight of God.” After John and Anthony left her

temporary convent that autumn day in 1567, she told the nuns that she now felt she could proceed with the establishment of the friars' monastery, "although I was still not quite satisfied with the prior." She said that she now had "a friar and a half," and that phrase has caused a minor controversy among historians. Some have said that the "half friar" was the diminutive John of the Cross, while others have contended that she was referring to her doubts about Anthony, and that she would certainly not jest about the small stature of the future doctor of the church. Or would she?

After Teresa had established the nuns at Medina del Campo in their regular convent, she departed for Madrid and eventually arrived at Alcalá de Henares in late November. Then in February she was off to Malagón where she founded another convent. This was the pattern of her life for the next fourteen years, and by the time of her death in 1582 she had personally founded fifteen convents of nuns.

In May of 1568 Teresa left Malagón and returned for a visit to St. Joseph's in Avila. While there, a relative of hers, Raphael Mejía, offered her an abandoned farm house at Duruelo some twenty-five miles away, which she could use as a monastery for the friars. At the end of June, on her way back to Medina del Campo, she visited the site, accompanied by another nun and Julian of Avila, the chaplain at St. Joseph's. "I always remember the fatigue of that long roundabout journey," Teresa wrote. The sun was scorching, and no one they met had ever heard of the site at Duruelo. They lost their way, wandered in circles for hours, and did not arrive at the property until dusk. And then they found the wooden farm house to be severely disappointing: "It had a fair-sized porch, a room divided into two, with a loft above it, and a little kitchen: that was all there was of the building which was to be our monastery." Teresa's companion said that the building was completely uninhabitable and that no one could endure living there, but the saint began to make plans for using the limited space: she determined that the porch could be used for a small chapel, and the loft as a choir, while the friars could sleep in the downstairs area. The building was so dirty that they were unable to spend the night there, and they had to sleep in a nearby church.

The following morning they made their way to Medina del Campo, where Teresa immediately described the site at Duruelo to Anthony, sparing none of the harsh facts. She told him that if he had the courage to at least begin the foundation the Lord would provide better quarters in due time, but "the important thing was to make a start." Anthony eagerly agreed to begin at Duruelo, adding that "he would be willing to live, not only there, but in a pigsty." John returned to Medina del Campo from his school year at Salamanca in the early summer of that year, 1568, and Teresa took him with her to Valladolid where she was planning yet another convent. He remained with the nuns from August until October, while Teresa instructed John "all about our way of life, so that he might have an exact knowledge of everything." It seems that at this point Teresa had a finer sense of the original Carmelite tradition than John, and she carefully explained to her young protégé the mechanics of the primitive rule. She later wrote that he was such a good man that "I could have learned much more from him than he from me." But she adds, in her typical fashion: "I did not do so, however, but merely showed him the way the nuns lived."

Anthony came to visit Teresa in Valladolid, informing her of the preparations he had made and the articles he had gathered for the foundation at Duruelo. For some odd reason he had collected five clocks, and Teresa commented: "I thought that very amusing. I do not think he even had anything to sleep on." It was arranged that John would go to Duruelo as soon as possible to prepare the building, while Anthony remained in Medina del Campo to conclude his affairs and resign his office of prior. Teresa herself sewed the new habit to be worn by the reformed friars, a Carmelite habit which, like the nuns' habits, was shorn of all excesses—the capuche was shortened, the extra folds of material were eradicated, the mantle reduced in length, and of course, the effete additions of the Renaissance age were removed: the gleaming buckles, the silver buttons on the sleeves, the ruffles and the lace collars. John tried on the habit in Valladolid, but did not wear it regularly until he arrived at Duruelo.

He reached Duruelo sometime in early October, accompanied by a young man who had asked to become a lay brother in the reform. The two men worked on the dilapidated farm house until it was in some semblance of order and ready for community living. On November 27, Anthony arrived at Duruelo in the company of the provincial, Alonso González, and two more recruits: a young Carmelite from Medina del Campo named Joseph who was a deacon; and Luke de Celis, a Carmelite priest who wanted to live in the reformed monastery for a while before deciding whether he should join. On the following day, the first Sunday of Advent, the provincial offered Mass, and then Anthony, John, and the deacon Joseph approached the altar, where they formally renounced the mitigation of Eugene IV and promised to live according to the rule of 1247. After this significant ceremony they signed the deed of foundation:

We, Brother Anthony of Jesus, Brother John of the Cross, and Brother Joseph of Christ, begin this day, 28 November 1568, to live the primitive rule.

They followed Teresa's practice of omitting their family names and adopting a religious title instead, and it is the first time that John used the title "of the Cross." Anthony of Jesus was then appointed prior of the monastery by the provincial, and John of the Cross novice master. The reform of the friars had begun.

Of the original group of five at Duruelo only two persevered through the first year. The lay brother aspirant soon departed; Luke de Celis became ill and returned to Medina del Campo; and Joseph of Christ disappeared from the official records, and is presumed either to have left the reform or to have died. However, other recruits came rapidly from the Carmelite monasteries in Castile, men who wanted to renounce the mitigation and follow the primitive rule, and by the end of the first year there were seven Carmelites at Duruelo. The community followed a brief and simple set of constitutions modeled closely on Teresa's constitutions for the nuns, with strong emphasis on solitude, poverty, two hours of daily meditation, and the simple, one-tone recitation of the Divine Office. Teresa visited the new foundation three months after its inception while she was on her way to establish the nuns in Toledo, and she was deeply impressed with what she saw. "I was amazed to see what spirituality the Lord had inspired there," she wrote. She noted that they had arranged the house according to her plan, and that the small loft which had holes in the roof was used as a choir where the friars chanted the office. They rose at midnight to chant matins, and remained in the choir for some time afterward in deep prayer, and Teresa observed that sometimes "their habits would be covered

with snow without their having noticed it.” Following the primitive tradition of the prophetic vocation, the friars also preached in the neighboring areas, and Teresa commented on this:

They used to go out and preach in many places in the district which were without instruction, and for that reason, too, I was glad that the house had been founded there, for they told me that there was no monastery near, nor any means of getting one, which was a great pity. In this short time they had gained such a good reputation that, when I heard of it, it made me extremely happy. . . . When they had preached and heard confessions and had returned to their monastery for a meal it would be very late. But this was very little concern to them, because they were so happy.

She had only one complaint: “severity in matters of penance, in which they were very strict.” She cautioned Anthony to exercise prudence in the use of penitential practices, because she was afraid that a lack of moderation might destroy the foundation; and “it had cost me so many desires and prayers to obtain men from the Lord who would make a good beginning.” The friars were going barefooted at that initial stage, even on their preaching expeditions, but they later began to wear hemp sandals like the nuns before them.

When Teresa left Duruelo she expressed her “great inward joy” at what had been accomplished. “For I saw quite well that this was a much greater grace than He had given me in enabling me to found houses for nuns.” Duruelo represented, as she wrote, “the beginnings of a restoration of the rule of the Virgin, His mother, and our Lady and Patroness.”

The second monastery of reformed friars was founded quickly by Teresa in her typically impetuous manner. She was at Toledo in her new convent when she received a message from the Princess of Eboli, stating that she wanted Teresa to come to the little town of Pastrana near Guadalajara and found a convent there. The princess was the wife of Ruy Gómez de Silva, a close friend and advisor to King Philip II, and one of the most influential men in Spain. Teresa did not want to leave Toledo so soon, but she was reluctant to displease the princess because “we were in a very bad way, the reform of the friars having just begun, and from every standpoint it would be useful to have Ruy Gómez on our side, since he had such influence with the king.” As she was pondering the matter, the Lord spoke to her and told her to go immediately, “for there was far more afoot than that foundation.” She traveled first to Madrid, where she stayed in a Franciscan convent. The morning after her arrival she was introduced to two hermits who had been leading a solitary life by themselves for a number of years. She talked to the elder of the two men, Mariano Azaro, an Italian of extraordinary background: he was a doctor, a mathematician, an engineer, he had attended the Council of Trent as a legal advisor, and he had worked in close collaboration with King Philip II on navigation and irrigation problems in Spain; and when he decided to abandon all of this for a life of complete dedication to God he investigated every Order but found them all “unsuitable for a man of his type”; thus he had been living as a hermit for eight years. He also informed Teresa that Ruy Gómez had given him a good piece of property at Pastrana for use as a hermitage.

Teresa was intrigued with this amazing Italian from Naples, and she tried to convince him that he should join her reform because “in our Order he could keep all his observances with less trouble, for they were the same as our own.” She talked to him at great length and concluded by telling him that “he could be of great service to God in this habit of ours.” Mariano replied

that he wanted to think about it overnight, but Teresa's dazzling persuasiveness had worked again and in the morning he agreed to join the reform, and to bring the other hermit with him, and to deed the property at Pastrana to her. Teresa later wrote that Mariano was "amazed to find that he had so quickly changed his mind, especially—as he occasionally mentions even to this day—at the suggestion of a woman."

Teresa acted quickly. She wrote letters to the Carmelite provincial for permission to establish at Pastrana the second of the two monasteries for which the general had given permission; to Anthony, requesting him to leave for Pastrana immediately, so that he could supervise the beginning of this second monastery; and to Balthasar Nieto, a Carmelite at Medina, a celebrated and eloquent preacher, who had sought admission to the reform, asking him to enter the reform at Pastrana. Teresa and her nuns made habits for the friars from brown frieze given her by the prince, and then they waited for Anthony to arrive. Balthasar arrived first, but Mariano was so impatient to begin the reform in Pastrana that, with Teresa's approval, they had Balthasar invest them in the habit and begin the observance of the primitive rule. The three new friars were known as Balthasar of Jesus, Mariano of St. Benedict, and John of the Misery.<sup>2</sup> Anthony arrived four days late; on July 13, 1569, and remained to instruct the small community in Carmelite life. He eventually made Balthasar the prior. Mariano and John both entered the Order as lay brothers, but five years later, at the command of his superiors, Mariano was ordained to the priesthood.

The monastery at Pastrana ultimately became the most celebrated and important monastery of the reform in Spain, the house of novitiate where generations of Carmelites were trained in the spirit of the primitive rule. For two centuries most of the general chapters of the reform in Spain were held at Pastrana. St. Teresa had less good fortune with the convent of nuns she established at Pastrana, and her problems were due to the capricious Princess of Eboli. ... Teresa finally removed the entire community of nuns and relocated the convent in Segovia.

In 1570 the overcrowded community of friars at Duruelo was moved to a new site some four miles away at Mancera de Abajo. Don Luis, the lord of Mancera de Abajo, gave the property to the Carmelites because he felt indebted to Anthony of Jesus. When his wife was in perilous labor at the end of a particularly difficult pregnancy, Don Luis asked Anthony to visit his wife. The prior of Duruelo laid his scapular on the sick woman, and her child was born quickly and safely. In gratitude, Don Luis gave the Carmelites a new church he had just built, and he constructed a monastery for the friars adjacent to it. Teresa said of the church: "I never saw anything more beautiful in my life." On June 11, the seven friars from Duruelo walked in a silent

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<sup>2</sup> John of the Misery was born John Narduch in Naples. He was a painter and sculptor by profession, but he had joined Mariano to live with him as a hermit. As a lay brother in the reform he continued to paint occasionally, and he had St. Teresa sit for his famous portrait of her. During the period of persecution against the reform he became frightened and rejoined the mitigation for a time, but he was ultimately accepted back into the reform again. His last years were saddened by paralysis and blindness, and he died in 1616. His name in the original Spanish is Juan de la Miseria. "Miseria" has no precise English counterpart, and "misery" is only an approximation. The word implies humility and abjection, a posture of nothingness before Almighty God. Such terms of self-contempt were frequently used in Spanish religious life at that time: one nun wrote Teresa and signed the letter "Elizabeth of the Dunghill"; and Teresa responded tartly, "I hope you mean that, and they are not just words."

procession from Duruelo to Mancera de Abajo, with Anthony of Jesus and John of the Cross leading them, to take possession of their new monastery.

Thus by the summer of 1570 a healthy reform movement was flourishing in the Castilian province of Spain. There were two monasteries of friars, Mancera de Abajo and Pastrana, and six convents of nuns, all following the primitive Carmelite rule. The general in Rome, John Rossi, was pleased with the movement, but he was watching it very carefully because he did not want it to get out of hand as had the Albi reform. However, Rossi regarded Teresa's reform as fundamentally a Spanish phenomenon, and not a real solution to his nagging problem: the reform of the entire Order. When Rossi assumed the leadership of the Order in 1562 the prolonged Council of Trent was drawing to a close. The Council had sparked a vigorous reform movement within the entire Church which ultimately eradicated the most grievous abuses of the Renaissance era. Rossi rode on the crest of this cleansing tide in the Church and attempted to reform his own Order. He was able, by dint of his forceful and sometimes ruthless efforts, to stamp out most of the more serious faults, especially the moral ones, but he was unable to effect a fundamental change of spirit. The Order now seemed to be wedded to the fifteenth-century mitigation, rather than to the original thirteenth-century tradition. Until the end of his life Rossi unceasingly urged a return to the original Carmelite ideal.

## **Appendix I: Session 6, Excerpt from *A Touch of OCDS History***

by Elizabeth M Korves, OCDS  
of the Oklahoma Province, USA

Paragraphs 7-15

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7. Toward the end of the 17th century, the Third Order began to grow in the Low Countries, then France, and finally into Italy. In 1699, a book offering a short rule appeared in Belgium and was approved for that province. In 1708, a rule, ceremonial, and directory were published in France. This rule gave a specific title of “Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa” for the members and included a statement that the third order was present in many cities and villages in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Belgium. The preface indicates the book was meant to put an end to “great confusion” about the third order since different people were doing different things.
8. This 1708 rule called for daily mass, reciting the Little Office, one hour of mental prayer (half in the morning, half in the evening), fasting and works of charity. The novitiate was one year and then members were admitted to the profession of charity and obedience to God, to Our Lady of Mt Carmel, to St. Teresa, and to the Superior General and his successor.<sup>i</sup>
9. Other rules for tertiaries came out in 1848 and 1857. In 1883, the Definitory General approved a revision of the 1848 rule and imposed it on all Congregations of the Third Secular Order. This remained the legislation for tertiaries until 1912.
10. In 1912, an official Manual of the Third Secular Order was published in Rome. It had been written by Fr. Elia of St. Ambrose and received approval by the Definitory General in 1911. In 1921, the Holy See approved it after some revision to bring the legislation in line with the 1918 Code of Canon Law. This Manual was the guiding legislation until Vatican II.<sup>ii</sup>
11. *Vatican II called all religious orders to renewal and the third order was included in this. Our own* Fr Sam Anthony Morello, along with Fr Adrian Cooney in the East and Fr Bonaventure Galvin in the West, each appointed a lay person and called a meeting at Marylake (Little Rock, Arkansas). It is hard to ascertain exactly when this meeting took place but it appears to have happened around 1967. This was the beginning of what is now the National Secretariat. The lay members were Bernard Zink of Sacramento, Doris Hadden of Boonton, NJ, and Esther Perry of Sacramento as Secretary. The identity of the representative for the Central Province remains a mystery. What little paperwork there is about this meeting does not include a name. Fr. Sam Anthony thinks it may have been either Azile Wrape or Ann Raney (both of Little Rock) but does not remember for sure. They “discussed and harangued,” consulted communities and forwarded results to Rome for consideration regarding what the new Rule should contain. (On a side note, the Father General Michael Angel of St. Joseph made a visitation to Marylake at this same time and the Seculars there cooked breakfast for him one morning).<sup>iii iv</sup>
12. A trial version of the Rule was received in Oct 1970 for a five-year trial period. Fr. Finian Monahan, then Father General, called together a commission of “experts from all regions” to



write this Rule. This commission consisted of six or seven friars, including Fr. Sam Anthony. The original draft was in Italian.<sup>v</sup> <sup>vi</sup> The final version of the Rule was approved in 1979 but it was not until 1982 that it was printed in English.<sup>vii</sup> This new Rule more fully emphasized the lay charism and also saw the introduction of First Promises. Prior to the 1979 Rule, vows of chastity and obedience were made after one year of novitiate.<sup>viii</sup>

13. Since that Rule was written we've had a new Code of Canon Law, the Synod on the Laity, and other Church documents pertaining to the laity that were not taken into account when the Rule was written. In 1996, an international Congress of OCDS was held in Rome. This was the first such congress and one of the things that came out of that congress was a sense that our Rule needed to be updated.
14. In 2000, a second congress was held in Guadalajara, Mexico to specifically talk about revising the Rule of Life. Each province throughout the world was asked to send two delegates. Others able to make the trip also attended the congress. The two representatives for the Central Province were Mati Martinez, then of the Austin, TX community, now with the Killeen, TX study group, and Nancy Thompson of the Cedar Rapids, IA study group. Fr. John Michael Payne attended as our Provincial Delegate. As a result of that congress, 10 OCDS from around the world were appointed to write what are now our Constitutions. Pedro J. Gonzalez of the Bradenton, FL community was chosen as the representative from the US. They worked via email and met in Rome a few times.
15. In spring 2002, a draft of the constitutions was released. Fr Aloysius Deeney, our Secretary General (and from our province [Oklahoma]) posted them on the web and immediately received lots of feedback from those of us online. Feedback also came through the slower channels after the draft was distributed via the Flos Carmeli and other provincial newsletters. In September of that year, Fr. Aloysius presented a revision to the General Definitory which approved it. The new Constitutions were then forwarded to the appropriate office in Rome for approval for a five-year experimental period. On June 19th, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life approved the Constitutions definitively, not experimentally. However, Fr. Aloysius does plan to receive feedback over the next five years and then ask for amendments/revision. [This article was written in 2004. The OCDS Constitutions were updated in 2014.]

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<sup>i</sup> Rodriguez, pg 52-53.

<sup>ii</sup> Rodriguez, pg. 54.

<sup>iii</sup> Unknown author, The Development of the Rule of Life of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, unpublished manuscript, pg. 4.

<sup>iv</sup> Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

<sup>v</sup> Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

<sup>vi</sup> Unknown author, pg. 5.

<sup>vii</sup> Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

<sup>viii</sup> Rodriguez, pg.54.

## Appendix J: Session 6, Entire article, *A Touch of OCDS History*

by Elizabeth M Korves, OCDS  
of the Oklahoma Province, USA

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1. In some respects, the history of laity being associated with the Carmelite Order goes back to the very beginning, to the hermits on Mt Carmel. Those hermits were laity who formed a community and early in the 13th century asked St. Albert for a Rule. One would consider that the order was officially created with the giving of the Rule. As those first Carmelites moved from Mt Carmel into Europe, their way of life changed and they became recognized as a mendicant order and accepted ordination into Holy Orders, thus leaving behind their earlier lay status.<sup>ix</sup>
2. Tracing the history of the secular/third order in Carmel and other orders is difficult because there is little documentation and a confusion of terms. Members of possible third orders have been referred to as *confraires*, *contratres*, *beatas*, *pinzocchere*, and *tertiary*. St. Francis is believed to have founded the very first third order, having written a rule for them in 1221. Other mendicant orders imitated this Franciscan rule when they later founded their own third orders.<sup>x</sup>
3. Evidence exists for a “Confrairie N.-D. du Mont-Carmel” at Toulouse in 1273 and a “Compagnia di Santa Maria del Carmino” at Bologna in 1280. Exactly what these groups were is uncertain due to lack of documentation and they may well have merely been some form of merchant guild associated with the local Carmelite parishes.<sup>xi</sup>
4. The first solid evidence for a third order in Carmel comes during the time that Bl. John Soreth was Prior General of the order. In 1452, he obtained permission from Pope Nicholas V for the formation of both second and third orders of Carmelites. In 1455, John Soreth wrote the first rule for third orders. It was based heavily upon the Rule of St. Albert and unlike our current Constitutions, showed much less recognition for the secular state of laity. The Rule that John Soreth wrote included wearing of the fuller habit (no mention of the veil), living communally, saying the full Office, and instructed tertiaries to “finally accommodate yourself to the holy customs of the entire Order as much as possible.”<sup>xii xiii</sup>
5. In 1580, when the Discalced Carmelites were formed as a separate province within the order, a papal bull granted them all the graces and privileges of the Carmelite Order. Later documents extended these to the Discalced Carmelites once they were formed as a separate order. While Teresa of Avila was known to have given the scapular to benefactors and supporters, there is no indication that she considered forming a Third Order.<sup>xiv</sup> Some authors claim that the brother of John of the Cross was a third order member but none seem to cite any documentation confirming it was anything official.
6. In actuality, the early Discalced Carmelites were rather disinclined to have tertiaries. When Fr. Jerome Gracián wrote the first Constitutions for the friars in 1576, he specifically forbade tertiaries. This prohibition was included in later versions of the friars’ Constitutions. The Order split into two congregations in 1600 (Spanish and Italian). Opposition in the Spanish

congregation to tertiaries resulted in that congregation concentrating on enrolling people into the Confraternity of the Scapular instead of the Third Order. The Italian congregation maintained a similar attitude.<sup>xv</sup> In the meantime, in 1635, Theodor Strazzio, then Prior General of the Ancient Observance wrote a rule for their third order which was adopted by some Discalced for use with third order members. This rule was revised in 1678.<sup>xvi</sup>

7. Toward the end of the 17th century, the Third Order began to grow in the Low Countries, then France, and finally into Italy. In 1699, a book offering a short rule appeared in Belgium and was approved for that province. In 1708, a rule, ceremonial, and directory were published in France. This rule gave a specific title of “Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa” for the members and included a statement that the third order was present in many cities and villages in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Belgium. The preface indicates the book was meant to put an end to “great confusion” about the third order since different people were doing different things.
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13. Since that Rule was written we've had a new Code of Canon Law, the Synod on the Laity, and other Church documents pertaining to the laity that were not taken into account when the Rule was written. In 1996, an international Congress of OCDS was held in Rome. This was the first such congress and one of the things that came out of that congress was a sense that our Rule needed to be updated.
14. In 2000, a second congress was held in Guadalajara, Mexico to specifically talk about revising the Rule of Life. Each province throughout the world was asked to send two delegates. Others able to make the trip also attended the congress. The two representatives for the Central Province were Mati Martinez, then of the Austin, TX community, now with the Killeen, TX study group, and Nancy Thompson of the Cedar Rapids, IA study group. Fr. John Michael Payne attended as our Provincial Delegate. As a result of that congress, 10 OCDS from around the world were appointed to write what are now our Constitutions. Pedro J. Gonzalez of the Bradenton, FL community was chosen as the representative from the US. They worked via email and met in Rome a few times.
15. In spring 2002, a draft of the constitutions was released. Fr Aloysius Deeney, our Secretary General (and from our province [Oklahoma]) posted them on the web and immediately received lots of feedback from those of us online. Feedback also came through the slower channels after the draft was distributed via the Flos Carmeli and other provincial newsletters. In September of that year, Fr. Aloysius presented a revision to the General Definitory which approved it. The new Constitutions were then forwarded to the appropriate office in Rome for approval for a five-year experimental period. On June 19th, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life<sup>1</sup> approved the Constitutions definitively, not experimentally. However, Fr. Aloysius does plan to receive feedback over the next five years and then ask for amendments/revision.
16. After this more generalized history of the Secular Order and our Rules and Constitutions, let us take a moment to briefly learn the history of Secular Carmel within the Central Province. Fr Evarist V. Foix began the first OCDS community in Oklahoma City while he was pastor on 9 Nov. 1937 (all dates refer to canonical establishment). The St. Louis, MO community was founded in 1948. Fr. Evarist was elected provincial in May 1951 and appointed Fr. Felix DaPrato as the first provincial delegate to the Third Order. Apparently, Fr. Evarist billed himself as the "Provincial of the Third Order" and it was during his term as Provincial that the Secular Order grew. A "Tertiary Page" was begun that July in the Little Flower Magazine and the following year Fr. Felix decided that a Congress of Tertiaries in the Southwest should be organized to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the creation of the Third Order (marking when Bl. John Soreth received permission to start it).<sup>xxv</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Even though the OCDS is canonically an association of the faithful (see Art. 37 of the Constitutions), we come under the jurisdiction of Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life rather than the Pontifical Council for the Laity. This is due to the fact that we fall under the juridical authority of the friars.

17. During the 1950's, communities were founded in Lafayette LA (1951), Jackson MS (1951), Little Rock AR (1953), New Orleans LA, (1953), Dallas TX (1954), Mobile AL (1954) and San Antonio TX (1956). Only two new communities were founded in the 1960's: Gulf Coast MS (1961) and Houston TX (1963). In the 1980's and 1990's, Secular communities once again blossomed with new communities founded in Baton Rouge LA (1984), Birmingham AL (1987), Austin TX (1989), Sioux City IA (1992), New Iberia LA (1995), Alexandria LA (1999), New Caney TX (1998), and a second community in Houston TX (1998).
18. Currently (2004) the Secular Order has Secular Order Groups in Jackson MS, Mobile AL (reduced from canonical community status), Vidalia LA, Amarillo TX, Savannah GA, Conyers GA, Cedar Rapids IA, Covington LA, Killeen TX, Lubbock TX, McAllen TX, Topeka KS, Waco TX, Thomasville GA and Knoxville TN. There are also six study groups that are in discernment about becoming part of the Secular Carmelite Order.<sup>xxvi</sup>

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<sup>ix</sup> Jotischky, Andrew, The Perfection of Solitude: Hermits and Monks in the Crusader States, Pennsylvania State University Press, Union Park, PA, 1995.

<sup>x</sup> Rodriguez, Otilio OCD, *The Secular Order of the Teresian Carmel: Its Origin and History*, Carmelite Digest, vol. 2, no. 1, Winter 1987, pg. 49.

<sup>xi</sup> Jarret, Bede, et al., *Third Orders*, Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 14, 1912 edition. Online at [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org)

<sup>xii</sup> Rodriguez, pg. 50.

<sup>xiii</sup> *The Rule of Bl. John Soreth*, Carmelite Digest, vol. 2, no. 1, Winter 1987, pg. 46-49.

<sup>xiv</sup> Rodriguez, pg. 50.

<sup>xv</sup> Rodriguez, pg. 51-52.

<sup>xvi</sup> Hartdegen, S., *Third Orders*, Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 14, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967, pg.94.

<sup>xvii</sup> Rodriguez, pg 52-53.

<sup>xviii</sup> Rodriguez, pg. 54.

<sup>xix</sup> Unknown author, The Development of the Rule of Life of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, unpublished manuscript, pg. 4.

<sup>xx</sup> Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

<sup>xxi</sup> Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

<sup>xxii</sup> Unknown author, pg. 5.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Rodriguez, pg.54.

<sup>xxv</sup> Payne, John Michael, private email communication.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Payne, John Michael, Directory and Catalog of the Oklahoma Province of Saint Therese . OCDS Section, Feb 2003.

## Appendix K: Session 6, Message of John Paul II to the Carmelite Family

*To the Most Reverend Fathers*

*Joseph Chalmers*

*Prior General of the Order of Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel (O.Carm.)*

*and*

*Camilo Maccise*

*Superior General of the Order of Discalced Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel (O.C.D.)*

1. The providential event of grace, which the Jubilee Year has been for the Church, prompts her to look with trust and hope to the journey we have just begun in the new millennium. *“At the beginning of this new century,” I wrote in the Apostolic Letter Novo millennio ineunte*, “our steps must quicken.... On this journey we are accompanied by the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom ... I entrusted the third millennium” (n. 58).

I therefore learned with deep joy that the two branches of the Order of Carmel, the ancient and the reformed, intend to express their filial love for their Patroness by dedicating the year 2001 to her, invoked as the Flower of Carmel, Mother and Guide on the way of holiness. In this regard, I cannot fail to stress a happy coincidence: the celebration of this Marian year for the whole of Carmel is taking place, according to a venerable tradition of the Order itself, on the 750th anniversary of the bestowal of the Scapular. This celebration is therefore a marvellous occasion for the entire Carmelite Family to deepen not only its Marian spirituality, but to live it more and more in the light of the place which the Virgin Mother of God and of mankind holds in the mystery of Christ and the Church, and therefore to follow her who is the “Star of Evangelization” (cf. *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 58).

2. In their journey towards the “mountain of God, Christ the Lord” (*Roman Missal*, Opening Prayer of the Mass in honour of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 16 July), the various generations of Carmel, from the beginning until today, have sought to model their lives on Mary’s example.

In Carmel therefore and in every soul moved by tender affection for the Blessed Virgin and Mother, there has thrived a contemplation of her, who from the beginning knew how to open herself to hearing God’s Word and to obeying his will (Lk 2: 19, 51). For Mary, taught and formed by the Spirit (cf. Lk 2: 44-50), was able by faith to understand her own history (cf. Lk 1: 46-55) and, docile to the divine promptings, “advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan (cf. Jn 19: 25), enduring with her Only-begotten Son the intensity of his suffering and associating herself with his sacrifice in her mother’s heart” (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58).

3. Contemplation of the Virgin presents her to us as a loving Mother who sees her Son growing up in Nazareth (cf. Lk 2: 40, 52), follows him on the roads of Palestine, helps him at the wedding at Cana (cf. Jn 2: 5) and, at the foot of the Cross, becomes the Mother associated with his offering and given to all people when Jesus himself entrusts her to his beloved disciple (cf. Jn 19: 26). As Mother of the Church, the Blessed Virgin is one with the disciples in “constant prayer” (Acts 1: 14); as the new Woman who anticipates in herself what will one day come to pass for us all in the full enjoyment of Trinitarian life, she is taken up into heaven from where

she spreads the protective mantle of her mercy over her children on their pilgrimage to the holy mountain of glory.

Such a contemplative attitude of mind and heart prompts admiration for the Virgin's experience of faith and love; she already lives in herself all that every believer desires and hopes to attain in the mystery of Christ and the Church (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 103; *Lumen gentium*, n. 53).

Therefore, Carmelites have chosen Mary as their Patroness and spiritual Mother and always keep before the eyes of their heart the Most Pure Virgin who guides everyone to the perfect knowledge and imitation of Christ.

Thus an intimacy of spiritual relations has blossomed, leading to an ever increasing communion with Christ and Mary. For the members of the Carmelite Family, Mary, the Virgin Mother of God and mankind, is not only a model to imitate but also the sweet presence of a Mother and Sister in whom to confide. St. Teresa of Jesus rightly urged her sisters: "Imitate Our Lady and consider how great she must be and what a good thing it is that we have her for our Patroness" (*Interior Castle*, III, 1, 3).

4. This intense Marian life, which is expressed in trusting prayer, enthusiastic praise and diligent imitation, enables us to understand how the most genuine form of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, expressed by the humble sign of the Scapular, is consecration to her Immaculate Heart (cf. Pius XII, Letter *Neminem profecto latet* [11 February 1950: AAS 42, 1950, pp. 390-391]; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, n. 67). In this way, the heart grows in communion and familiarity with the Blessed Virgin, "as a new way of living for God and of continuing here on earth the love of Jesus the Son for his Mother Mary" (cf. *Angelus Address*, in *Insegnamenti* XI/3, 1988, p. 173). Thus, as the blessed Carmelite martyr Titus Brandsma expressed it, we are put in profound harmony with Mary the *Theotokos* and become, like her, transmitters of divine life: "The Lord also sends his angel to us ... we too must accept God in our hearts, carry him in our hearts, nourish him and make him grow in us so that he is born of us and lives with us as the God-with-us, Emmanuel" (*From the report of Bl. Titus Brandsma to the Mariological Congress of Tongerlo, August 1936*).

Over time this rich Marian heritage of Carmel has become, through the spread of the Holy Scapular devotion, a treasure for the whole Church. By its simplicity, its anthropological value and its relationship to Mary's role in regard to the Church and humanity, this devotion was so deeply and widely accepted by the People of God that it came to be expressed in the memorial of 16 July on the liturgical calendar of the universal Church.

5. The sign of the Scapular points to an effective synthesis of Marian spirituality, which nourishes the devotion of believers and makes them sensitive to the Virgin Mother's loving presence in their lives. The Scapular is essentially a "habit." Those who receive it are associated more or less closely with the Order of Carmel and dedicate themselves to the service of Our Lady for the good of the whole Church (cf. "Formula of Enrolment in the Scapular," in the *Rite of Blessing of and Enrolment in the Scapular*, approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 5 January 1996). Those who wear the Scapular are thus brought into the land of Carmel, so that they may "eat its fruits and its good things" (cf. Jer 2:7),

and experience the loving and motherly presence of Mary in their daily commitment to be clothed in Jesus Christ and to manifest him in their life for the good of the Church and the whole of humanity (cf. "Formula of Enrolment in the Scapular," cit.).

Therefore two truths are evoked by the sign of the Scapular: on the one hand, the constant protection of the Blessed Virgin, not only on life's journey, but also at the moment of passing into the fullness of eternal glory; on the other, the awareness that devotion to her cannot be limited to prayers and tributes in her honour on certain occasions, but must become a "habit," that is, a permanent orientation of one's own Christian conduct, woven of prayer and interior life, through frequent reception of the sacraments and the concrete practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In this way the Scapular becomes a sign of the "covenant" and reciprocal communion between Mary and the faithful: indeed, it concretely translates the gift of his Mother, which Jesus gave on the Cross to John and, through him, to all of us, and the entrustment of the beloved Apostle and of us to her, who became our spiritual Mother.

6. A splendid example of this Marian spirituality, which inwardly moulds individuals and conforms them to Christ, the firstborn of many brethren, is the witness to holiness and wisdom given by so many Carmelite saints, all of whom grew up in the shadow and under the protection of their Mother.

I too have worn the Scapular of Carmel over my heart for a long time! Out of my love for our common heavenly Mother, whose protection I constantly experience, I hope that this Marian year will help all the men and women religious of Carmel and the devout faithful who venerate her with filial affection to grow in her love and to radiate to the world the presence of this Woman of silence and prayer, invoked as Mother of Mercy, Mother of Hope and Grace.

With these wishes, I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing to all the friars, nuns, sisters and lay people of the Carmelite Family, who work so hard to spread among the people of God true devotion to Mary, Star of the Sea and Flower of Carmel!

*From the Vatican, 25 March 2001.*



## **Appendix L: Session 8, Pastoral Care of the Secular Order (Excerpt)**

*14 December 2006*

### **Spiritual Assistants<sup>1</sup>**

#### **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:
  - 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 the Provincial or Provincial Delegate, the Assistant sees to it that

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<sup>1</sup> Constitutions OCDS, 44

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.

## **Appendix M: Session 9, Letter to the OCDS from Fr Saverio Cannistrà OCD Superior General**

CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI  
CORSO D'ITALIA, 38  
00198 ROMA

*To my very dear Brothers and Sisters of the OCDS*

*In Christ Jesus and his Holy Spirit, greetings of peace and communion!*

1. For some years I have been meeting with you through the letter to the OCDS. By this means, I want to exercise part of my service of “spiritual and pastoral care of the OCDS,” as well as “guaranteeing the fidelity of the OCDS to the charism of the Discalced Carmelite Order, unity... and communion with the Church” (*Pastoral Care of the Secular Order*: 1; 3:2; cfr. 6-7).

In this regard, I would like to reflect with you on some issues related to the *Councils of the Secular Order communities*. I would like to help you in the service of guiding communities, of which you are “the immediate authority” (CC = OCDS Constitutions 46). At the same time, I think that these reflections can also shed light on the service provided by the Provincial Councils of the OCDS in promoting formation, apostolate and unity in the Provinces, even if they do not have a legal authority on par with that of the local councils (cf. CC 57-58).

2. From documents concerning the Secular Order emerge the *characteristics* and *duties* of the local Council.

This is composed of a President, three Councillors and the Director of formation who has made definitive promises (CC 52-53). Together with the General and the Provincial, the Council has the responsibility of guiding the Community “in discerning and accepting God’s ways” (CC 15), as legitimate Superiors of the Secular Order (CC 48). With regard to matters arising that are outside the “competence of the Council, it is the obligation of the President to bring it to the attention of the Provincial” (CC 47g).

The “primary responsibility” of the local Council is taking care of the “formation and Christian and Carmelite maturing of the members of the community” (CC 46; cfr. *Ratio Institutionis of the Secular Order* n. 6, 10, 11, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35). In order that this may come about, the Council must meet frequently “in reference to taking care of formation programs and the growth of their own community” (CC 47). Other duties in the formation field are: to exercise discernment in admitting candidates to formation (cfr. *Ratio OCDS* 59-93), to first promise and to definitive promise and to give its consent to admit those called to vows (CC 36b, c, d; 39; 47a). For just motives and with the consent of the Provincial, it may reduce the period of formation to the first promise (CC 47b); lastly, it can receive a member transferring from another community (CC 47f).

Another fundamental aspect of the mission of the Council is involving the Community, remembering that it has a responsibility in formation (cfr. *Ratio of the Secular Order*: 28). What benefits this greatly is *preserving fraternal communion* within the Community according to the style of St Teresa. This, its crucial role, appears in article 24d of the Constitutions, to which I refer you.

Every three years the Council must convene the Community for the elections of the new Council (CC 47c), according to the electoral process established in the Provincial Statutes. Once the members of the new Council are elected, they appoint a Secretary and a Treasurer (CC 50, 54-55) from whom to receive the minutes of the meetings and the half-yearly report of the accounts. For a serious reason, the Council may replace a member of the Council itself (CC 47d).

After consultation with the Council, the OCD Provincial appoints a Spiritual Assistant for the Community (CC 43); the Assistant, although not part of the Council, may be invited to participate in its meetings and consulted on the ability of a candidate to assume the responsibility of a vocation to the OCDS (CC 44). Here, in thanking every Assistant for his dedication, I mention that he is the guarantor of the fidelity of the community to the charism (cf. CC 44; *Guide for Pastoral Care to the Secular Order*, 14-18) and in charge of its liturgical celebrations (ritual 13, 31, 51, 66). In addition, the Assistant plays the most important role of being a bond of fraternal communion between the community and the friars and the nuns of the Order, in whose name he fulfils this ministry of assistance.

Finally, it is up to the Council to take care of the processes of dismissal of members of the Community, as well as evaluating and discerning together with a member who, of his or her own accord, wants to leave the Community (CC 24e; 47e).

3. From these duties, we see that the Council carries out a fundamental role of accompanying and leading the Community in its mission. For this reason, it ought to walk together towards it, encouraging the *communal character of the Christian and Carmelite* vocation and look upon each of the members with God's eyes.

The Church, being a mystery of communion (cf. LG 2-4), formed of people created in the "image of divine communion" (*Evangelii Gaudium* = EG 178; cfr. Gen 1:26,27), Christians must bear witness to a "captivating fraternity" (Final document of 2018 Synod: 1), the root of which is in the Most Holy Trinity. Communion in the Church leads to communion with Christ (cf. 1Jn 1:3), which in turn builds communion between men and women. In fact, in this communion, all the baptized participate in the commonly held meaning (*sensus commune*) of the faith (cf. LG 12; EG 119-120) and are called to become actively engaged in evangelization (EG 120). Thus, they "make real the human person's call to live communion, which comes about through sincere self-giving, union with God and unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ." Then, "the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on taking pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will" (cf. International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, March 2, 2018 (= ITC) 43, 68).

4. The authority of the Council is shared among its 5 members by different functions. Firstly, I think that the warning of our Holy Mother to the Discalced friars is also useful for the Council, that is, that "their leaders be in accord" (Spiritual Testimonies 64). It should be an authority lived "with a mother's love" and with "discretion" (S. Teresa of Jesus, Constitutions 34, or cfr. Foundations 18:6-8). Its exercise requires *active co-responsibility*, both within the Council itself in the choices and decisions to be taken, and in arousing the active and responsible participation of each member of the community, in decisions concerning the good of the

community and in the exercise of the discernment of truth. Today more than ever, in the face of social and ecclesial reality, a solid formation is necessary that leads to the practice of discernment in community. The community is then the fertile sphere of this; it should lead each member to be co-responsible for the community, its formation and its mission (GE 175; cf. Final Document 2018 Synod, 119-124).

Lastly, its character as a *temporary shared authority*, renewed every three years, indicates that the Council receives an authority of mediation and delegation from the community that elects it. It must therefore lead it according to the spirit and charism of the Teresian Carmel, according to what is defined in the OCDS constitutions. By fulfilling this condition, it elicits and strengthens the identity and sense of belonging to the Order, and favours encounter with God and with the brethren, thus facilitating embodiment in each member. For this to happen, the members of the Council must know well the documents that govern the OCDS and let themselves be guided by them.

5. As an immediate authority, the Council serves as a support for the community's good; it must stand out *by its great esteem for the charism of the Teresian Carmel and a fraternal relationship* with the friars and nuns and the other members of the Teresian Carmel family. Its role, therefore, is to mediate between the Order and the members of the community, to which the Council lends a humble service (cf. CC 24d). To this end, they must cherish a love of the truths of Sacred Scripture, docility and submission to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church and Order, avoiding radicalism and strange, fanatical or anachronistic conceptions about the Church or the Order (See Ratio 67). The community must not close in on itself, but feel itself in communion with other communities, since we are all branches of the one vine (cf. Jn 15:5-6).

To carry out this service, the members of the Council must look to Jesus, who came to serve and give his life for others (cf. Mk 10:43-45). This leads authority to be respectful towards the community, understanding it as a gift from above that must be guarded (cf. Benedict XVI *Caritas in Veritate*, 34) and as a place where the Risen One is present (GE 142; cfr. VC 42). It must seek the community's good and lead it to human, Christian and Carmelite growth, with the attitudes of the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11-15), until all arrive at the final goal of Faith: eternal life (cf. 2Cor 5:1).

6. Another very important quality in the exercise of the Council's service is the ability to live and promote *confident dialogue* at different levels: within the Council itself; between the Council and the other members of the community; it must also foster dialogue with other communities, with the Provincial Council and other realities of the Order.

In the practical exercise of dialogue, on the one hand, all must have *the patience of listening*. It must be understood as "an encounter in freedom, which requires humility, patience, willingness to understand, and an effort to respond in new ways. Listening transforms the heart of those who do it, especially when it takes place with an inner disposition of harmony and docility to the Spirit" (Final Document of the 2018 Synod: 6). On the other hand, it also implies having *the courage to speak*. This must be done with frankness and openly, and refer to what one has prayed about and weighed up, in the silence of a heart at peace and in the light of God, having therefore perceived that it is in conformity with the truths of Scripture and the

Magisterium. So, it is not a question here of tenaciously defending one's ideas, but of seeking the truth together with others in humility.

It is also a dialogue respectful of others and of the diversity of opinions and experiences in the community. Only so can we develop, through dialogue, the acceptance of what is different from me in a unity that generates life, making possible a "communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity" (EG 228; cf. 226-230). In this form of dialogue, possible and eventual conflicts in the community that could fragment it (cf. *Way of Perfection* 7:10), are harmonized by the unity of the spirit.

7. In order that what has been said so far can come about, *humility* is essential. The Apostle Paul proposes in the letter to the Philippians (Phil 2:2-11) the example of the self-emptying (kenosis) of Christ. It implies first of all an attitude of service and considering others superior to oneself. All are called to be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Humility also requires having our eyes fixed on God, the true centre of each and every one, not considering oneself the centre of the world and of oneself. Thanks to this, the humble person recognizes that he or she needs others, to which our Holy Father John of the Cross has already drawn our attention: "[Humble people] do not dare deal with God independently, nor can they be completely satisfied without human counsel and direction. God wants this (....) he draws near those who come together in an endeavour to know it [truth]" (St. John of the Cross, 2 *Ascent* 22:11). Only with humility and detachment from self can we overcome the temptations of factions, rivalries and vainglory in the community (cf. *Way of Perfection* 10:3-4).

8. Finally, so that there may be a co-responsible exercise of authority by the Council and all the members, there is a need for *training in communion* which helps to move from the selfish "I" of the old person to the "we" of the new person (cf. NMI 43; ITC 107-109). In the first place comes the common good, sought by all. Everyone must feel in search of the fulfillment of God's will, following in the footsteps of Jesus under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, at the service of the mission.

Since for each community attention is required to be given to the new generations, who appreciate a readiness and a capacity for working collaboratively, it should be remembered that "the skill required for working collaboratively involves cultivating specific relational virtues: the discipline of listening and the capacity to give the other person space, readiness to forgive and willingness to 'put oneself on the line', according to a genuine spirituality of communion" (*Final Document of 2018 Synod*: 103).

In this formation, the celebration of the Eucharist plays a primordial role. In fact, in the Eucharist, that "source and paradigm of the spirituality of communion," there are the principles of communion among all, in the equal dignity received in Baptism.

Constituted into a Eucharistic assembly, with the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity and participating in the sacred action in a full, conscious, pious and active form (cf. SC 48. 14), the members of the community, through their various gifts and charisms received from the Father of all, express and renew the commitment of each one to unity, promoted by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, recognizing their own fragility and personal sins (*penitential act*), they are called to live and to choose again the path of communion, by implementing reconciliation with God and with their brothers and sisters. Then, the common listening to the word of God recalls that learning to listen to God takes first place and leads to listening to others. The offering of gifts reminds us of the union with Christ in our daily activities and works which, lived in the faith and spirit of Christ in the liturgy, are now united to His unique offering (cf. SC 61). Communion with the body and blood of Christ, received by those present, in turn realizes the unity of the members in the one bread, creating and favouring communion with God and with the brothers and sisters. Finally, nourished by the Eucharist, they are led to mission, to be a community of faith “outgoing” towards all (cf. ITC 109). Thus, in the Eucharist “source and apex of the whole Christian Life” (LG 11), is formed and nourished in the members of the community a reciprocal affection that leads to walking together, which is a “constitutive dimension of the Church (ITC 1.5.42.57, 94, 120).

9. My dear Secular Order members, what I have told you may seem an ideal difficult to achieve, in the face of the countless challenges you encounter in carrying out this task. Nevertheless, the important thing is to take steps in this direction, to start and to follow the processes of growth (cf. EG 222-225). I am sure that we are in an authentic time of grace. It is *now and here* that we are called to be prophetic, sensing in faith the way to go together, thus corresponding to God’s will. “God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness” (LG 9; cfr. GS 32; GE 6). For this reason, we have the guarantee of the grace received in the consecration of Baptism and Confirmation. More concretely, with the call to the Teresian Carmel we have the guarantee of divine support in continuing to walk the path of holiness in community, with the virtues of “endurance, patience and meekness, joy and sense of humour, daring and fervour” (cf. GE 110-157). St. John of the Cross confirms this to us: “The Lord has always revealed to mortals the treasures of his wisdom and his spirit, but now that the face of evil bares itself more and more, so does the Lord bare his treasures more” (*Sayings 1*).

Dear brothers and sisters: May the Holy Spirit continue to shed light on your path. Following the example of Jesus and in fidelity to the Teresian charism, promote always the witness of the kingdom in the midst of the world and thus collaborate in the mission of the Church and the Order.

In thanking you for your fraternal affection so often shown, I offer dear and brotherly greeting to you, your families and communities. I wish you a fruitful Lenten time and a holy Easter of the Resurrection: Let it be the inexhaustible source of hope and joy for each one of you.

Imploring upon you the Lord’s blessing, I beg Our Lady of Mt Carmel to guard you and gather you around her Son.

*Faternally,*

Fr Saverio Cannistrà OCD

*Superior General*

Rome, 6th March 2019

*Ash Wednesday*

## Appendix N: Session 10, Our First Duties as Carmelites

Fr. David Centner, OCD

7/21/2006

What is the *pars potior* (the most important part) of the Carmelite vocation? The answer usually given was prayer; by that meaning quiet or contemplative prayer. Is this a sufficient answer?

The Rule itself makes it clear that our first duty is to serve Christ with pure hearts and upright consciences. In scriptural terms, that means that we believe in him and put his word into practice.

To serve Christ rightly, we must turn to the gospels and learn what it is that he commands us to do. In the pages of John's Gospel we learn that his commandment is: "Love one another as I have loved you." It would follow that the *pars potior* of our vocation is to love and cherish one another.

That statement surprises many Carmelites who think that their chief responsibility is prayer and sacrifice. Yet, as St Paul tells us, if we do not have charity, everything else—including our prayer and sacrifices—is of no avail. He even tells us, "Bear one another's burdens and you will fulfill the Law of Christ."

When Mother Isabel of the Angels, the only one of the Spanish Mothers to remain in France when Carmel was established there, was asked by the Carmel of Amiens to write some words of encouragement, she wrote (in deliciously mixed French and Spanish) about charity, not about observance. Her words were something like this: "As we have so little opportunity to converse with one another, we must anticipate one another's needs. This is what our Mother Teresa wanted, for this is the principal part of our religious observance."

Secular Carmelites have even less opportunity to converse with each other than do friars or nuns who live in communities. Yet the obligation of cherishing one another is as important for seculars as for religious. When we see communities that fail to love one another unconditionally as Christ does, we can doubt if all their knowledge of our spirituality and their practice of prayer has any value at all.

But how do we learn to cherish one another, especially when we know that all of us (myself included) have moments when we are disagreeable and all of us have natural antipathies? I think these things are extremely important:

"Do not judge and you will not be judged...for the measure you measure will be measured back to you." Holy Mother Teresa put this into practice by refusing to say anything negative about anyone, especially in their absence. As a consequence, she drew many to herself.

Always consider others better than yourself. By this we do not mean false humility. We mean the recognition that God gives different talents to everyone. There is no one alive who is not naturally better than I am in some respect. And as for supernaturally better, only God knows. But we do know this, the moment we exalt ourselves for some virtue, we lose it, for then charity has gone out of it.



## Appendix N

As a consequence we listen readily to one another, and we reach out to help one another. We grow in patience and compassion, for we know that God has been very compassionate with us. In this way, we open the door to letting Christ bring to perfection His charity within us.

Conclusion: If we are to be true friends of Christ, as Holy Mother so ardently desires, because Jesus himself desires that, we must determine to be true friends of one another.

## **Appendix O: Session 11, The Promise & Vows in the Secular Order of The Discalced Carmelites**

by Fr Alzinir Debastiani, OCD  
2016

We are living through a period in the Church, when many of the faithful laity gathered in the various lay movements and associations seek to live the evangelical counsels in a more committed way through some form of consecration of life, whether in the making of promises or vows or by some other affiliation.

Thus, the lay faithful, gathered around the Tertiary or secular Orders, live out the charism of a religious Institute, under its authority, cultivating perfection in charity and an apostolate in the world.

What is certain is that the existing Constitutions of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmel contain some reflections and directives with regard to the matter of promises and vows, so that it seemed opportune to go deeper into some aspects given the vocation of the laity.

What is our understanding of the promises and vows taken by members of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmel? What meaning do they have?

I will try to respond to these questions after carrying out a brief historical résumé of the meaning of the act of commitment which was formerly done through the vows, which today are done through the promise. From a theological perspective, the promise is intended to be an aid to living by following Jesus, a process begun in Baptism. We will then have a short reflection on the theme of the promise taken by the secular Order, ending with a reflection on following Jesus in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and those of the Beatitudes.

With this résumé, I hope to help in understanding and situating the significance of the commitment, which the laity of our Order make, as its aim is to be a witness to the Gospel in the midst of the world according to the Carmelite-Teresian charism.

I thank the following for the suggestions, corrections and textual revisions: Fray Luis David OCD, Fr. Pedro Zubieta OCD and Fr. Aloysius Deeney OCD. A special thanks to Myrna Torbay OCDS for her patient editing of the text in Spanish.

*I thank immensely Rosanna Haigh OCDS for the translation from Spanish into English and Fr. Aloysius Deeney OCD for the final revision of the text.*

### **1. From the vows to the promise**

We go back to the year 1452, when Pope Nicholas V, in the papal bull entitled *Cum nulla fidelium* of 7<sup>th</sup> October, canonically authorized John Soreth, General of the Order of Carmelites, to initiate the Second Order (nuns) and the Third Order (the laity) of Carmel, by which they could receive and give the habit to lay people called to live the spirituality of the Order, as

already existed with the Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians. This document, together with the Papal Bull *Dum attenta* by Sixtus IV (28th November 1476) made the structure of such groups more explicit.

At that time, lay people made their commitment to the Order through vows, as foreseen in the ancient missals of the Order of Carmel, like the one edited in Venice in the year 1504, where there is a rite for the admission of vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and another dating from 1587, in which only the vows of chastity and obedience, were made for the admission of married people to be admitted.<sup>1</sup>

Later, Pope Clement VIII, with the papal bull *Cum dudum* of 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1594, extended privileges given to the Order of Carmelites of the Ancient Observance, for also allowing the organization of groups of seculars next to the monasteries of the Order of Discalced Carmelites. Nonetheless and despite the Constitutions of Alcalá in the year 1581, explicitly forbidding the acceptance of seculars, there are reports that recount that prior to the year 1600, Fr. Pedro de la Madre de Dios, superior of the monastery of Santa Maria della Scala in Rome, was admitting secular persons and that they were called "*tertiarii ad instar*"<sup>2</sup>; furthermore, this was happening in several countries in Europe.

It is indeed certain that there have always and continuously been a presence of lay people, who, committed to the spirit of the evangelical counsels (through vows of chastity and obedience depending on their relationship to the superiors of the Order<sup>3</sup>), living out the spirituality of the Teresian Carmel, imitating the life of perfection of the religious in the world, carrying this out in diverse styles of life: whether in the family and work, adjacent to the monasteries, joined to the monasteries, as religious or associated in fraternities, oratories or brotherhoods. Although, let us remember that for many years evangelical perfection was reserved for religious and clerics, since some of the great theologians described it thus, as did certain documents of the Church's Magisterium.

In the XVII-XVIII centuries, various documents evolved which sought to unify and organize the life of these lay people, one of the most important of which was published in Marseille in the year 1708: *The Rule, ceremonial and directory of the Sisters of the Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Teresa established in various cities in France, Italy, Spain and Germany*. This document was in some respects the precursor of the Manual of 1921, which we will examine next.

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1 Cf. Letter from the General OCD to the Congregation for Divine Worship seeking approbation for the Rite of the Secular Order, Rome 26<sup>th</sup> June 1990.

2 Cf. Isidoro a Sancto Ioseph, *Historia generalis fratrum discalceatorum Ordinis B. Virginis Mariae de Monte Carmelo; congregationis S. Eliae*. Tomo I. Romae, ex typographia Philippi Mariae Mancini. 1668. p. 198 & ff. Available in, <http://books.googleusercontent.com/books/> cf. V. Macca, *Appunti per una storia*, in, Anastasio del SS. Rosario, *Partecipi dello stesso carisma; L'Ordine Secolare dei Carmelitani Scalzi*. Firenze: Fiamma teresiana 1980. p. 71-83.

3 We can assume that this was an ancient custom in the Order, already present in the Missal of the Order published in Venice in the year 1504, in which a rite by which to receive people into the Order with simple vows of *chastity, poverty and obedience* was foreseen. Another reference appeared in the Missal published in Rome in the year 1587, where there is a rite for the reception of members with vows of *chastity and obedience*, making it possible to admit married persons to the Third Order. This custom would remain in later editions and would be the norm and custom to the present day for taking vows.

## 1.1. The Manual of 1921

This was the first official document of the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites, approved by Benedict XV on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1921<sup>4</sup>, entitled *Rule of the Secular Third Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus*. It is structured in two parts: *I- Of the nature of the Third Order and the duties of Tertiaries; II- Of the organization of the Third Order*, comprising 162 articles in total.

Although, most certainly its content is very valuable, we will only pause to look at that which refers to the vows as the original expression of the present promise. Let us take into account that at that time and according to the Code of Canon Law of 1917, the Third Orders were “instituted to promote the perfection of Christian life among members in the midst of the world” (cc. 685; 700; 712§1).<sup>5</sup>

The *Rule* speaks of *vows of obedience* (Chap. VIII) and of *chastity* (Chap. IX). The vow of *obedience* is taken to the superiors of the Order in which the *Rule* has been established. The vow of *chastity* implies an obligation to live chastely according to the state in which one finds oneself, when one makes the promise, but it does not prevent the person from changing their state in life. These vows always follow a year of “novitiate” and are renewed devotionally during the Feast of the Holy Cross (14<sup>th</sup> September) and at Epiphany.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to consider No 31 of the Rule with regard to the vows, which denotes a difference from the vows taken by the religious:

“The vows of obedience and chastity, according to the Rule of the Third Order, have not the same binding force as Religious vows and expire upon leaving the Order; they are intended to bring the Tertiary to a perfect observance of the holy Law of God and of Our Holy Mother the Church, and while elevating to a higher degree the practice of Christian virtue and increasing its value and merit, they do but give a more sacred sanction to the duty incumbent on all the Faithful of humble submission to lawful authority and of preserving in whatever state of life purity of soul and body.”

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4 The Rule is to be found in the *Manuale del Terz'Ordine Secolare della Beata Vergine Maria del Monte Carmelo e della Santa Madre Teresa di Gesù* (=Manual) Milano, Casa editrice S. Lega Eucaristica, 1921. From the Manual, the following are included 1- the letter from the General Superior, Fr Luca de María Santísima (13<sup>th</sup> April 1921); 2- Decree of definitive approbation and confirmation of the Rule by Pope Benedict XV (Prot. N. 2058<sup>1</sup>-19. C. 20) – dated 6<sup>th</sup> March 1921; 3- La Regola del Terz'Ordine Secolare della Beata Vergine Maria del Monte Carmelo e della Santa Madre Teresa di Gesù; 4- *Rituale o Cerimoniale del Terz'Ordine Secolare della Beata Vergine Maria del Monte Carmelo e della Santa Madre Teresa di Gesù*; 5- Appendix: *Sommario delle Indulgenze, dei Privilegi ed indulti del Terz'Ordine secolare della Beata Vergine Maria del Monte Carmelo e della Santa Madre Teresa di Gesù*; 6- Various formulations: through registration, decisions made by the Chapter, through records of the meeting and witness of the clothing and Profession. In another edition of the Manual made in Rome, 1943, following the Rule, there is an *Appendice per gli Aspiranti al Terz'Ordine Carmelitano Teresiano*: these consist of some directives for the election and formation of Aspirants to the Third Order, based on the *Instrucciones* of the Friars, nn 297-299; it was approved in the year 1927 by the Definitory General of the Order.

5 Cf. Juan José Echeberria, p. 29, *Asunción de los Consejos evangélicos en las Asociaciones de fieles y movimientos eclesiales; investigación teológico-canónica*. Gregorian University Press. Rome 1998.

6 Cf. *Manuale del Terz'Ordine Secolare della Beata Vergine Maria del Monte Carmelo e della Santa madre Teresa de Gesù*. Rome, Tip. Bracony, 1943, n. 29-30. The formula for profession in N° 29 says: “Io N. N. faccio la mia professione, e prometto a Dio, alla Santissima Vergine del Monte Carmelo, alla nostra Santa madre Teresa, ed ai Superiori dell'Ordine, obbedienza e castità, secondo la Regola del Terz'Ordine, la quale voglio osservare con la maggiore perfezione che mi sarà possibile, fino alla morte.”

Furthermore, in the *Ritual or Ceremonial* of the Third Order, published in the *Manual*, there is no separate rite for Vows from that of the promise as will be the case in the Ritual of 1990.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2. The Rule of life (1979)

The *Rule* of 1921 was in force until the year 1970, when it was developed *ad experimentum* the *Rule of Life*. This would be definitively approved by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes on 10<sup>th</sup> May, 1979 (Prot. N.C 20-/79). It sought to bring the doctrine and contents up-to-date in order to understand the identity and mission of the laity in the Church, in accordance with the doctrine of Vatican Council II. At the same time it sought to adapt the charism of the Teresian Carmel to the state of the lay way of life, rather than as an imitation of religious life.

The first change was in the name: from *Third Order*, it became the *Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites*, more in keeping with ancient tradition and as suggested by many of the fraternities. Another important change was to do with the commitment of lay people in the Order, since in place of vows, they would make promises<sup>8</sup> (art. 11-14), with a new form of temporal commitment lasting three years – and not for the rest of one's life, as said in the formula for the vows of the previous Rule – at the end of which the secular could take them definitively.

The vows appeared in art. 15-16, as an option for those who freely sought to take them, at least one year following the definitive promises. They carry the same content and interpretation as the promises, with the clarification that “vows increase the merit of the virtue of religion in the practice of chastity and obedience and represent a more complete offering of oneself and carry with it greater moral responsibility” (Art. 15).

## 1.3. The Constitutions (2003)

The next step in legislation for the Secular Order was the drawing up of the *Constitutions* in the years 2000-2003, as a consequence of the advance in thinking and recognition of the vocation of the laity within the Order, encouraged by ecclesial events at the time.

The Synod of Bishops of October 1987 was on the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church. In the following year, the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici* (ChL) sought to emphasise and summarise the teachings of Vatican Council II on the laity twenty years on. A few years later, the synod of 1994 took place on consecrated life. One of the themes of interest to us is the new light it shed in relation to the theme of working together with the laity in the mission of the religious. With the publication of the apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (VC),

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<sup>7</sup> In another edition of the Manual in the Italian edition of 1963 and published by the General Secretary of the Third Order in Rome, in addition to the documents of the previous edition, there is also a *Catechism of the Third Order*, drawn up with 158 questions and answers. Questions 57-69 refer to the vows, which seek to explain the substance of the vows and give suggestions as to how to live them, avoiding sinning against them, etc.

<sup>8</sup> We have no information about the process of change of the designation of vows to promises in the *Rule of Life*, 1979. LG 44 speaks of the vows or other sacred bonds, which can be an oath, oblation, etc.

there is explicit mention of the laity who participate in the spirituality of religious institutions. The document states that:

“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.

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” (cf. VC 54-55; cf. 98).

These ecclesial events immediately stimulated the celebration of Secular Order international Congresses, the first in 1996 in Rome and then Mexico in 2000. As a consequence, it was considered necessary to revise and modernize the *Rule of Life* of 1979, taking into account the directives of the ecclesiastical Magisterium. The developmental work took place between 2000 and 2003, the year in which they were approved by the Congregation for the Institutions of Consecrated Life and Societies for Apostolic Life of the Holy See (16<sup>th</sup> June; Prot. N C 228-1/2003).

In the present *Constitutions of the OCDS*, Chapter 2 deals with the promise, which is about the following of Jesus in the lay Carmel and vows in Chapter 7 in art. 39, which deals with “Organization and government” in the Secular Carmel. The promise is a commitment to the Order and the Community in the quest for perfection in charity according to the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and the Beatitudes. Since the vows are made of one’s freewill and the time and circumstances in which to carry them out, the definitive promises are determined by the Provincial Statutes (cf. *Const OCDS* 58 e). At the same time, they require the agreement of the Council of the Community and the permission of the Provincial. Here there is a clear distinction in the form of commitment and the following of Christ begun in baptism is now highlighted and lived out according to the charism of the Teresian Carmel.

With this brief examination of the documents of the Order, we have seen the form of commitment the laity has with the Order, which changes from vows to promise and from the promise to vows of chastity and obedience for those who freely seek it.

Further on, we will deepen our understanding of the promise in the light of the documents of the Magisterium and the Constitutions of the OCDS. It is a theme which needs to be deepened and that which is presented here is a small contribution to the understanding of this theme, since there have not been many reflections on this.

## 2. The promise and the vows: living the spirit of the evangelical counsels in lay life

Central to the doctrine of Vatican Council II (1962-1965), with regard to the Church, is the understanding of the Church as *mystery of communion* of the whole people of God.<sup>9</sup> All members from all states of life in the Church: lay people, religious and clerics/priests all form the People of God; they possess equal dignity, founded in Baptism and play a complementary role<sup>10</sup> in the exercise of the mission of the Church.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, all participate in a common vocation to sanctity, which consists in the perfection of charity, according to each person's state in life.<sup>12</sup>

For each state of life, it is necessary to live out the evangelical counsels, according to the statement in the VC:

"In fact, all those reborn in Christ are called to live out, with the strength which is the Spirit's gift, the chastity appropriate to their state of life, obedience to God and to the Church, and a reasonable detachment from material possessions: for all are called to holiness, which consists in the perfection of love. But Baptism in itself does not include the call to celibacy or virginity, the renunciation of possessions or obedience to a superior, in the form proper to the evangelical counsels. The profession of the evangelical counsels thus presupposes a particular gift of God not given to everyone, as Jesus himself emphasizes with respect to voluntary celibacy (cf. Mt 19:10-12)" (VC 30).

The specific mission of the laity in the Church, "The *laity*, by virtue of the secular character of their vocation, reflect the mystery of the Incarnate Word particularly insofar as he is the Alpha and the Omega of the world, the foundation and measure of the value of all created things" (VC 16b). The laity is to

"... seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer" (LG 31; cf. ChL 14-15).

In order to fulfill this mission, the Church recognizes the liberty of the baptized people to form and participate in associations of faithful, as a mutual aid in the development of a particular apostolate in the name of the Church. This is the case of the Third Orders or Seculars: they participate in the charism of a religious institution; their aim is to dedicate themselves to the

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9 Cf. ChL 18-19.

10 LG (Lumen Gentium) 17; 33; ChL 20; 55.

11 Cf. id. 23; VC 31.

12 LG Chap. V, especially 39.42

apostolate and to seek Christian perfection under the direction of the same Institute, in accordance with its own Statutes.<sup>13</sup>

In the Order of the Discalced Carmelite Seculars (OCDS), the *Constitutions* determine the degree of commitment with the Order of the Discalced Carmelite, as expressed in n. 11:

“Following Jesus as members of the Secular Order is expressed by the promise to strive for evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and through the beatitudes. By means of this promise the member’s baptismal commitment is strengthened for the service of God’s plan in the world. This promise is a pledge to pursue personal holiness, which necessarily carries with it a commitment to serving the Church in faithfulness to the Teresian Carmelite charism. The promise is taken before the members of the community, representing the whole Church and in the presence of the Delegate of the Superior of the Order” (*Constitutions OCDS* 11).

But, what does it mean to make a promise? This is what we will endeavor to deepen in the next section.

## 2.1. A general outline of the promises

In order to understand the theme of the promise which is made in the Secular Carmel, let us begin with that which is said in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) with regard to promises in general:

“In many circumstances, the Christian is called to make *promises* to God. Baptism and Confirmation, Matrimony and Holy Orders always entail promises. Out of personal devotion, the Christian may also promise to God this action, that prayer, this almsgiving, that pilgrimage, and so forth” (CCC 2101).

From the Bible, it is evident that “God has approved the pact and promise so that He himself is bound by it in such a way that, without even expecting fidelity from his ally, He will fulfill his promises even if his ally does not fulfill his” (Scharbert). God keeps his promises, because He is faithful to himself and through them seeks to create a new heart (Jer 31:33) with all those for whom his promise is destined, as in the case of Abraham in the Old Testament. The same applies to the new covenant, for the action of the Holy Spirit guarantees the realization of the promise, which needs to be embraced through the observance of the new law which is Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16,19); an observance or attachment which is a vivifying spirit which sets all free (cf. Gal 4, 5:1). In this sense, attachment to Jesus in his Spirit means attachment to God’s promise, to full liberty and to love. Thus, the promise, seen from either side, whether from God’s part which He promises or whether trusting in man’s part, the fidelity of both sides show the two poles of God’s justice, which seeks the salvation of mankind.<sup>14</sup>

From this dynamic perspective, the promise constitutes the deepening of one’s own liberty in the experience of love in the following of Christ, in the same way that a dynamic path opens up to the future and ventures forward in faith and hope. It implies the capacity for love, to be able

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. CDC can. 303; cf. L 29; VC 54-55.

<sup>14</sup> Cf.: Rom 1:17; 3:5,21-25; 10:3.



to open oneself up in a responsible way, determinedly and realistically in pursuit of the evangelical values.

At the same time, it requires an *openness of oneself* to others, available to that which could be useful or pleasing to the beneficiary of the promise (the Community, the Church, the Order): “To make a promise is one of the key terms in the language of love. To make a promise means to pledge all one’s strength and weakness, proclaiming oneself both certain of the future and sure of oneself. At the same time, it means arousing adherence of heart and generosity of faith in one’s companion.” Thus, fidelity is “the condition of reliability, a key condition in social relationships and also in the relationship between God and man. The promise demands openness and also seeks trust, hope and therefore love.”<sup>15</sup>

In summing up, the central value of the promise is the fidelity of God and his Covenant on the one hand and man’s conscience, liberty, deliberation, which in turn are conditions validating a promise on the other. This brings the person to loving openness to God and to others.

## 2.2. The meaning of the promise in the Secular Order

Bearing in mind the afore-going reflections, we will now seek out the meaning of the promise in the OCDS.

In the same way, but not to the same degree as the promises made in the Sacraments, through which the Christian is consecrated, belongs to God definitively and receives the appropriate grace according to of the Sacrament in order to live and exercise the mission according to the Sacrament one receives, the promise which the Secular Carmelite makes to the Superior of the Order and to the Community, demands sincerity,<sup>16</sup> fidelity and a firm resolve.

The promise is made in a liturgical context (Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours and Celebration of the Word). This signifies that the purpose of the liturgy is kept in mind: worship of God and the sanctification of the assembly (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10). Personal will to the Community/Authority of the Order in the “following of Christ” and “to strive for evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and through the beatitudes” (*Const. OCDS* 11). Here, the moment is clothed with a similar character as that of the promises which are made during the celebration of the Sacraments, where the person who is responding to God’s call enkindled by charity.

The promise is the evidence of the will to grow in the perfection of the love of Christ and of one’s brethren, which was already assumed in Baptism. It is also a humble recognition of the need of the presence and assistance of the Other-other, in order to live out the evangelical counsels and to live in following and with the progressive configuration in Christ in greater fidelity. The promise makes us face up to our weakness and limitations in fighting against the great temptations, which lie in wait for us: having – poverty, being able to – obedience,

<sup>15</sup> To examine that which follows in greater detail see: L. Padovese, *Promesa y juramento*, in: [http://www.mercaba.org/DicTM/TM\\_promesa\\_y\\_juramento.htm](http://www.mercaba.org/DicTM/TM_promesa_y_juramento.htm) (accessed 5<sup>th</sup> December 2015).

<sup>16</sup> The promise made as a verbal expression of the interior will of the person, implies living with the truth as the eighth commandment demands: “Truth or truthfulness is the virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and guarding against duplicity, dissimulation, and hypocrisy” (CCC 2505).

pleasure – chastity. Thus, the promise should be a source of liberation, liberating us from that which prevents us from reaching the fullness of being, the fullness of living in dignity, and the fullness of Love. Only thus, can we understand that the promise is a strengthening of the “baptismal commitment at the service of God’s plan in the world,” a “garment of personal sanctity” which should be carried to a “commitment to serving the Church in fidelity to the Teresian-Carmelite charism.”

For this reason, if “the fidelity of the promise made to God is a manifestation of respect to the divine Majesty and out of love to the God who is faithful” (CCC 2101), equally, we could say that fidelity to the promise made in the Community is a manifestation of love and respect to the brothers and sisters of the same Community and Order.

All this is expressed in the formula for the making of the promise:

“I [ ], inspired by the Holy Spirit, in response to God’s call, sincerely promise to the Superiors of the Order of the Teresian Carmel and to you my brothers and sisters, to tend toward evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, obedience, and of the Beatitudes, according to the Constitutions of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, for [3 years/rest of my life]. I confidently entrust this, my Promise, to the Virgin Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel.”<sup>17</sup>

Thus the crucial aspect with regard to the promise taken in the Secular Carmel is the following of Christ and participation in the mission as a response to the first love, the living out of the *spirit of the evangelical counsels* and the *Beatitudes* as a result in the Community. The Community is thereby the test, aid and the place where these will be translated into a living and prayerful relationship with Christ, as well as concrete actions with one’s brothers and sisters, in family life and at work (cf. ChL 30). Consequently and in accordance with one’s individual state in life, situation and possibilities, each one “heightens and enriches the baptismal commitment” and married people will encourage “those called to married life, both as spouses and as parents” (Const. 12). It demands a constant renewal due to the appropriate dynamic of the following of Christ.

As a consequence, the promise in the OCDS demands commitment and personal endeavor in order “to acquire the necessary training to know the reasons, the content and purpose of the evangelical lifestyle they are undertaking” (id.). Eternal life is the goal of the Christian life and is a dynamic journey, with a call to grow and mature unceasingly and to yield fruit in every stage of the person’s life. In order for this to happen, each one must take their responsibility and produce fruit in order not to be cut down and cast away like the sterile branch compared with the vine and its branches in the Gospel (cf. Jn 15:5-6; ChL 57).

### 2.3. The vows

The vows are a phenomenon present in all religions. According to Canon Law, public vows are characteristic of Consecrated and eremitical<sup>18</sup> Life. The vow includes the promise, as it is defined in the Code of Canon Law, in can. 1191, which is quoted in n. 2102 of the CCC:

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<sup>17</sup> *Ritual OCDS* 1990, 42 A. In the original: “...according to the *Rule of Life*...”.

<sup>18</sup> The vows are public, when the evangelical counsels are accepted by the legitimate superior in the name of the Church (can. 1192, 1). Cf. CIC can. 207, §2; 573, §2; 587, §1; 603, §2; 607, §2; 654.

“A *vow* is a deliberate and free promise made to God concerning a possible and better good which must be fulfilled by reason of the virtue of religion” (CIC can. 1191, § 1). “A vow is an act of *devotion* in which the Christian dedicates himself to God or promises him some good work. By fulfilling his vows he renders to God what has been promised and consecrated to Him. The *Acts of the Apostles* shows us St. Paul concerned to fulfill the vows he had made (cf. Acts 18:18; 21:23-24)” (CCC 2102).

The promise, as we saw previously, “is not made directly to God, but to a person or institution (Church, Institute). It is not an obligation due to religion but by virtue of fidelity and means an oblation of the person.”<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, the vow is part of the *virtue of religion* and transforms the promise into an act of worship or religion and is understood as a giving of oneself, according to the theological virtue of charity.<sup>20</sup> This brings us to “love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God” (CCC 1822).

Furthermore, justice toward God is called the virtue of religion. This consists in always having a firm and constant will to give one’s due to God (CCC 1807), whether in adoration (CCC 2096-97), prayer, (CCC 2018), sacrifice (CCC 2099-2100), the promises and vows (CCC 2101-2103).

On this account, the vow, as an act of the virtue of religion, is a response to an interior call from God and is an act of reverence and worship to God, which entails the commitment of the whole life of the person, who undertakes it and implies fidelity to that which has been promised. Non-observance has the consequence of being a sin. Thus, the virtue of humility, together with a spirit of trusting prayer in the grace of God and the fraternal aid of the Community, are essential for a faithful response to this very call.

For the vow to be legitimate, *deliberation* is necessary. This is one of those human acts, by which the exercise of freedom is united with the ability to know, reflect and to love; to undertake all that is implied by the vow. On this account, the CIC says that “all who possess suitable use of reason are capable of making a vow” (CIC can. 1191§2). Deliberation also calls for *freedom*, that is the absence of coercion, whether internal or external, the imposition of another, even if it is out of reverential fear.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, the vow is made in the quest for *a possible and better good*, one which it is possible to achieve and which the one who promises has the capacity to accomplish in the future and better than that which is lived out in the present.

The *Constitutions* of the OCDS speak of vows in Chap. 7, which deals with *organization and government* in the Secular Order. It is the election of the legislator to give greater emphasis to the following of Christ made by means of the promise, since, according to the Council, public vows are typical of Consecrated Life. The text expresses it thus:

“All of Christ’s faithful have the right to make vows.<sup>22</sup> With the consent of the Council of the community and the permission of the Provincial, a member of the Secular Order may make vows of obedience and chastity in the presence of the community. These vows are strictly

19 Juan José Echebarría, *La asunción de los consejos...*, id. p. 199.

20 Id., p. 113.

21 As for example a promise made to a significant person on one’s deathbed, pursuing or embarking on a career in which the person himself does not feel that he has of his own free will elected to do it.

22 *Ritual*, Instruction, 9; 30-49

personal and do not create a separate category of membership. They suppose a greater commitment of fidelity to the evangelical life but do not transform those who make them into juridically recognized consecrated people as in Institutes of consecrated life. Those who make vows in the Secular Order continue to be lay persons in all juridical effects" (*Constitutions OCDS* 39).

Fr. Pedro Zubieta makes the following comment about this point:

"The Constitutions, taking up the tradition of the Secular Order of Carmel, foresaw the possibility that Secular Carmelites who might wish to, should be able to take the vows of obedience and chastity. It concerns private vows which the text qualifies as being 'strictly personal' and which do not create, within the community, a different category of belonging to the same; although they are made in the presence of the community and with the previous agreement of the Council. The vows taken imply a 'greater commitment to faithfulness in evangelical life', but do not change those who have taken them into people recognized juridically in the same way as those in the Institutes of Consecrated Life. Those who take the vows in the Secular Order continue to be lay people juridically.

In all other matters, the scope or substance of the vows of obedience and chastity is the same as in respect of the promise. The difference as we have explained, is in the quality of the bond."<sup>23</sup>

The quality of the bond comes from the fact that the vow is now *made to God*. In the ambit of the virtue of religion, the vow commits the entire life of the person in an act of worship or religion, as an act of love, according to the theological virtue of charity, source of life, whether as a promise or as a vow.

Thus, chastity as a vow is a call to live out the virtue of chastity according to one's state as a bachelor, spouse or widow. Obedience means submitting one's will to that of the Superior of the Order and of the Community Council in the capacity in which they represent the will of God, as that which is prescribed by the *Constitutions* of the OCDS. With regards poverty, if it is not part of the vow, one should nonetheless be vigilant, and one is called to live in sobriety and solidarity with regard to the use of material goods. Furthermore, it is good to be constantly reminded, that all dimensions of the Christian life are united in a living out of the evangelical counsels in the following of Christ.

When all is said and done, vows in the Secular Order demand a mature decision, freely taken on the part of the person who feels called to make them and in consultation with a spiritual director and the Council of the Community. It should not be taken for vainglory. Prudence (cf. Prov 20, 25), discernment and a firm decision are above all necessary in order to compel oneself to live in a continual quest for a possible good, which is better than the contrary. The authority of the Community, for their part, seek respect for the person, look for discernment in the light of faith, together with a serious awareness of the ability of the person to live and give witness through the vows, questioning whether it will foster growth, whether there is a sound human basis, if the person is freely seeking, etc.

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<sup>23</sup> Pedro Zubieta, *Orden seglar del Carmelo Teresiano, Regla Constituciones y comentario*. Roma 2003. pp 94-95.

### 3. Living the spirit of the evangelical counsels and the Beatitudes

Understanding of the evangelical counsels and the Beatitudes is essential in the process of a mature and dynamic growth in the life of divine grace. They form the evangelical content of the promise in following Jesus.

Before all else, the *objective and significance of taking on the evangelical counsels*<sup>24</sup> with a promise, is based on the fact that it represents a free response to a call to an “intimate relationship between Christ, teacher and his disciple.” “Christian life becomes a loving response to the invitations made by Christ to human liberty, in the attitude of the disciple open to incarnate wisdom, in a dimension of joyful trust and surrender.” The vocation to following Jesus is personal a one. It is an “invitation, without distinction to put God above all things and to accomplish his will. It takes form in different spheres according to their personal mission and individual circumstances; to follow Jesus, whether in the fidelity of an indissoluble marriage or as a celibate person for the kingdom, or giving all to the poor, or offering half of one’s goods (Mk 10:21; 19:8), abandoning everything to be with him or staying in one’s own environment (Mt 19:27; Lk 8:38-39).”

The counsels do not tend to impose or to level, but to persuade, convince, test individually and to commit through a freely taken decision; since they wish “to make them win through by means of entry into the kingdom of God; they promise joy, bliss and eternal life. They are a call to perceive that they do not limit individual rights and definitely lead to freedom.”<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the profound anthropological significance is a guarantee that “the decision to follow the counsels, far from involving an impoverishment of truly human values, leads instead to their transformation. The evangelical counsels should not be considered as a denial of the values inherent in sexuality, in the legitimate desire to possess material goods or to make decisions for oneself. Insofar as these inclinations are based on nature, they are good in themselves” (VC 87).

It is certain that in order to reach maturity in the Christian life, according to the counsels, it becomes necessary for there to be an “assimilation of the counsels of the Lord by means of humble listening, reflection, decision making and verification of experience”; all this “transforms the Christian into a wise man, spiritually mature and with the ability to help

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24 Cf.: S. de Fiore, *Consejos evangélicos* in, [http://www.mercaba.org/DicES/C/consejos\\_evangelicos.htm](http://www.mercaba.org/DicES/C/consejos_evangelicos.htm). Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> December 2015; cf.: Juan José Echeberria, *Asunción de los Consejos evangélicos en las Asociaciones de fieles y movimientos eclesiales; investigación teológico-canónica*. Gregorian University Press. Rome 1998, p. 74-75: “Lo esencial de la práctica de los consejos evangélicos es por lo tanto seguir a Cristo más de cerca, ser partícipes del misterio pascual más cercano y más radical, en anticipación respecto a los otros para los cuales esto tendrá lugar al menos en la hora de la muerte”... “Para todos los bautizados, en conformidad con sus diversas condiciones de vida, se da una exigencia real de pobreza, pero no hasta la liberación de los bienes terrenos; de castidad no pero hasta la renuncia al matrimonio; de obediencia, pero no hasta el despojo de la propia voluntad respecto a aquellos que tienen el lugar de Dios... Por tanto los laicos están invitados a vivir los consejos evangélicos de un modo concreto aunque diferente de la vida consagrada, pero sin que esto signifique una vivencia irreal o accesorio de su compromiso. La radicalidad evangélica, que exige un amor total al Señor y la perfección de la caridad, se dirige a todos los cristianos y esta se lleva a cabo a través de las diversas vocaciones cristianas que se integran recíprocamente y juntas realizan la *sequela Christi* en la Iglesia universal.”

25 Juan J. Echebarría, *Asunción...* p. 75. Cf. Ghirlanda, *Cit. en, Ib...* p. 76-77.

others with advice.”<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the CCC reminds us that “the evangelical counsels are inseparable from the commandments” (CCC 2053).

Thus, we will seek in first place to see the doctrine of the CCC with regard to each counsel in order subsequently to examine the content in the *Constitutions*.

### 3.1. The spirit of the counsel of chastity

Within the scope of the sixth Commandment (cf. CCC 2331 and ff) the CCC states the following with regard to chastity:

“Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man’s belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman. The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person (2338-2345) and the integrality of the gift” (2346-2347) (CCC 2337).

Every baptized person is called to live in chastity (CCC 2348) depending on their state in life whether in virginity or as a consecrated celibate and “others in the way which is determined by moral law, whether married or celibate” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) declaration in *Persona humana* 11). “Married people are called to live conjugal chastity; others practice chastity in continence” (CCC 2349). This practice of chastity confronts us “with relation to the other” for one’s own benefit, that is, necessitating a reflection on that which the other person signifies and represents, the place which he occupies in the relationship, the implied respect, the purity of the intentions which bind me with the other and above all of not being “treated as an object” of the person, since the other is not a disposable object for consumption or for the indulgence of needs or insufficiency, but a subject of love, gratitude and gratuity. Only by being aware, can we understand offences against chastity (lust, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution and violation), as well as the topic of homosexuality, dealt with in nn. 2351-2359 of the Catechism. Conjugal chastity appears in 2360-2391 of the Catechism for further examination.

Here, we recall that in the context of marriage and “in the Christian view, chastity by no means signifies rejection of human sexuality or lack of esteem for it: rather it signifies spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it towards its full realization.”<sup>27</sup> Chastity is the virtue which regulates the correct manner in which to live out sexuality as a man or woman, according to the precepts of Christian love.

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<sup>26</sup> S. de Fiores, art cit.

<sup>27</sup> John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 33. For his part, the moral theologian, B. Häring describes it as follows: “Christian charity: perfect dominion, exercised by divine charity over sex and eros, or over sexuality and psychosomatic eroticism, out of holy respect for redeemed creation and a resolute will in struggle and renunciation. Christian charity is founded in absolute love. The Apostle says this when he states that it is “fruit of the spirit” (Gal 5:22), of “the Spirit of divine love,” in, [http://www.mercaba.org/Haring/II/261-336\\_matrimonio.htm](http://www.mercaba.org/Haring/II/261-336_matrimonio.htm).

All these topics form part of general moral doctrine on chastity and are proposals in order to live out the promise which the Secular takes, according to the situation in which he finds himself: whether single, married or widowed.

The *Constitutions* of the OCDS describe the content of the promise to live out the promise in following Christ in the spirit of the evangelical counsel of chastity:

“The promise of chastity reinforces the commitment to love God above all else, and to love others with the love God has for them<sup>28</sup> In this promise the Secular Carmelite seeks the freedom to love God and neighbor unselfishly<sup>29</sup> giving witness to the divine intimacy promised by the beatitude “blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). The promise of chastity is a commitment to Christian love in its personal and social dimensions in order to create authentic community in the world. By this promise the Secular Carmelite also expresses the conscious desire to respect each person as required by God’s law and one’s state of life, as a single person or married or widowed. This promise does not prevent a change in state of life” (n.13).

We will now highlight a few essential elements in specifically living out the counsel of chastity.

— *Love of God and neighbor according to the beatitude of the pure in heart (Mt 5:8)*

According to the Bible<sup>30</sup>, the happiness of the pure in spirit is related to the main seat of our thoughts (cf. Mt 9:4; 24:28), understanding (cf. Mt 13:15), recognition of values (cf. Mt 6:21), aspirations and activities (cf. Mt 15:19), in our behavior in relation to others (cf. Mt 11:29; 18:35), and of our relationship with God (cf. Mt 15:8; 22:37). This means that the center of the intellect, will and emotion of the individual is the origin and point of reference and unity of the relationship with God and with others. In Mt. 5:8 it is stated that those are happy who maintain their heart in unison with God and his Word, free of tendencies and impulses contrary to the will of God (cf. Ez 20:13-16). According to Ps. 24, God is approached by “those who have clean hands and pure hearts,” united with the desire for the presence of God, a desire which will be sated in the eschatological vision (cf. Mt 5:8). For this reason, the one who has a “pure heart” has the capacity for fraternal love (cf. 1 Tm 1:5), since it is the source of charity (cf. 1 Pet 1:22).

— *Liberty and lack of self-interest in love*

In the New Testament<sup>31</sup>, freedom is understood in relation to “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:21); there is freedom “where the Spirit of the Lord is” (2 Cor 3:17). The concept refers to “the freedom we have in Christ Jesus” (Gal 2:4; 5:1). When St. James speaks of the “law of freedom” (1:25 and 2:12), he is referring to the vital order in which man lives in accord with the will of God; it is about living in accordance with the Gospel or the person of Jesus: “the truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32), and this “truth” brings the person to live and to serve through love, following His example, moved by Him and not for egotistical reasons due to sin: “now that you have been freed (NB: emancipated) from sin” (Rom 6:18, 22). Taken in this

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ascent, III 23, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Counsels, 1 and 6.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Beatitudini*, from *Dizionario di Mistica*. <http://www.clerus.org>, accessed 17<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

<sup>31</sup> J. Blunk, *Libertad*, in *Diccionario teológico del Nuevo Testamento II* (Salamanca: Sígueme 1990) p. 434-435.

sense, Christian love is by its nature gratuitous and seeks the good of the other because it is a mutual good, without ulterior motives.<sup>32</sup>

Gaudium et Spes (GS) speaks of the *greatness freedom* (Nº 17) and describes it as “only in this can man direct himself toward goodness.” This “is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man”; it forms part of the dignity of man, which “demands that he act according to a knowing and free choice that is personally motivated and prompted from within, not under blind internal impulse nor by mere external pressure.” It continues by saying that man will achieve this dignity when, freed entirely from being held captive to passions and by seeking the support of the grace of God, he inclines to this end with the free election of what is good and finds appropriate means through effective and skillful action.<sup>33</sup>

— *Respect for each person according to their state in life*

“Purity of mind and body helps develop true self-respect and at the same time makes one able to respect others, because one sees them as persons to reverence, as they are created in the image of God and through grace are children of God, re-created by Christ who “called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1P 2:9).”<sup>34</sup> It is about a sense of consideration and recognition of the intrinsic value of every person, accepting them and treating them with love and according to their capacity for understanding and intrinsic dignity. The golden rule in Mt 7:12 is the measure of respect: to treat others as one would like them to treat oneself (cf. CCC 1929-1933).

— *Commitment to creating a community*

The theme is developed in Chap. 3 B of the *Constitutions* on Fraternal Communion [Art. 24 a-e]. This is underpinned by the need to take into account the relationship dimension of the human being, who is by nature sociable (cf. GS 4, 25; Apostolicam actuositatem (AA, 18), created in the image and likeness of God Trinity. On account of this, personal salvation passes through solidarity with the other, recognized as another I.<sup>35</sup> In the Teresian context, the community is an aid and support in the search for God, as is explained in N. 24 b of the *Constitutions*.

### **3.2. The commitment of the promise to live out the spirit of the evangelical counsel of poverty**

Having a spirit of poverty means having the humility to follow the example of Jesus, who “though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor” (cf. 2 Cor 8:9), and who came to serve, not to be served. But it is also meant to be a sign of hope for those who live in situations of oppression. Voluntary humility of the human spirit and renunciation are called “poverty of spirit” by the Word: the apostle gives us the example of the poverty of God, when he says: “for your sakes he became poor” (2 Cor 8:9) (St. Gregory of Nyssa, beat. 1).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Benedicto XVI, *Deus caritas est*; esp. nn. 1; 6; 16-18; 33; 39;

<sup>33</sup> The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* deals with freedom in nn. 199-200.

<sup>34</sup> The Pontifical Council for the family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 17.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine*... nn 31-37; 149-151. The statement in GS 12 is key: “For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential.” Cf. GS 25.



The Catechism deals with poverty of the heart in the context of the tenth commandment, especially in nn. 2544-2547. The motivation is the example of Jesus, who exhorts them to “direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect charity by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches” (Lk 14:33) for Him and for the Gospel (cf. Mk 8:35). A short while before his passion, He showed them the example of the poor widow in Jerusalem, who, despite her extreme poverty, gave all she had to live on (cf. Lk 21:4). “The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven.” Thus, *Lumen Gentium* (LG) exhorts all Christians to “have a care that they guide aright their own deepest sentiments of soul. Let neither the use of the things of this world nor attachment to riches, which is against the spirit of evangelical poverty, hinder them in their quest for perfect love” (LG 42). Surrender to the providence of the Father frees us from concern for tomorrow (cf. Mt 6:25-34), and trust in God disposes the person to the beatitude of the poor: they shall see God (cf. CCC 2545-2546).

The *Constitutions* of the OCDS take up the content of the promise of poverty thus:

“By the promise of poverty the Secular Carmelite expresses the desire to live in accordance with the Gospel and its values. In evangelical poverty there is a wealth of generosity, self-denial, and interior liberty and a dependence on Him who “Though rich, yet for our sake, became poor” (2 Cor 8:9), and who “emptied Himself” (Ph 2:7), to be at the service of His brothers and sisters. The promise of poverty seeks an evangelical use of the goods of this world and of personal talents, as well as the exercise of personal responsibilities in society, in family, and work, confidently placing all in the hands of God. It also implies a commitment to the cause of justice so that the world itself responds to God’s plan. In combination with these, evangelical poverty recognizes personal limitations and surrenders them to God with confidence in His goodness and fidelity” (n. 14).

Now, let us highlight some of the essential aspects of poverty.

— *Wealth of generosity and denial of self is to be found in evangelical poverty*

Poverty and generosity always presuppose availability (of self, time, things...). One need only look at the example and invitation of Jesus: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (Mt 16:24-25) and “if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile” (Mt 5:40-41), then “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). From this viewpoint, “self-denial” is the sacrifice which one makes of one’s will, affections or one’s own interests in order to dispose oneself to the service of God or of one’s neighbor. This entails asceticism, a struggle against egoism, indifference and individualism.

— *Placing oneself at the service of one’s brothers and sisters*

The Christian dimension of service<sup>36</sup> (*Diakoneo*) acquires its significance from the person of Jesus and his Gospel (Mk 10:45). It becomes the characteristic by which to designate the activity of love for one’s brother and neighbor (which proceeds from God), the realization of communion (*koinonia*) and solidarity.

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<sup>36</sup> K. Hess, *Servicio*, in *Dic. Teológico del NT*. Vol. IV, p. 214.

The service of Jesus to man and to his disciples was a demonstration of the love of God and of true humanity, a humanity beloved of God. “I am among you as one who serves” (Lk 22:27; cf. also Jn 13:1-15) and “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mt 20:28). The example of Jesus (Jn 13:15) brings with it an exhortation to the disciples: “the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves” (Lk 22:26; cf. Mt 20:26 par; 23:11). The gift which each one has received must be put at the service of the others (1 P 4:10). He who feeds the hungry, gives shelter to the homeless, clothes the naked, visits the sick or the prisoner (Mt 25:35 s) “serves” (v. 44) by doing so Jesus himself: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (v. 40). The exhortation to serve is imperative, since it derives from the sacrifice of Jesus who came “...to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28). In accordance with the meaning of this text, 1 Jn 3:16 puts forward the consequence, that we too should give up our lives for our brothers (cf. 1 Jn 3:16).

— *seek the evangelical use of the goods of this world and of personal talents*

The principle is that “all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown” (GS 12), and in this sense the Secular should be aware of the universal destination of created goods, since, “in using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others. On the other hand, the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one’s family belongs to everyone.”<sup>37</sup> Personal talents are intended for the good of the Community (cf. 1 Cor 12).

— *The exercise of one’s responsibilities in society, the family and at work*

“The *lay faithful’s duty to society primarily* begins in marriage and in the family” (ChL 40), without forgetting mindful participation in politics, in order to encourage human and gospel values (cf. ChL 42; cf. CDSI 83-84). “In the context of the transformations taking place in the world of economy and work which are a cause of concern, the lay faithful have the responsibility of being in the forefront in working out a solution to the very serious problems of growing unemployment; to fight for the most opportune overcoming of numerous injustices that come from organizations of work which lack a proper goal; to make the workplace become a community of persons respected in their uniqueness and in their right to participation; to develop new solidarity among those that participate in a common work; to raise up new forms of entrepreneurship and to look again at systems of commerce, finance and exchange of technology.” To such an end the lay faithful must accomplish their work with professional competence, with human honesty, and with a Christian spirit, and especially as a way of their own sanctification, according to the explicit invitation of the Council: “By work an individual ordinarily provides for self and family, is joined in fellowship to others, and renders them service; and is enabled to exercise genuine charity and be a partner in the work of bringing divine creation to perfection. Moreover, we know that through work offered to God an individual is associated with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, whose labor with his hands at Nazareth greatly ennobled the dignity of work (GS 67)” (ChL 43).

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<sup>37</sup> GS 69; cf. *Compendium of the Social doctrine of the Church* (CDSI) 171-196; cf. *Caritas in veritatem* 9, 27 & 35.

— *placing oneself with trust in the hands of God*

Jesus teaches us to base our very existence in God and in seeking his kingdom (Mt 6:33), not to fear persecution (Mt 10:28-31). He teaches us to found our very existence in God and the seeking of his kingdom (Mt 6:33), not to fear persecution (Mt 10:28-31), not to seek security in material goods which perish, since God cares for his creatures (Lk 12:22-34). The apex of this trust in providence is taught us in the Our Father. The whole of Jesus' teaching is directed to revealing that man lives under the loving, providential gaze of the Father, who is close to him. Neither does evil escape divine providence, but is at the service of the plan of salvation. The certainty which guides Christian existence is that all happens for good with those who love God (Rom 8:28).

— *commitment in favor of justice in the world*

Justice, according to its classical definition "is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor" (CCC 1807)<sup>38</sup>. Pope Francis, in turn, warns and recalls that "spiritual conversion, the intensity of the love of God and neighbor, zeal for justice and peace, the Gospel meaning of the poor and of poverty, are required of everyone" (cf. Francis, EG 201). As a result, justice forms an important part of the growth of fundamental, human values in the mission of giving witness to the Gospel through them, as the Council already stated: "[the laity] should also hold in high esteem professional skill, family and civic spirit, and the virtues relating to social customs, namely, honesty, justice, sincerity, kindness, and courage, without which no true Christian life can exist" (AA 4).

— *exercise of hope which recognizes personal limitations and surrenders in confidence to the goodness and fidelity of God*

Hope has its roots in man's very being, since he is a being open to the future, to infinity and eternity. In the domain of the Christian religious, the theological virtue of hope has its basis in the promise of God, whose lordship is revealed gradually until its definitive consummation in Christ's death and resurrection (cf. Acts 13:32-33).

In this sense, faith-hope are united, since faith reveals the path to an authentic life and hope makes us journey along it until we reach "the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph 4:13). At this point, it is necessary to make one's life an act of absolute trust in God, who saves through the death and resurrection of Christ. To trust means to love the one whom we trust, but authentic love is translated into concrete works. Thus, faith-hope are united in bringing us to transform the world in the service of mankind, since authentic hope always generates life and transformation wherever it exists.

Benedict XVI wrote a beautiful page about this: "Faith, hope and charity go together. Hope is practiced through the virtue of patience, which continues to do good even in the face of apparent failure, and through the virtue of humility, which accepts God's mystery and trusts him even at times of darkness. Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our sakes and gives us the victorious certainty that it is really true: God is love! It thus transforms our impatience and our doubts into the sure hope that God holds the world in his hands and that, as the

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<sup>38</sup> On this topic, cf. CDSI 82; 167; 201-203; 292; 303; 306; 340; 366, etc.

dramatic imagery of the end of the Book of Revelation points out, in spite of all darkness he ultimately triumphs in glory. Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practice it because we are created in the image of God. To experience love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world – this is the invitation I would like to extend with the present Encyclical” (*Deus caritas est* 39).

### **3.3. The commitment of the promise to live out the spirit of the evangelical counsel of obedience**

The *Letter to the Hebrews* tells us that Christ “*learned obedience*” (Heb 5:8). Thus, the model, par excellence, for all Christian obedience is the obedience of Jesus to the will of the Father, in each and every situation of his life, from the temptations to the cross, thus He also carries out the obedience by which He – a man among men – remains faithful to his own earthly existence and through it, to himself, giving in this particular way, proof of his obedience to the Father: “and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Heb 5:7-9).

Jesus himself invites us to do “*the will of my Father in heaven*” (Mt 7:21). The “Our Father” (Mt 6:10) and the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane (26:42) speak of the will of the Father. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount we read: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven” (Mt 7:21). The condition for admission is clearly formulated: obedience to the will of the Father. What does this mean?

It is not enough to invoke the name of the Lord. “Christ” must be translated into life and to this end, words alone are not enough. The decisive gauge in this transformation is obedience to the will of the Father, manifested in the Sermon on the Mount. This indicates the alternative of the will of the Father to current praxis; it introduces a new and liberating path: one is not to return evil for evil, it is possible to turn the other cheek, it is possible to conquer evil with good (5:38-42); the enemy does not carry on being the enemy necessarily: it is possible to discover in him, the man over whom God makes the sun to rise (5:43-48).

The will of God can be summarized in the commandment to love, for this is the focal point. Love is the lens through which the law is to be interpreted. The law and the prophets depend on it. Thus, Abraham’s examples of obedience in faith are important (CCC 2570) and that of the Virgin Mary (CCC 148-149).

With regards to obedience in the ambit of the Church, the faithful “show themselves to be established in a respectful adhesion to the Superior, but at the same time try to transcend it in order to be bound immediately to the Father in the Spirit of Christ; each recognizes authority as a grace to lead to the plan of God and which he then carries out. At the same time, it leads to commitment and nurturing of life, which is thereby less alienated from God’s wishes. He has faith that the Lord is present in the hierarchy, but also knows that the face of God in Christ is ineffable. He trusts in obedience as a path to acquire Christian freedom, but at the same time,

he has to commit himself to going beyond the person of the superior so as not to fall into servility.”<sup>39</sup> “‘You shall worship the Lord your God’ (Mt 4:10). Adoring God, praying to him, offering him the worship that belongs to him, fulfilling the promises and vows made to him are acts of the virtue of religion which fall under obedience to the first commandment” (CC 2135).

Let us look now at the text of the *Constitutions* which refer to obedience:

“The promise of obedience is a pledge to live open to the will of God, “in whom we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28) imitating Christ who accepted the Father’s will and was “obedient unto death, death on a cross” (Phil 2:8). The promise of obedience is an exercise of faith leading to the search for God’s will in the events and challenges in society and our own personal life. For this reason, the Secular Carmelite freely cooperates with those who have responsibility for guiding the community and the Order in discerning and accepting God’s ways: the Community’s Council, the Provincial and the General” (Nº 15).

The essential themes which can be highlighted are as follows:

— *living one’s life open to the will of God*

“To seek the will of God means to seek a friendly and benevolent will, which desires our fulfilment, that desires, above all, a free response in love to his love, in order to make of us instruments of divine love. It is along this *via amoris* that the flower of listening and obedience blooms” (CIVCSVA)[\*see end of article], *The service of authority and obedience*, 4). Listening to God in his Word and following Jesus give meaning to human mediations with regard to obedience and the laws which they represent (Magisterium of the Church). Thus, an attitude of faith is important in these mediations and at the same time vigilance so as not to follow only that which one feels interiorly, but to face up to authority; obedience to the will of God demands constant vigilance so as not to allow oneself to be carried along by passive or convenient exterior obedience and not follow the interior impulse to not obey when an order or decision of the Community is not to one’s liking.

Only experience of the love of the living God can make one become constantly open to his will, to seek to know it and to understand that which is most pleasing to him in order to translate it into actions: “The love-story between God and man consists in the very fact that this communion of will increases in a communion of thought and sentiment, and thus our will and God’s will increasingly coincide: God’s will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will, based on the realization that God is in fact more deeply present to me than I am to myself” (*Deus caritas est* 17).

— *exercise of faith which leads one to seek the will of God in daily personal and social events*

As an exercise of faith, in the light of the *secular person*, all situations in daily life provide occasions for doing the will of God “in every event,” and to “see Christ in everyone whether he be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgments about the true meaning and value of temporal things both in themselves and in their relation to man’s final goal” (AA 4). In this sense, these very occasions provide opportunities for permanent formation, namely to be “free

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<sup>39</sup> T. Goffi, *Obediencia* in <http://www.mercaba.org/DicES/O/obediencia.htm>. Accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

to learn during one's whole life, at every stage and at every moment, in every human ambit and context, with everyone, in every culture, allowing oneself to be instructed in truth and beauty, which are to be found within one's reach."<sup>40</sup>

For St. Teresa, who was particularly committed to obedience (cf. F 18,13), she describes how she used to recall the example of Jesus: "And in matters touching on obedience He doesn't want the soul who truly loves Him to take any other path than the one He did: *obediens usque ad mortem*" – obedient unto death (F 5,3). "It's necessary to be on one's guard and careful in the performance of good works by having frequent interior recourse to God, even though these works are done in obedience and charity" (F 5,17), since "obedience gives strength" (F prol. 2).

— *unfettered cooperation in discernment and acceptance of God's ways with the authority of the Order: the local Council, the Provincial and the Fr. General*

Unfettered cooperation in discernment<sup>41</sup> demands that one take an active role – never passive or submissive – in the process of decision making and obedient acceptance. This always needs to be done in the light of the Spirit, with the spirit of faith, prayer and listening to the will of God. The aim is for a greater giving of oneself in love, following Christ more closely, even when it results in suffering, but without ever attacking the dignity of the person. It is important that obedience be the fruit of dialogue, illuminating the conscience and done in charity. It should in turn be a manifestation of interior freedom, so that, despite disagreeing in the face of a particular situation, one may have the capacity to welcome in all humility that which is proposed, aware always that it will be for a greater good.

The criteria for fraternal communion in the Church and the Community, of peace and light, together with the fruits of the same Spirit<sup>42</sup> in the life of the believer are criteria which must be taken into account. At the present time, community discernment acquires special significance.

### **3.4. The commitment in the promise of living out the spirit of the Beatitudes**

The Beatitudes are central to the New Testament.<sup>43</sup> They comprise an attitude to life rather than virtues, which emphasize the fleeting nature of the world. The Kingdom of God is represented in the person of Jesus, in his preaching and works. They take up the promises made to the chosen people since Abraham. The Beatitudes fulfill the promises by enjoining them no longer merely in respect of the possession of land, but of the Kingdom of heaven. They depict the "countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity." At the same time, "they express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints" (cf. CCC 1716-1717).

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<sup>40</sup> Caminar desde Cristo, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. A. Barruffo, *Discernimiento*, in <http://www.mercaba.org/DicES/D/discernimiento.htm>

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Gal 5,14-22; Ef 5,8-10; Rm 7,4-5.19-20.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. for that which follows see: U Becker, *Bienaventurado*, in *Diccionario teológico del Nuevo testamento*, Vol. I (Sígueme Salamanca, 1990) 183-184.

They are proposals for joy (cf. CCC 1718) which begin in the ‘now’ of this world, but which lead to an end which transcends it. Thus, the “poor in spirit,” “those who suffer,” “the non-violent,” “those who hunger and thirst for justice” only represent different aspects of the same attitude in confronting the world, which is approaching its end or perhaps, the attitude of one who endures and who is ever waiting. It is not a highlighting of a set of virtues, rather a proclamation of joy, which has the same sound as “blessed” from the first half of each beatitude and which reflects the motivation expressed in the second half. What has been seen and heard is put into action (Lk 14:14; Jn 13:17) by those who maintain vigilance and trust (Lk 12:37 s; Mt 24:24; Jas 1:12; Ap 16:15 and *passim*). Despite the differences of each Beatitude, it must be stated that with respect to the future perspective, they cannot be understood from a sense of consolation or of later retribution. They always deal with an affirmation of a future which brings with it a radical transformation of the present. The *Beatitudes* are the “the only path that leads to the eternal beatitude for which the human heart longs” (CCC 1697).

This is all expressed in article 16 of the *Constitutions*, where at the same time, the living out of the day-to-day nature of the Beatitudes calls the Secular to give witness to Christ:

“The Beatitudes are a plan of action for life and a way to enter into relationship with the world, neighbors and co-workers, families and friends. By promising to live the beatitudes in daily life, Secular Carmelites seek to give evangelical witness as members of the Church and the Order, and by this witness invite the world to follow Christ: “the Way, the Truth and the Life” (Jn 14:6)” (*Const. OCDS* 16).

In the search to live out the spirit of the Beatitudes, the theological aspect of the faithful is key to union with Christ, lived out in daily actions, a continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity. It is that which AA, advances under the subheading *Secular Spirituality with reference to the Apostolate* (4). We have the perfect example of this in the Virgin Mary, “who while leading the life common to all here on earth, one filled with family concerns and labors, was always intimately united with her Son and in an entirely unique way cooperated in the work of the Savior.”

### **“Let us go forward together, Lord...”**

In every Christian, baptism and confirmation imply consecration of the person to God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is a commitment to configure oneself in Christ throughout one’s life and to work with him in the construction of the Kingdom, in one of the states of life in the Church, whether as a lay person, priest or in consecrated life.

The evolution of understanding of the lay vocation in the secular Order has come about as a consequence of Vatican Council II and of the Synod of Bishops of 1987 and 1995. For the Teresian Carmel, this has entailed a permanent discernment of the mission of the laity in the Order and their call to live the baptismal commitment according to their own charism.

Placing the emphasis on the following of Christ, the promise and vows are possible graces to the fidelity of God in the first place, since He is faithful to his promises and in consequence, the secular responds reciprocally to his faithfulness. Hence the promises in the secular Order are also a commitment of faithfulness to the Order and the Community, since the promise is made

before members of the Community as representatives of the Church. The Order and the Community, for their part help the member to live out their commitment taken in the promise and vows in faithfulness through the spirituality, sharing of formation and offering fraternal life as a support on the personal path in the following of Jesus and the exercise of their own mission, according to the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and those of the Beatitudes. As a result, it is necessary to be an active member in the life of the Community.

If a member feels called to take the vows in the secular Carmel, this implies a deeper oblation of oneself to that already undertaken in the promises, but not isolating oneself from others, but following Jesus according to one's state in life. The vows carry weightier moral responsibility and the awareness of making one's life a spiritual worship which is pleasing to God, "Do not be conformed to this world" (cf. Rm 12:1-2). It also brings with it humility before the gift which has been bestowed in the spirit of service and a more intense vigilance in response to God's appeal: to be a servant in the construction of the Kingdom, already begun by Jesus, in the Church and in communion with the Order, living in oblation to Jesus Christ (*Rule of St. Albert*, 2), who is "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6).

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***Rome, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2016***

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord

\* Editor's note: *The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.*]



## **Appendix P: Session 11, Gerald Alford, OCDS, on the Evangelical Counsels**

### **Chastity: This Only One Kind of Love I Promise to Be Truly Poor Existential Obedience**

#### **Chastity: This Only One Kind of Love**

To be transformed into Jesus is to live fully the theological virtues, and to live by and experience the happiness of the Beatitudes. In a previous conference, we reflected upon our Promise as lay Carmelites to be obedient as Christ was, and made our reflection on obedience in relation to the virtue of Faith and to the Beatitude of meekness. In a subsequent conference, we reflected upon our commitment to the evangelical counsel of Poverty as a way of imitating Christ. We related this commitment to the virtue of Hope which directs our eyes to God alone, so that possessing little, we look forward to possessing all: all that we need in the herepresent to carry us onward into the ALL of the Hereafter.

Now we will reflect upon the evangelical counsel of Chastity, and do so in relation to the theological virtue of Charity. My Promise to live chastely is based on my belief and hope that in striving to love as Christ did, I will be blessed with purity of heart by which alone I can see God as the SOUL of my and my neighbor's soul. In God and in God's love we find a basis for a truly satisfying relationship. In the love of my brother/sister, my spouse / my friend I find the measure of my love of God, and make God present to me and my loved one.

"It is the love of my lover, my brother/sister, or my child that sees God in me, and makes God credible in me. And it is my love for my lover, my child, my brother/sister that enables me to show God to him or her in himself or herself." (Thomas Merton)

God is Love. Divine Charity is God's Life. Creation is the effusion, emanation, outpouring of God's Love; its manifestation. God created all out of Love.

The essence of the intimacy of the soul with God is in the exercise of the Theological virtues, and especially in the exercise of Charity, called by spiritual theologians, the queen and formative principle of all virtues, the bond of perfection that unites and harmonizes the virtues and the Holy Spirit's Gifts in the divine unity of Love. Our love of neighbor is a manifestation of our intimate love relationship with God. It is the effect of that love; an outpouring, an effluence. In the intimacy of our relationship with God, loves wells up and pours out towards others. The love of others springs from this outpouring.

The Bible is through and through the story of God's unending love for men and women and of their vocation to love God in return, and to love each other, and their fellow-men. God made man and woman in order that they might love. And in their love, be a sign of His Love, as we shall see.

Jesus told those to whom he preached that he came to fulfill the law and to point to its focus. When he was asked:

“Master, what is the greatest of the commandments?”

Jesus replied that the first and the greatest commandment, which gave the whole of the law its final focus, is to love God with one’s whole being, and the second, He said, was like unto the first: to love one’s neighbor as oneself. That focus of Charity is the basis for Chastity.

All true love must be ultimately focused in God, and if it is, then it will be chaste.

Our love for another will be chaste when it is based on the reality of the other being created in the image of God; when our love of the other is dedicated to that other’s well-being. The “other’s well-being,” by the way, is the motivation for fraternal correction. When we truly love another chastely, the Spirit is able to use us as an instrument toward transforming the other into that image of Christ the Father is calling the other to be. Becoming what God desires us to be is indeed well being.

Chastity is the counsel specifically governing human sexuality. Human sexuality is a legitimate power given to us by God primarily for the sake of creating community and as a means of ourselves being in relation to others, in friendships or, more exclusively, the particular love relationship of marriage. Like any power it must be used as its creator wills it to be used, that is, toward its proper end. As such, it must be, like all powers, regulated and directed. This is the work of the virtues.

More specifically, the virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of temperance, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason, and so bring them under control. However, Charity is the form of all the virtues. Under its influence, the self-mastery of temperance is prevented from being repressive, and chastity becomes more a love-gift of self than a withholding of self. Imbued with charity, chastity becomes the joyous affirmation of someone who knows how to be truly self-giving in a relationship, whether of friendship, or of married love. The chaste lover is not self-centered, not involved in selfish relationships with other people. Chastity aids and abets mature relationships. It promotes a purity of mind and body which helps develop true self-respect and at the same time makes one capable of respecting others, because it makes one see in them persons to reverence, insofar as they are created in the image of God and through grace are children of God, re-created by Christ who called them “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

St. Paul tells us that all laws, including laws regulating the Christian’s sexual life and sexual relationships must be governed by this great commandment of charity. In Romans, he writes:

All the commandments: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and so on, are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbor as yourself. (Romans 13:9)

Using more positive terms, St. Paul provides us with a wonderful working definition of chaste love in I Corinthians, chapter 13. That love, St. Paul specifies, is patient and kind; it is never jealous; it is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offense and is not resentful. Chaste love takes no pleasure in other people’s sins, but delights in the truth. It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

Chaste love in other words is love with no strings attached. It is unconditional love, love which is a gift. It is in fact, true love, for true love can only be a gift. "Were one to offer all he owns to purchase love, he would be roundly mocked." (The Song of Songs)

Chaste love is love which overcomes a smothering need to possess, and which goes beyond passion. "Deep waters cannot quench love, nor floods sweep it away." (Song of Songs)

Love, Thomas Merton writes, "... is a certain special way of being alive."

Chastity, we might say, is a certain special way of loving. It leads to a simplification of love by purifying our way of loving of all selfish motivations which tend to complicate being in love. This can result in an intensification of love and thereby an enhancement of life.

To designate Chastity as a certain special way of loving is to equate it with God's way of loving. When we love chastely, we are loving divinely. We are loving as God loves us: without measure, without conditions. Nothing we can do can separate us from God in His love for us, can stop God from loving us, because God is love. It is His nature to love. Meister Eckhart, the 14th C. Dominican priest and mystic, expressed this wonderfully in one of his sermons:

God loves. "What a mystery!" What is God's love? His nature and His being: that is His love. Whoever would take away God's love for us would take away His essence, because His Being is dependent upon His love for us.... What a mystery that is! God loves me with His whole Being – His Being depends on it – God loves me as if his being and his becoming depend on it. God knows only one kind of love and with exactly that same love with which the Father loves His only begotten Son, with the same love He loves us.

This is the essence of chastity: this only one kind of love that God knows. It is a detached love, a love innocent, a love unspoiled, a love free of the debauchery and wantonness inherent in the kind of love motivated by self interest, self-seeking and all forms of self-centeredness. It is a love which gives itself in hope of possession, but which does not impose possession as a condition of its giving. This is the kind of love which Jesus revealed to us in his humanity. He loved as he experienced himself being loved by the Father, and he called his followers to love each other as he loved them.

What an ideal! If we are as truthful as someone like Therese, we have to admit that it is impossible for us to love in this way. Therese admitted that her sisters' faults, failings, natural characteristics experienced as being so often in conflict with her own, continually threatened to block her efforts to so love. So, she discovered that in order to follow the Christian commandment of love, she must love her sisters, her neighbors, as Christ loved them, with His love.

When we make our Promise of Chastity, we are promising to strive to love all chastely as Christ does. We are promising to strive to love all creation with purity of heart: our spouses, our children, our friends, our enemies, our work, all of material creation, and above all, God.

Our Rule tells us that the promise of chastity binds us to the practice of this virtue according to our state in life, and that in no way does this promise call for a change in the practices proper to our particular state in life: whether married, unmarried, widowed or celibate by vow. Whatever our state in life, we are called to exercise the virtue of chastity in our relationships with others.

We have to recognize that the practice of chastity is not a denial of our sexuality. It is not a repression of our sexuality. It is to provide direction to our sexuality. It brings sexual love with its energy into focus, that focus we mentioned which is the focus of charity: to love God with our whole being, and that means with all our powers and energies, including our sexual energy. In one of the stanzas of the Spiritual Canticle, St. John of the Cross writes:

....all my energy in His service

....my every act is love.

In his commentary on this verse, the saint explains that by “all my energy,” he is referring to the sensory part of ourselves. He writes:

... By directing the activity of the interior and exterior senses toward God, [the soul's] use of the body is now conformed to His Will. (Spiritual Canticle, 28, 4)

In regard to this conformity of will, we note that our Rule specifies that the promise of chastity “... expresses a conscious intention to respect the law of God in a way proper to the unmarried, married or widowed state, as the case may be....”

Our state in life is our vocation – our call from God to seek him within the freedom and demand inherent in that state. If God calls a person to be totally and exclusively his own physically as well as spiritually by vow, public or private, then that is the highest state in life for that person and his or her way of perfection. It is for that person the way which imitates the essence of Christ's way: His way was to do the will of the Father. Likewise, if God calls a couple to be his own through the medium of union with one another in a love which strives to become one, in a marriage of flesh and spirit, then that is the highest state in that couple's regard and is the way by which they will reach perfection.

I do not think we need to elaborate on this point. Vatican II clearly states that whether we are called to a relative or absolute practice of chastity, “... all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank and status are called to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of Charity” De Ecclesia [Lumen Gentium, 40].

When we make our promise of chastity as individuals living in the world in the married, unmarried or widowed state, or as professed celibates, we are witnessing to this teaching of the Church that all are called to the perfection of charity. For that perfection of charity is a charity that springs from a pure heart, a heart purified by the consuming fire of God's love. God's love consumes us but does not destroy us. It allows us our individuality and indeed brings us to the perfection of our individuality. God loves us without violating that freedom of will He gave us which makes us like unto Himself. He loves with no strings attached, unconditionally.

No matter how deficient or half-hearted our efforts or even our desires to respond to that love may be, God continues to love us with His whole being. He loves us chastely and calls us to love Him and others in Him in a like manner. There is no room for lust in our love for God. Our love for Him must go beyond limited concepts and images of who He is and beyond the sense experiences of His gifts. Empowered by God's grace and surrendering to the attraction of His love, we must allow ourselves to be drawn into that focus of love and live there, as Elizabeth of the Trinity exhorts. That focus of love is intimacy with God, and we spiral towards it as we

conform our wills with His in and through all our relationships. Just as we “shall see God” only if we have purity of heart, so we will come to appreciate the dignity of others only if we relate to them with chaste love. We become unchaste in our relationships, marital or otherwise, when we violate the freedom of others by striving to manipulate them for self-benefit, when we allow sensual desires to have primacy so that we use our relationships with others primarily to gratify our own desires and self-interests.

To be chaste, we must ever trust in the primacy of God and order all our material and human relationships as a manifestation of that trust. We must not violate the integrity, freedom and uniqueness of those persons God provides us to be our friends and/or spouses by using them for self-gratification. Likewise, a chaste regard for the right use of those material things God gives us must be sought. We love and use material creation chastely when we relate to it as God intended, that is, by using material things to sustain and enrich our lives and to assist us in fulfilling the ultimate purpose of our existence – the praise and glorification of God.

There is a sacramental quality to chaste love in that its presence in a relationship is an efficacious sign of intimate union, because such a love effects such a union. In human relationships, such a union is sacramental in a real and full sense only in Christian marriage because only a monogamous commitment can provide the condition for its growth and development. The inherent beauty of married love lies in this signification. Male and female God created humanity, Genesis tells us. When a man and woman join together to truly complement one another, they become one body. Sexual love is an energy which impels the two into this one fusion – not a coupling, but a union of being, physical and spiritual, with a creative potential of creating community, as the eternal love fusion inherent in the Divine Relationships of the Trinity is creative.

How beautiful and holy sexual love becomes when seen in this light. So holy and beautiful that St. Paul points to married love as the sign of Christ’s love for the Church. So holy and beautiful that sexual love is used as an expression of the highest intimacy – the soul’s union with God.

In conclusion: our Rule of Life calls us to observe the virtue of chastity in accordance with our state in life and to observe it with the conscious intention of practicing it according to God’s will for our respective states. Another element noted in our Rule concerning the observance of Chastity is the one we have been emphasizing. It is that our promise binds us to practice this virtue in order “... to bear especial witness, as befits those called to intimacy with God, to the beatitude: Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.” Fr. Michael Griffin in his commentary on the promises points out that the order in which the promises are made is new. Previously, the promises were made in the order of obedience, chastity and poverty. Vatican II insisted on the order in which the promises were to be taken should be: chastity, poverty and obedience. This is actually a return to an ancient tradition in the Church. Its return is meant to stress that first of all we are to strive to give ourselves to God totally with undivided love, and then we will want to live as the poor Christ and will be willing to be obedient as He was in carrying out the Will of the Father, even unto death.

## **I Promise To Be Truly Poor**

In the Gospel of St. Mark (Mark 10: 21, 22), we read the story of the rich young man who asked Jesus for a formula of perfection: What must I do to be perfect?

Jesus' initial answer to obey the commandments did not satisfy him.

The rich young man was obviously a good young man. He emphatically stated that he had followed the commandments from youth. The truthfulness of his claim seemed confirmed by Jesus' response: the gospel account tells us that Jesus looked upon him and loved him. This rich young man obviously had incorporated the commandments in his life which made him pleasing to God. However, this alone did not satisfy him; he wanted something more; a greater perfection.

Isn't this the situation of most of us in seeking admission into formation in the Secular Order of Carmel? We want to go beyond the Third Mansion. We are saying it is not enough for us to simply obey and keep the commandments, to avoid sin and being what most people regard as good Catholics. We feel a desire for a deeper union with God; for an intimate relationship with Him. After two and a half years of consideration and formation, we decide that this way of Carmel is the way of following Jesus into greater perfection, and so we make at first a temporary and then a final commitment to tend to perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels and of the beatitudes according to the Rule of Life given us by our Carmelite order.

In considering at the counsel of Poverty, we regard that rich young man to see what proved to be the obstacle which kept him from walking with Jesus into deeper union with the Father in the Spirit.

When Jesus told the young man that in order to achieve the greater perfection he was seeking he should sell all that he had and then follow Him, the young man walked away sad for he had many possessions. What proved to be the obstacle to that young man in following Jesus, at least at that time, was a spirit of possessiveness about what he owned. He lacked the spirit of poverty necessary to respond to Jesus' call.

The call to poverty we answer as secular Carmelites is not the radical poverty which is practiced by those called to the religious life. As Secular Order members we are not making a promise of poverty as a religious makes a vow of poverty. When a religious makes a vow of poverty he/she makes a solemn commitment to voluntarily give up the right to ownership to anything. The religious may have use of temporal goods as the Order provides, but can not claim them to be for his/her exclusive use absolutely. Obviously, as people living in the world we can not necessarily make that kind of commitment. Some individuals can and do, but it can not be a requirement, otherwise it might very easily violate the nature of our vocation as Carmelite Seculars in so far as our Rule is to subserve the secular state of life of its members, not change it. See p. 88 of Fr. Griffin's commentary as to why Seculars do not make a Vow of poverty.

Nevertheless, we are promising to follow Christ in our state of life in the world according to the spirit of poverty required by Christ in order to be perfect, that is, to be through and through His, to belong thoroughly to God and have God Alone as our sole possession. So the question we continually have to ask ourselves in following Christ in this spirit of Poverty prescribed by the

Good News, the Gospel, is this: what is our relationship to the goods of this world which we now have in our possession? We continually need to test our spirit in regard to material possessions, and continually be on guard against an inordinate acquisitive and possessive spirit.

In Chapters 1 and 2 of St. Teresa's WAY OF PERFECTION, we find Holy Mother giving reasons for reforming the Order and providing a definition of the Carmelite Vocation. In Chapter 2, she takes up the question of poverty. In doing so, she emphasized the importance of being poor in spirit. She noted:

...although I had professed poverty, I was not only without poverty of spirit, but my spirit was devoid of all restraint. Poverty is good and contains within itself all the good things in the world. It is a great domain – I mean that he who cares nothing for the good things of the world has dominion over them all....and what do...honors [of kings and lords] mean to me if I have realized that the chief honor of a poor man consists in his being truly poor. (2:41-42)

Obviously, for Teresa, to be truly poor means to be POOR IN SPIRIT.

As Carmelites we commit ourselves to live a life of perfection according to the evangelical counsels and the beatitudes. Being poor in spirit, of course, is the first BEATITUDE. This beatitude is one of those referred to by spiritual writers as an "antidote beatitude." An antidote is something one takes to counteract a poison of some kind. Being poor in spirit is the antidote against the poison of possessiveness. Looking back at that rich young man in the Gospel, we said that the obstacle which prevented him from following Jesus was his attachment to his possessions – his possessiveness. By possessiveness of course we mean a grasping, a holding on to something, whether it be a material good or a spiritual good as if we possess it by right, by dominion, by an ownership. This is contrary to St. Paul's realization, later emphasized by Therese among others, that ultimately everything is gift. When we view everything as implicitly or explicitly a gift, then we have the perspective which fosters the spirit of poverty.

When we are poor in spirit, we have this attitude of detachment toward possessions of any kind, material or spiritual. For you see, having possessions is not the real problem. What is the problem is how possessive we are about what we have. I think that is the heart of St. John of the Cross' teaching about detachment which is not always understood or appreciated.

In ASCENT, Book I, Chapter 3, St. John is describing how detachment is like a night to the soul and he says:

...we are not treating here of the lack of things, since this [the mere lack of things] implies no detachment on the part of the soul if it has a desire for them; but we are treating of detachment from them with respect to taste and desire, for it is this [detachment from desire] that leaves the soul free and void of them although it may have them. [3:4]

Remember what Teresa said – "...he who cares nothing [that is, controls his desire] for the good things of the world has dominion over them all." True freedom does not necessarily mean being without things, but having control over our desire for these things. We are not free by the mere fact of material poverty. It is not enough to simply give up possessions, if after the renunciation of the superfluous, the comforts and the conveniences of life, we still remain attached to them by affection.

For as St. John reminds us again in Chapter 3:

It is not the things of this world that either occupy the soul or cause it harm, since they enter it not, but rather the will and desire for them, for it is these that dwell within it. [3:4]

After the rich young man walked away sad, because he had many possessions, Jesus commented: How hard it is for the RICH to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The rich, those who possess a great deal, have difficulty not because of what they have; they have difficulty because it is so difficult for them not to be inordinately possessive about what they have. Those who are materially or physically poor can have the same problem: they may not possess much, but they may desire much.

When Jesus told his disciples, for example, that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved. He certainly did not mean that a person rich in worldly goods could not be saved. His point was that salvation or the possession of divine life could not be had at all, by rich or poor. To be saved, to share in God's life is impossible for man, period. God alone can save us and give us a share in his very life.

EVERYTHING IS A GIFT.

So you see what is at stake in being truly poor is our attitude toward possession itself and the perspective in which we view the material and spiritual goods we have. We can be materially rich or poor by circumstance or by luck, but we can only be truly poor, poor in spirit, by will, by desire, by intention and really only by Grace.

To be truly poor in spirit means to live according to the truth of who we really are. To develop this sense of reality which is the basis of a true spirit of poverty, we need that Gift of the Holy Spirit which is Knowledge. This Gift enables us to know God and know ourselves in TRUTH. Such knowledge provides us with the true perspective and sense of reality. It is the science of the saints. When we truly know who God is and who we are in relation to God, how can we help but be left with a spirit and attitude of poverty. How truly poor we are even at our best and most beautiful in comparison to One who is so infinitely and supremely perfect. As Jesus tells us, even when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say: we are useless servants; we have done only what we ought to have done. [Lk 17:10]

In the realization of our poverty, the virtue which sustains us is the theological virtue of hope. How can we, poor creatures that we are, attain to the God Whom we believe to be so pure and good, so infinitely perfect and supreme! The realization of who He is and who we are could only lead to despair if we were not empowered by the virtue of Hope which enables us to have trust and confidence in attaining to the perfection of our calling as children of God in and through the merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

When Jesus pointed out to the disciples how difficult it was for a rich man to be saved, they rightly replied in exasperation: then who indeed can be saved. And Jesus' answer was: NO ONE – no matter how rich they were in earthly power or heavenly power, that is virtue, no one has the power to save him- or herself and gain the kingdom on his or her own.

We speak of the Carmelite way of following Jesus as an apophatic way, the via negativa. We mean that it is the way to God through negation, stripping away of delusions / illusions about



God in preparation for the truth or self-revelation God makes of Himself to us; the illumination of our minds and hearts by the Spirit. It is the way of NADA, “nothing.” St. John of the Cross advises us: “In order to possess everything (TODA), desire to possess nothing” (Ascent I, 13.11). You see, the NADA of John of the Cross is not a sterile emptiness, but a preparation for the TODA. God replaces our ideas, our concepts, our images we have of Him, always doomed to be imperfect and untruthful even at their best, with Himself, in so far as He desires to reveal Himself to us. We seek to be poor, to be empty, not for the sake of emptiness, but so that we can be filled with God.

The spirit of poverty requires then a complete, humble realization of our dependency upon God. Above all we must be empty of any confidence in ourselves relative to spiritual progress. God does not lead us into a higher spiritual life, nor deeper intimacy with Himself until we lose all vestiges of confidence, even the most subtle, in our own strength, initiatives, knowledge or virtues.

The direction to the spirit of poverty is the direction God took in becoming man: kenosis: self-emptying. We read a number of times in the Divine Office that passage from St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians, chapter 2, which we read at Evening Prayer I yesterday:

Though he was in the form of God,  
Jesus did not deem equality with God  
something to be grasped at.  
Rather, he emptied himself  
and took the form of a slave,  
being born in the likeness of man.

If we wish to be united to God, we must do exactly what the Word did to become united to man. Just as Jesus was willing to let go of his divine status (not his divine nature) in order to become man, so we must be willing to let go of any status we may acquire as man in order to become like God. Because we are in reality so poor, that is, so dependent upon God in the order of the supernatural and its end, intimate union with God, we can only desire to strive for such an attitude of poverty. However, in cultivating such a desire to follow Jesus on this path of humility toward nothingness, we take hope in the teaching of Drs. John of the Cross and Therese who taught that we would not have such a desire if God did not plan to fulfill it. This assumes that it is truly a desire and not just wishful thinking or daydreaming. We pray for an efficacious desire characterized by perseverance in striving “to seek not the best of temporal things, but the worst...” and a striving, for God’s sake, “to desire to enter into complete detachment and emptiness and poverty with respect to everything that is in this world” (Ascent I, 13.6).

The spirit of poverty involves such an emptying of all ego claims to status and loss of confidence in our own power. Such emptiness must be in regard to both material and spiritual acquisitions. We always must be willing to let go of what we consider to be pleasing to God for the sake of being truly pleasing to Him as He desires us to be.

The Carmelite way of poverty is the way of “no-gain.” When a novice sighed about her lack of virtue and progress in the spiritual life, and bemoaned how much yet she had to gain, Therese answered: “No, rather so much yet to lose!”

In practicing poverty what do we need to lose? That is the question! Certainly, we must strive to lose the spirit of acquisition. We want to be empty so that we can be filled with God. Make “room in our inn” for God! What more do we need to lose? We must lose too a spirit of possessiveness about even those things we need to have in order to live simply in our particular state of life in the world. We must strive for a sense of simplicity by acquiring only what we need, and by losing any sense of possessiveness about even those goods.

What an ideal! And as in the case of all ideals, we must view this one with the spirit of poverty, recognizing that all we can do is “endeavor to be inclined always towards” fulfilling such an aspiration. An important part of the way to this perfection of spiritual poverty is the “way of imperfection.” It is our failures and deficiencies which make us realize how truly poor we are and dependent upon God. God truly then becomes our sufficiency as St. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians: 3:5. When we are emptied of confidence in ourselves and filled with trust and confidence in God, then we are disposed for total conversion. St. Teresa confessed in her LIFE (chapter 8) that what prevented her from overcoming the last obstacles was really a remnant of confidence which she still had in herself. She wrote: “I must have failed to put my whole confidence in His Majesty and to have a complete distrust of myself.” [8:12]

After we have done all that we have been commanded, as that rich, young man could say, and then have left everything behind in terms of acquisition and possessiveness to follow Jesus; after we have done all this and can say with sincerity: I am a useless, an unprofitable servant; then we are on the WAY. The final word, after our admission of poverty and unprofitableness, must be: O God, I place all my trust and confidence in you. And not only say it, but live it.

Our confidence in God can never be excessive or exaggerated. Blind, unlimited hope in God is what will sustain within us a genuine spirit of poverty. It is so pleasing to God that St. John of the Cross teaches: “The more the soul hopes, the more it attains” (Ascent III, 7.2). And Dr. Therese, who lived her life according to this spirit of poverty based on hope practiced as boundless trust and confidence in God, made this thought of St. John her own and wrote: “We can never have too much confidence in the good God who is so powerful and so merciful. We obtain from Him as much as we hope for.”

As a final word, we go back to the response of Jesus to the rich, young man in answer for his request for a formula for following Him perfectly –

Jesus told him that perfection consisted in selling all he owned, giving the profits to the poor and then come and follow Him.

Our model in a way of understanding what this might mean for ourselves is Therese. Over the years in her spiritual journey, her life was a process of “selling all that she had” As a religious, materially speaking, she did this in a more radical way than most of us can do in our state of life as Secular Carmelites. But she was a model to us in living out the spirit of poverty to its fullest and in a real way adhering to what Christ asked: that we not only sell all that we have, but we give to the poor what we earned from this selling. Therese came to the point where she prayed

to be dispossessed of any and all merits she may have earned by her practice of virtue, and to have all these merits given to the “poor,” those souls in need. She wanted to come to God completely stripped, with empty hands, without any merits accrued for herself, but all merits used for the sake of sinners.

Our personal sanctification as Carmelites is not a dead-end street; if it is, then it truly is a way which ends in death to true sanctification. Initially, we may need to make our sanctification paramount, but the closer we come to God and the more we participate in God’s life, the more effusive we become in our concern about others. We truly thirst with Christ for souls: their salvation and sanctification. And so we become like Therese willing to appear before God with empty hands, having given away what “we may have acquired” through our ascetical and virtuous practices for the sake of others.

To reach such an attitude of poverty is something worth hoping and praying for.

Holy mother, Teresa, holy father, John, inspire us. Dr. Therese, teach us. Our Carmelite brothers and sisters in Glory, pray for us.

## **Existential Obedience**

I would like to present obedience in a very elemental way, largely from the heart, without reference to the usual distinctions made in defining it: the dissection of it into its component parts, the noting of its specific differences from other virtues, and its relationships to other virtues in the theological scheme of things. I want to regard obedience as it relates to living our life in union with and after the example of Christ; seeing obedience as a dynamic of our existence as creatures and children of God.

The common denominator of anything said about obedience is this fact of Christian reality: obedience was the leitmotiv, the basic, underlying theme of Jesus as Son of God.

“Here I am to do your will, O God.”

The Word was made flesh in obedience to God’s plan, and Jesus as the incarnate word lived his life in obedience to the unfolding of that plan as revealed by the Spirit of God. Obedience provided the very sustenance of Jesus’ life. He declared that the Father’s Will was his very food and drink. He also described obedience to the Father as the criteria by which he qualified our love for Him: if you love me, keep my commandments.

From the example of Jesus during his existence on earth we can discern this: obedience is always an individual’s response to God’s Will. To be obedient as Jesus, I must choose to conform or be uniform with what God desires of me. Another more basic way of saying the same thing is that obedience is my response to the truth and its demands manifested moment by moment in the fulfillment of my nature as created by God in order to live out the unique life He has provided for me by His Will. The contemplative poet and priest, Ernesto Cardenal wrote: “As the Body of Christ is hidden beneath the appearances of bread and wine, so God’s Will is hidden beneath the appearances, the bread and wine, of day-to-day happenings.”

More specifically, this existential obedience directs my will to making those choices which will conform my life to that image of the Son the Father desires me to be. I let go of my own desires for holiness in obedience to becoming holy as God desires me to be.

My obedience involves being attentive to the “revelations” about the reality and mystery of this my life which are manifested to me through the circumstances, opportunities, demands, and consequences of my choices, especially the choice known as “my state in life.” Very often the most telling of these “revelations” are the disclosures provided by my weaknesses, failures and way of imperfections. For the truth is always subject to being disguised by the illusions I develop about myself sustained by pride and false witness of the world about me. Nothing can shatter such illusions better than the revelation of how weak, wrong, ego-seeking and sinful I can be in my choices and actions.

Discernment and self-knowledge then are important elements in coming to this, “my” truth. However, the truth will not set me free until I acknowledge it as it is and surrender my will to its implications. Obedience which is this response of surrender to and acceptance of the reality of myself and my life as willed for me by God is essential for the experience of true freedom. Such conformity to what God in His Providence wills for me normally is discovered by the exercise of my reason enlightened by Faith. Much of who I am is a mystery and can be apprehended only in Faith. My effort to understand what Faith enables me to perceive is sustained by Hope in God who alone can provide the means by which I can be obedient to what I perceive as God’s will for me. Motivation and strength for obedience to what God desires of me in fulfilling “my destiny” comes from Charity. The Love of Christ urges me on, impels me to the truth, and strengthens me in my resolve to become who/what the Father desires. Only in so far as the will is strengthened by this love can it overcome its propensity to obey the dictates of ego interests and the “flesh” rather than the urgings of God’s Spirit.

If I had lived before Christ, my obedience would be to the truth of who I was as a creature of God governed by what is known as the natural law, basically expressed in the Decalogue. However, as a baptized Christian I must be obedient to the truth contained in the reality that I am not only a creature of God, but God’s son or daughter as well. This filial relationship with God was established by my brother Jesus who calls me to follow Him as the Way, the Truth and the Light of my life.

Furthermore, my Carmelite vocation is my choice to follow Christ according to the example and teaching of Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross. The Carmelite Rule of Life has become a part of “my truth,” which I must obey. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, I discern and then proclaim, that I am responding to God’s call and make a commitment “to tend toward evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels and the Beatitudes.” One of the evangelical counsels of course is obedience, and one of the “be”- attitudes which must characterize my obedience is meekness or docility. Obedience inspired by and directed by the Holy Spirit is docile. To be docile is not to be a doormat but a child of God. I acknowledge and accept my total dependence upon God, particularly in the order of Grace and relative to salvation and sanctification. Docility is characteristic of such childlike obedience. No matter how old I am, how rich, powerful, sophisticated and smart I become – when it comes to myself and who I truly am in relationship

with God, I am essentially His creature, and, by redemption and pure gift, His child. My greatest distinction is to have God as my Father.

What should matter to us in being obedient to God's Will is not abstract ideals, but profound love and surrender to the concrete "judgments of God." God's judgments are our life and our light, inexhaustible sources of purity and strength. As baptized Christians we surrender our will in obedience to the judgments of God as revealed in the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, and the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church. As Baptized, our obedience is characterized by filial love since we become God's children through Baptism. When we are professed as Carmelites we surrender to the judgment of God that he is calling us to live out our Baptismal covenant by following the Rule of Life given to us by the Order. We make our Carmelite promises to God of course, but practically speaking to the Superiors of the Order, to the Rule of Life provided by the Order and to each other. These are generally the instruments God employs in revealing His Will to us. These "instruments" we accept as the means by which the concrete Judgments of God are revealed, manifesting how we are to become holy as He desires us to be.

We can look to Therese for an example of this kind of obedience.

In writing the story of her life under obedience, Therese explained: "Our Lord has made it clear to me that all he wanted of me was plain obedience."

The substantial force behind and sustaining Therese's obedience was the truth. Therese said toward the end of her life: "... I can nourish myself on nothing but the truth."

"I never acted like Pilate who refused to listen to the truth," she wrote, "I've always said to God: O my God, I really want to listen to You; I beg You to answer me when I humbly say: What is truth? Make me see things as they really are. Let nothing cause me to be deceived."

Her obedience was a surrender to the truth of her reality. She learned to listen to God in the circumstances and demands of her life as it unfolded in the light of this truth. Her obedience was to what was required of her by her vocation. She was attentive to the ordinary day by day demands made of her through her rule and the dictates of her superior. "We must pay attention to regular observance," she admonished. Therese lamented those in her community "who do nothing or next to nothing, saying: I am not obliged to do that, after all.... How few there are who do everything in the best way possible! And still these [who are obedient] are the most happy...." She observed: "... it gives God much pain when we rationalize much."

Selective obedience is game playing with the truth. "I made the resolution," Therese said, "never to consider whether the things commanded me appeared useful or not.... it is love alone that counts. Forget about whether something is needed or useful; see it (the demand, rule, obligation, etc.) as a whim of Jesus." Indeed, because of our Carmelite Promise we should be striving toward an obedience that goes beyond merely following the commandments. Ours should be an obedience to the very "whims" of Jesus, to His desires for us. To know these desires we must not only hear and listen to the Word, but, like Mary, ponder His words and actions. Also, we must be attentive as she was to his revelations unfolding in our life, as already explained.

Therese revealed in her last conversations: “I formed the habit of obeying each one (referring to requests, demands made by her sisters) as though it was God who was manifesting his will to me.” Recall that we make our Promises not only to God, the superiors of the Order, but to each other. The needs of others in community can be a matter of obedience. I am present in community, for example, not only because it is required by the Rule, but because a brother or sister in my community may need my example and support. In being there, I am being obedient to that need. We should strive to be so sensitive in our obedience that we endeavor to obey not only the letter of the law, but primarily its spirit. The spirit of the law, Jesus taught and demonstrated, was/is Charity. That is why, as already mentioned, he designated obedience as the proof of our love for God.

An essential attitude for obedience is humility and, as we know, humility is truth. Part of the simple humble truth is, as we said, the realization of our dependency upon God, and in the order of Grace, our filial relationship with God. Part of that truth too is that we have natural and acquired temporal and worldly talents. It is the simple truth, not to be denied, in word or in action, that I may be intelligent, knowledgeable, skilled manually, artistically, verbally, physically etc. If I deny such talents and gifts in living out my life, I am being disobedient to the truth of Who God wants me to be. As long as we realize with St. Paul and Therese that everything is gift, and that the natural or acquired skills or talents which we possess are to be used for the glory of God and in the service of others, then we remain in the truth. St. Therese warned against using “false currency” in the practice of virtue. Certainly, false humility is a counterfeit coin in the spiritual exchange of the Christian life.

Finally, in the birth of Jesus, the Way and the Truth became incarnate. God really and truly came to share our life and His Life with us. In so doing God exemplifies for us the M.O. (modus operanti) we are to follow relative to our commitments to Him. The promise to obedience that we make can remain an abstraction. If I am to practice this evangelical counsel “divinely,” I must incarnate it in “my” life. I must reflect upon its meaning in terms of who I am in my particular day by day life situation. The matter for obedience may not be that unique. The Rule and prescriptions of my community’s council generally will more than likely be the same for me as everyone else about me. However, the form, or the “how” of my practice of obedience may provide unique opportunity for expression. By form of obedience, I mean the way I individually respond to prescriptions of authority. Certain requirements may be temperamentally easier or more difficult for me personally. A particular requirement regarded as a demand of insignificant consequence for one person, may be most difficult for me. I may experience repugnance or reluctance to obey a particular prescription, and so be tempted not to do what is required in order not to be “hypocritical” in practice. However, what counts is faithfulness to my commitment, my intention, and the consistency of my choice. I may find attendance at meetings, for example, generally a burden temperamentally and, perhaps, more often than not, irrelevant to my needs. Even so, I choose to attend meetings regularly as a concrete expression of my obedience, as a sign of my faithfulness to my commitment, as a defense against a possible form of subtle pride which insinuates that I am above others, as a practice of charity sustained by the hope that my presence which may seem useless to me may be in fact a valuable witness to others. The form of practice means too that my practice of a rule such as attendance is not just resignation, but involves a real effort to make my conformity viable. In

attending meetings (to follow through on our example), I strive to be attentive to what is going on, to be active in my participation in discussions, and to be responsive to material communal needs presented by volunteering to serve.

In summary: existential obedience is my response to God's will as revealed to me in the here and now, moment to moment, "demands" of my state in life which includes the opportunities and consequences of my choice to follow Christ according to the Carmelite Rule of Life and example and teachings of Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross. It involves a response of NO to all that God's Spirit reveals to me as obstacles to fulfilling God's will for me as His unique son or daughter, but above all, it is a response of YES in imitation of Jesus who St. Paul describes as being always a YES to the Father. This obedience reaches perfection when it is followed through even unto death – death on the cross. For us usually this means death to the Ego which tends to be in conflict, or at cross-purposes with the truth of our identity in God which we may call the Self. When we face this cross, this conflict, in its truth, and submit our wills to its anguish as Christ did, then by that obedience is the conflict profoundly resolved and we are liberated into a share in the Resurrected life of Christ Jesus. Normally this "final" conversion is a gradual process resolved finally at death and perhaps through what is referred to as purgatory. For some it is resolved in life and finalized through the passover of death. In any case, be obedient to the truth of who you are and the truth shall set you free.

If you are the work of God, wait patiently for the hand of your artist who makes all things at an opportune time.... Give to Him a pure and supple heart and watch over the form which the artist shapes in you ... lest, in hardness, you lose the traces of his fingers. By guarding this conformity you will ascend to perfection.... To do this is proper to the kindness of God; to have it done is proper to human nature. If, therefore, you hand over to Him what is yours, namely, faith in Him and submission, you will see his skill and be a perfect work of God.

St. Irenaeus (Adversus Haereses, Bk. IV, ch. XXXIX.2.col.1110)

O God,  
as docile and as tractable to your artistic spirit  
as media is to the artist who uses it,  
so that the design the artist has in mind may be brought to completion;  
so obedient may I,  
to you, my Creative Father,  
BE.

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