

**RULE OF SAINT ALEBERT  
AND  
THE CONSTITUTIONS  
OF THE SECULAR ORDER  
OF THE TERESIAN CARMEL**

DECREE

The General Superior of the Discalced Carmelites, with the prior approval of the General Definitory, given in the 11<sup>th</sup> session of June 9, 2003, presented the text of the Constitutions of the Secular order to the Apostolic Center, requesting its approval.

The Congregation for the Institutes of consecrate life and the Societies of apostolic life, having considered attentively every thing in its respect, by the present Decree approves and confirms the aforesaid text, according to the example presented in Spanish language, preserved in its file.

May the new text of the Constitutions of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites be a really effective means, so that its members can reinvigorate more and more their baptismal consecration in the concrete situations of family, social, civilian and ecclesial life.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

Vatican, June 16, 2003

**Eduardo Card. Martínez Somalo**, Prefect / **Silvano Nesti, CP**, Secretary

**To the Provincials, Provincial Delegates for the Secular Order and the members of the Secular Order.**

Dear Carmelites,

The General Delegate for the Secular Order presented the Constitutions for the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order to the General Chapter and to the new Father General and Definitory. The new Definitory also studied the Constitutions and made a few recommendations and reworded some items in the Spanish text, which is the official text.

The Definitory then approved the revised text on June 9, 2003 and sent them to the Holy See on June 10 with the request that they be approved for five years “ad experimentum”. The Holy See surprised us on June 16, 2003 with the decree of approval, not for five years “ad experimentum” but with the definitive approval. We, the Order, will still make us of the five year period for making concrete observations on this text, eventually asking the Holy See to approve certain changes as practical application indicates.

In order to proceed in an orderly way with these new Constitutions, that now replace the Rule of Life, it will be necessary that the Provincial Council of the OCDS in each Province review the Provincial Statutes and submit them to the General Definitory for approval. There are only a few Provinces that do not have a Provincial Council of the OCDS formed, but most of them are in the process of forming a Council now.

The Provincial Statutes take on an added responsibility in these new Constitutions. They are the place where many things of importance to the life and functioning of the OCDS in each Province may be stipulated. After each Province has elaborated its own Provincial Statutes, those places that have a national organism may compose National Statutes according to Article 60 of the Constitutions.

This is an exciting time in the history of the Secular Order, a time for strengthening the bonds that exist within the Order. May all of our efforts be for the glory of God and the good of the Church.

**Fr. Luis Aróstegui, OCD, General Superior**

## **The Rule of Saint Albert**

[1] Albert, called by God's favour to be patriarch of the church of Jerusalem, bids health in the Lord and the blessing of the Holy Spirit to his beloved sons in Christ, B. and the other hermits under obedience to him, who live near the spring on Mount Carmel.

[2] Many and varied are the ways in which our saintly forefathers laid down how everyone, whatever his station or the kind of religious observance he has chosen, should live a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ -- how, pure in heart and stout in conscience, he must be unswerving in the service of his Master.

[3] It is to me, however, that you have come for a rule of life in keeping with your avowed purpose, a rule you may hold fast to henceforward; and therefore:

[4] The first thing I require is for you to have a prior, one of yourselves, who is to be chosen for the office by common consent, or that of the greater and maturer part of you; each of the others must promise him obedience -- of which, once promised, he must try to make his deeds the true reflection -- and also chastity and the renunciation of ownership.

[5] If the prior and brothers see fit, you may have foundations in solitary places, or where you are given a site that is suitable and convenient for the observance proper to your Order.

[6] Next, each one of you is to have a separate cell, situated as the lie of the land you propose to occupy may dictate, and allotted by disposition of the prior with the agreement of the other brothers, or the more mature among them.

[7] However, you are to eat whatever may have been given you in a common refectory, listening together meanwhile to a reading from Holy Scripture where that can be done without difficulty.

[8] None of the brothers is to occupy a cell other than that allotted to him or to exchange cells with another, without leave or whoever is prior at the time.

[9] The prior's cell should stand near the entrance to your property, so that he may be the first to meet those who approach, and whatever has to be done in consequence may all be carried out as he may decide and order.

[10] Each one of you is to stay in his own cell or nearby, pondering the Lord's law day and night and keeping watch at his prayers unless attending to some other duty.

[11] Those who know how to say the canonical hours with those in orders should do so, in the way those holy forefathers of ours laid down, and according to the Church's approved custom. Those who do not know the hours must say twenty-five Our Fathers for the night office, except on Sundays and solemnities when that number is to be doubled so that the Our Father is said fifty times; the same prayer must be said seven times in the morning in place of Lauds, and seven times too for each of the other hours, except for Vespers when it must be said fifteen times.

[12] None of the brothers must lay claim to anything as his own, but you are to possess everything in common; and each is to receive from the prior -- that is from the brother he appoints for the purpose -- whatever befits his age and needs.

[13] You may have as many asses and mules as you need, however, and may keep a certain amount of livestock or poultry.

[14] An oratory should be built as conveniently as possible among the cells, where, if it can be done without difficulty, you are to gather each morning to hear Mass.

[15] On Sundays too, or other days if necessary, you should discuss matters of discipline and your spiritual welfare; and on this occasion the indiscretions and failings of the brothers, if any be found at fault, should be lovingly corrected.

[16] You are to fast every day, except Sundays, from the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross until Easter Day, unless bodily sickness or feebleness, or some other good reason, demand a dispensation from the fast; for necessity overrides every law.

[17] You are to abstain from meat, except as a remedy for sickness or feebleness. But as, when you are on a journey, you more often than not have to beg your way; outside your own houses you may eat foodstuffs that have been cooked with meat, so as to avoid giving trouble to your hosts.  
At sea, however, meat may be eaten.

[18] Since man's life on earth is a time of trial, and all who would live devotedly in Christ must undergo persecution, and the devil your foe is on the prowl like a roaring lion looking for prey to devour, you must use every care to clothe yourselves in God's armour so that you may be ready to withstand the enemy's ambush.

[19] Your loins are to be girt with chastity, your breast fortified by holy meditations, for, as Scripture has it, holy meditation will save you. Put on holiness as your breastplate, and it will enable you to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength, and your neighbour as yourself. Faith must be your shield on all occasions, and with it you will be able to quench all the flaming missiles of the wicked one: there can be no pleasing God without faith; [and the victory lies in this -- your faith]. On your head set the helmet of salvation, and so be sure of deliverance by our only Saviour, who sets his own free from their sins. The sword of the spirit, the word of God, must abound in your mouths and hearts. Let all you do have the Lord's word for accompaniment.

[20] You must give yourselves to work of some kind, so that the devil may always find you busy; no idleness on your part must give him a chance to pierce the defences of your souls. In this respect you have both the teaching and the example of Saint Paul the Apostle, into whose

mouth Christ put his own words. God made him preacher and teacher of faith and truth to the nations: with him as your leader you cannot go astray. We lived among you, he said, labouring and wary, toiling night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you; not because we had no power to do otherwise but so as to give you, in your own selves, an example you might imitate. For the charge we gave you when we were with you was this: that whoever is not willing to work should not be allowed to eat either. For we have heard that there are certain restless idlers among you. We charge people of this kind, and implore them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they earn their own bread by silent toil. This is the way of holiness and goodness: see that you follow it.

[21] The Apostle would have us keep silence, for in silence he tells us to work. As the Prophet also makes known to us: Silence is the way to foster holiness. Elsewhere he says: Your strength will lie in silence and hope. For this reason I lay down that you are to keep silence from after Compline until after Prime the next day.

At other times, although you need not keep silence so strictly, be careful not to indulge in a great deal of talk, for, as Scripture has it -- and experience teaches us no less -- sin will not be wanting where there is much talk, and he who is careless in speech will come to harm; and elsewhere: The use of many words brings harm to the speaker's soul. And our Lord says in the Gospel: Every rash word uttered will have to be accounted for on judgment day. Make a balance then, each of you, to weigh his words in; keep a tight rein on your mouths, lest you should stumble and fall in speech, and your fall be irreparable and prove mortal. Like the Prophet, watch your step lest your tongue give offence, and employ every care in keeping silent, which is the way to foster holiness.

[22] You, brother B., and whoever may succeed you as prior, must always keep in mind and put into practice what our Lord said in the Gospel: Whoever has a mind to become a leader among you must make himself servant to the rest, and whichever of you would be first must become your bondsman.

[23] You, other brothers too, hold your prior in humble reverence, your minds not on him but on Christ who has placed him over you, and who, to those who rule the Churches, addressed the words: Whoever pays you heed pays heed to me, and whoever treats you with dishonour dishonours me; if you remain so minded you will not be found guilty of contempt, but will merit life eternal as fit reward for your obedience.

[24] Here then are the few points I have written down to provide you with a standard of conduct to live up to; but our Lord, at his second coming will reward anyone who does more than he is obliged to do. See that the bounds of common sense are not exceeded, however, for common sense is the guide of the virtues.

# OCDS CONSTITUTIONS

## PREFACE

All are called to share, in charity, the holiness which belongs to God alone: "You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48).

Following Christ is the way to attain perfection, open to all by baptism. Through Baptism we take part in the triple mission of Jesus: kingly, priestly and prophetic. The first is a commitment to transforming the world according to God's design. By the priestly mission, the baptized person offers self and the whole of creation to the Father with Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit. And as prophet, the baptized person announces God's plan for human kind and denounces all that is contrary to it<sup>[1]</sup>.

The great Teresian Carmelite family is present in the world in many forms. The nucleus of this family is the Order of Discalced Carmelites B the friars, the enclosed nuns, the seculars. It is the one Order with the same charism. The Order is nourished by the long tradition of Carmel, expressed in the Rule of Saint Albert and the doctrine of the Carmelite Doctors of the Church and the Order's other saints.

The present OCDS Constitutions are the fundamental law for its members, present in different regions of the world. For this reason they are characterized by simplicity of structures and moderation in rules concerning the way of life. In this way, within a fundamental unity established by this legislation, there is preserved openness to pluralism in expression demanded by the various social, cultural and ecclesial contexts. To achieve this, particular Statutes may be drawn up to complete and adapt the general laws where permitted in these Constitutions.

## I

### OUR IDENTITY, VALUES AND COMMITMENT

1. Carmelite Seculars, together with the Friars and Nuns, are sons and daughters of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St Teresa of Jesus. As a result, they share the same charism with the religious, each according to their particular state of life. It is one family with the same spiritual possessions, the same call to holiness (cf. Ep 1:4; 1 P 1:15) and the same apostolic mission. Secular members contribute to the Order the benefits proper to their secular state of life<sup>[2]</sup>.

2. Our membership of the Order goes back to the relationship established between laity and members of religious Orders born in the Middle Ages. Gradually these relationships took on an official character, forming part of the religious Institute and taking part in its charism and spirituality. In light of the Church's new theology of the laity, Seculars live this membership with a clear secular identity.

3. The members of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites are faithful members of the Church<sup>[3]</sup>, called to live "in allegiance to Jesus Christ"<sup>[4]</sup> through "friendship with the One we know loves us"<sup>[5]</sup> and in service to the Church. Under the protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in the biblical tradition of the prophet Elijah and inspired by the teachings of St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross, they seek to deepen their Christian commitment received in baptism.

4. The Virgin Mary is present in a special way, most of all as a model of faithfulness in listening to the Lord and in service to Him and to others. Mary is the one who preserved in her heart the life and actions of her Son and meditated on them<sup>[6]</sup>, providing for us an example of contemplation. At Cana she counselled to do what the Lord commanded<sup>[7]</sup>. Mary is an example of apostolic service. On another occasion, she waited, persevering in prayer with the apostles<sup>[8]</sup>, for the coming of the Holy Spirit, thus giving witness to intercessory prayer. She is Mother of the Order. Secular Carmel enjoys her special protection and cultivates a sincere Marian devotion.

5. Elijah represents the prophetic tradition of Carmel and is an inspiration to live in the presence of God, seeking Him in solitude and silence with zeal for God's glory. The Secular Carmelites live the prophetic dimension of Christian life and Carmelite spirituality by promoting God's law of charity and truth in the world, above all by making themselves the voice for those who cannot, on their own, express this love and this truth<sup>[9]</sup>.

6. The Rule of Saint Albert is the original expression of the spirituality of Carmel. It was written for the laypeople who gathered on Mount Carmel to live a life dedicated to meditation on the Word of God, under the protection of Our Lady. The following principles of that Rule guide Carmelite life:

- a) Living in allegiance to Jesus Christ;
- b) Being diligent in meditating on the law of the Lord;
- c) Giving time to spiritual reading;
- d) Participating in the Church's Liturgy, both the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours;
- e) Being concerned for the needs and the good of others in the community;
- f) Arming ourselves with the practice of the virtues, as we live an intense life of faith, hope and charity;
- g) Seeking interior silence and solitude in our life of prayer;
- h) Using prudent discretion in all that we do.

7. The origin of the Discalced Carmel is to be found in St Teresa of Jesus. She lived with profound faith in God's mercy<sup>[10]</sup> which strengthened her to persevere<sup>[11]</sup> in prayer, humility, love for her brothers and sisters, and love for the Church, leading her to the grace of spiritual matrimony. Her evangelical self-denial, disposition to service and perseverance in the practice of the virtues are a daily guide to living the spiritual life<sup>[12]</sup>. Her teachings on prayer and the spiritual life are essential to the formation and life of the Secular Order.

8. Saint John of the Cross was the companion of Saint Teresa in the formation of the Discalced Carmelite Order. He inspires the Secular Carmelite to be vigilant in the practice of faith, hope and charity. He guides the Secular Carmelite through the dark night to union with God. In this union with God, the Secular Carmelite finds the true freedom of the children of God<sup>[13]</sup>.

9. Taking into account the origins of Carmel and the Teresian charism, the fundamental elements of the vocation of Teresian Secular Carmelites can be summarized as follows:

- a) to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ, supported by the imitation and patronage of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, whose way of life is, for Carmel, a model of being conformed to Christ.
- b) to seek "mysterious union with God" by way of contemplation and apostolic activity, indissolubly joined together, for service to the Church;
- c) to give particular importance to prayer which, nourished by listening to the Word of God and by the liturgy, is conducive to relating with God as a friend, not just in prayer but in daily living. To be committed to this life of prayer demands being nourished by faith, hope and, above all, charity in order to live in the presence and the mystery of the living God<sup>[14]</sup>;
- d) to infuse prayer and life with apostolic zeal in a climate of human and Christian community;
- e) to live evangelical self-denial from a theological perspective;
- f) to give importance to the commitment to evangelization: in the ministry of spirituality as the particular collaboration of the Secular Order, faithful to its Teresian Carmelite identity.

## II

### **FOLLOWING JESUS IN THE TERESIAN SECULAR CARMEL**

10. Christ is the centre of our lives and of Christian experience. Members of the Secular Order are called to live the demands of following Christ in union with Him, by accepting His teachings and devoting themselves to Him. To follow Jesus is to take part in His saving mission of proclaiming the Good News and the establishment of God's Kingdom (Mt 4:18-19). There are various ways of following Jesus: all Christians must follow Him, must make Him the law for their lives and be disposed to fulfil three fundamental demands: to place family ties beneath the interests of the Kingdom and Jesus himself (Mt 10:37-39; Lk 14: 25-26); to live in detachment from wealth in order to show that the arrival of the Kingdom does not depend on human means but rather on God's strength and the willingness of the human person before Him (Lk 14:33; to carry the cross of accepting God's will revealed in the mission that He has confided to each person (Lk 14:33; 9:23).

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.

12. By the promise made to the community in the presence of the Superior of the Order or his Delegate, the person becomes a full member of the Secular Order. By this commitment members strive to acquire the necessary training to know the reasons, the content and purpose of the evangelical lifestyle they are undertaking. The promise heightens and enriches the baptismal commitment in Secular Carmelites. This includes those called to married life, both as spouses and as parents. This promise is renewed once a year at Easter time.

#### **The commitment to the promise to live the spirit of the evangelical counsel of chastity**

13. 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>[15]</sup>. In this promise the Secular Carmelite seeks the freedom to love God and neighbour unselfishly<sup>[16]</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.

#### **The commitment to the promise of living the spirit of the evangelical counsel of poverty**

14. 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 Co 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.

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

15. 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" (Ac 17:28) imitating Christ who accepted the Father's will and was "obedient unto death, death on a cross" (Ph 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.

## **The commitment to the promise to live the spirit of the beatitudes**

16. The beatitudes are a plan of action for life and a way to enter into relationship with the world, neighbours 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).

### **III**

#### **WITNESSES TO THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD**

17. The vocation to the Teresian Carmel is a commitment to "live a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ", "pondering the Lord's law day and night and keeping watch in prayer"<sup>[17]</sup>. Faithful to this principle of the Rule, St Teresa placed prayer as the foundation and basic exercise of her religious family. For this reason, Secular Carmelites are called to strive to make prayer penetrate their whole existence, in order to walk in the presence of the living God (cf. 1 K 18:14), through the constant exercise of faith, hope and love, in such a way that the whole of their life is a prayer, a search for union with God. The goal will be to achieve the integration of experience of God with the experience of life: to be contemplatives in prayer and the fulfilment of their own mission.

18. Prayer, a dialogue of friendship with God, ought to be nourished by His Word so that this dialogue becomes that, "we speak to him when we pray; we hear him when we read the divine word"<sup>[18]</sup>. God's Word will nourish the contemplative experience of Carmelite Seculars and their mission in the world. Besides personal contemplation, listening to the Word ought to encourage a contemplation that leads to sharing the experience of God in the Secular Order community. By this means, the Community together seeks to discern God's ways, maintain a permanent energy of conversion, and live with a renewed hope. The Carmelite Secular will be able to see through events and discover God in everything.

19. Occupying a privileged place in nourishing the prayer life of Carmelite Seculars will be the study and spiritual reading of Scripture and the writings of our Saints, particularly those who are Doctors of the Church: St Teresa, St John of the Cross and St Therese of the Child Jesus. The Church's documents are also food and inspiration for a commitment to follow Jesus.

20. The Carmelite Secular will make sure to have special times set apart for prayer, as times of greater awareness of the Lord's presence and an interior space for a personal and intimate meeting with Him. This will lead to prayer as an attitude of life, that will "always and everywhere recognize God ..... seek his will in every event, see Christ in all people whether they 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 humankind's final goal"<sup>[19]</sup>. Thus they will achieve a union of contemplation and action in history, integrating faith and life, prayer and action, contemplation and Christian commitment.

21. Carmelite Seculars will commit themselves daily to spending a time in the practice of mental prayer. This is the time to be with God and to strengthen their relationship with Him so that they can be true witnesses to His presence in the world.

22. The way of Christian prayer demands a life of evangelical self-denial (Lk 9:23) in fulfilling one's own vocation and mission, since "prayer and comfortable living are incompatible"<sup>[20]</sup>. Carmelite Seculars accept from the viewpoint of faith, hope and love, the work and suffering of each day, family worries, the uncertainty and limitations of human life, sickness, lack of understanding and all that makes up the fabric of our earthly existence. They will strive to make all this, material for their dialogue with God, in order to grow in an attitude of praise and gratitude to the Lord. In order to live truly, simply, freely, humbly and completely confident in the Lord, the Secular Carmelite observes the practices of evangelical self-denial recommended by the Church. Of particular importance are those days and periods in the liturgical calendar that have a penitential character.

23. The personal prayer life of the Carmelite Secular, understood as friendship with God, is also nourished and expressed in the liturgy, an inexhaustible font for the spiritual life. Liturgical prayer enriches personal prayer and this, in its turn, gives a lively expression to liturgical participation. In the Secular Order a special place is given to the liturgy, understood as God's Word celebrated in active hope, after having received it by faith and the commitment to live it in effective love. The Sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation, need to be lived as signs and instruments of the freeing action of God and as an encounter with the Paschal Christ, present in the ecclesial community. They are grace-giving structures in opposition to the structures for sin in society. Carmelite Seculars strives to discover in liturgical prayer the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit, living and demanding something of us in everyday life. In the liturgical year, they will experience the mysteries of redemption which inspire collaboration in bringing about God's plan. The Liturgy of the Hours, for its part, brings the Secular Carmelite into communion with the prayer of Jesus and the Church.

24. The value of the sacramental and liturgical life in the Secular Order leads its members to take part in the celebration of the Eucharist, in as far as possible. They will try to recite Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer of the Hours in union with the Church spread throughout the world. When it is possible they will also recite Night Prayer. Their participation in the sacrament of Reconciliation and the other sacraments of the Church will assist the process of their conversion.

## IV

### SERVING GOD'S PLAN

25. "The lay faithful, precisely because they are members of the Church, have the vocation and mission of proclaiming the Gospel: they are prepared for this work by the sacraments of Christian Initiation and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit"<sup>[21]</sup>. The spirituality of Carmel will awaken in Secular Carmelites a desire for greater apostolic commitment, in becoming aware of all that their call to Carmel implies. Aware of the need the world has of witnesses to God's presence<sup>[22]</sup>, they will respond to the invitation the Church directs to all Associations of the faithful followers of Christ, committing them to human society by means of active participation in the apostolic goal of the Church's mission, within the framework of their own charism. As a fruit of this participation in evangelization, Carmelite Seculars will share a renewed taste for prayer, contemplation and the liturgical and sacramental life.

26. The vocation to the Secular Order is truly ecclesial. Prayer and apostolate, when they are true, are inseparable. The observation of St Teresa that the purpose of prayer is "the birth of good works"<sup>[23]</sup> reminds the Secular Order that graces received ought to have an effect on those who receive them<sup>[24]</sup>. Individually or as a community and, above all as members of the Church, apostolic activity is the fruit of prayer. Where possible, in collaboration with religious

superiors and with the necessary permissions of those in charge, the communities of the Secular Order participate in the apostolate of the Order

27. The Carmelite Secular is called to live and witness the charism of the Teresian Carmel in the local Church, that portion of the People of God in which the Church of Christ is truly present and acts<sup>[25]</sup>. All will try to be living witnesses of God's presence and accept responsibility for the need the Church has of concrete help within the pastoral concerns in its evangelising mission under the direction of the bishop. For this reason, each one will have an apostolate either collaborating with others in the community or individually.

28. To their apostolic commitment they will bring the wealth of their spirituality in the various forms it takes in evangelization: missions, parishes, houses of prayer, Spirituality Institutes, prayer groups, the ministry of spirituality. With their particular contribution as Secular Carmelites they can offer the Teresian Carmel fresh inspiration for "a renewed spiritual and apostolic dynamism"<sup>[26]</sup>, with creative fidelity to their mission in the Church. The different apostolic activities of the Secular Order will be specified and evaluated in the Particular Statutes for the various geographical areas<sup>[27]</sup>.

## V

### WITH MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

29. In the interior dynamism of following Jesus, Carmel contemplates Mary as Mother and Sister, as "the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord"<sup>[28]</sup> and, as such, a model for the life of the members of the Order. The Virgin of the Magnificat proclaims the break with the old order and announces the beginning of a new order in which God casts the mighty down from their thrones and exalts the poor. Mary places herself on the side of the poor and proclaims how God acts in history. For Secular Carmelites, Mary is a model of total commitment to God's Kingdom. She teaches us to listen to God's Word in Scripture and in life, to believe in it in every circumstance in order to live its demands. All this she did, without understanding many things; pondering all in her heart (Lk 2:19, 50-51) until light dawned through contemplative prayer.

30. Mary is also an ideal and inspiration for the Secular Carmelite. She lived close to people and their needs, being concerned about them (Lk 1:39-45; Jn 2:1-12; Ac 1:14). She, the "most perfect image of freedom and of the liberation of humanity and of the universe"<sup>[29]</sup>, helps us understand the meaning of mission. She, Mother and Sister, who goes before us in a pilgrimage of faith and in following the Lord Jesus, keeps us company so that we may imitate her life hidden in Christ and committed to the service of others.

31. While giving life to Teresian Carmelite spirituality, Mary's presence also shapes its apostolate. As a result, the Secular Carmelite is committed to knowing Mary better, daily, through the Gospel to communicate to others an authentic Marian devotion leading to imitating her virtues. Guided by the outlook of faith, members of the Secular Order will celebrate and promote the liturgical devotion to the Mother of God in light of the mystery of Christ and the Church. They will practice, in faith and love, the devotional exercises in her honour.

## VI

### FORMATION IN THE SCHOOL OF CARMEL

32. 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.

33. With sincere interest in the teachings of the Church and the spirituality of our Carmelite Saints, Carmelite Seculars seek to be men and women who are mature in the practice of faith, hope and love, and in their devotion to the Virgin Mary. They commit themselves to deepening their Christian, ecclesial and Carmelite life. Christian formation is the solid basis of Carmelite and spiritual formation. Through the Catechism of the Catholic Church and Church documents, Secular Carmelites receive the necessary theological foundation.

34. 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 service to the Church. Human formation develops the ability for interpersonal dialogue, mutual respect and tolerance, the possibility of being corrected and correcting with serenity, and the capacity to persevere commitments.

35. Carmelite identity is confirmed by formation in the Scriptures and *lectio divina*, in the importance of the liturgy of Church, especially the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours, and in the spirituality of Carmel, its history, the works of the Order's saints, and formation in prayer and meditation.

Formation for the apostolate is based on the theology of the Church concerning the responsibility of the laity<sup>[30]</sup> and on understanding the role of Seculars in the apostolate of the Order. These help to know the place of the Secular Order in the Church and in Carmel and give a practical way to share the graces received through the vocation to Carmel.

36. The gradual introduction to the life of the Secular Order is structured in the following manner:

a) A sufficient period of contact with the community for no less than 6 months. The purpose of this stage is that the applicant might become more familiar with the community, the style of life and service to the Church proper to the Secular Order of the Teresian Carmel. This period also give the community the opportunity to make an adequate discernment. The Provincial Statutes will specify this period.

b) After the initial period of contact, the council of the community may admit the applicant to a more serious period of formation that usually lasts for two years leading up to the first promises. At the beginning of this period of formation, the scapular is given to the applicant. This is an outward symbol of membership in the Order, and the sign that Mary is both Mother and Model on this journey.

c) At the end of this stage, with the approval of the Council of the Community, the applicant may be invited to make the first promises to follow the evangelical counsels and to live in the spirit of the beatitudes for a period of three years.

d) In the last three years of initial formation there is a deeper study of prayer, the Scriptures, the Documents of the Church, the Saints of the Order and formation in the apostolate of the Order. At the end of these three years the applicant may be invited by the Council to make the Definitive Promises to live the evangelical counsels and the spirit of the Beatitudes for life.

## VII

### ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT

37. The Secular Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa of Jesus is an association of the faithful and an integral part of the Discalced Carmelite Order. It is essentially lay in character, with the welcome participation of diocesan clergy<sup>[31]</sup>.

38. The friars and nuns of the Teresian Carmel consider the lay community of Secular Carmel an enrichment to their consecrated life. Through mutual interaction the friars and nuns wish to learn from the Secular Carmelites to recognize the signs of the times together with them. For

this reason, it will be arranged that representatives of the Secular Order are present when the apostolic service of the Order is planned in a geographical area, at a local or provincial level, or when serious study is made on the situation in the Church or in society.

39. All of Christ's faithful have the right to make vows<sup>[32]</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 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.

40. The Secular Order is basically structured on the local community as a visible sign of the Church. At the Provincial level and in the local communities, the Secular Order enjoys juridical personality<sup>[33]</sup>.

41. The Secular Order is juridically dependent on the Discalced Carmelite Friars<sup>[34]</sup>. The Superior General establishes the local communities and makes pastoral visitations. He may dispense, in particular cases from the Constitutions and local statutes and can grant juridical exceptions. He has the authority to resolve cases which are not foreseen by this legislation and which cannot be resolved by local authorities. A general Delegate assists the Superior General. His responsibility is to further relations between the Religious and the Seculars and to maintain contact with the Provincial Delegates and Assistants to each community to insure the purpose and well-being of the Secular Order.

42. The General Definitory of the Order approves the regional<sup>[35]</sup> and provincial statutes of the Secular Order<sup>[36]</sup>.

43. The Provincial Superior, usually aided by the Provincial Delegate, is the Superior of the Secular Order within his territory<sup>[37]</sup>. He is responsible for the well-being of the Secular Order within the territory of his jurisdiction. He is to make visitations of the communities in his jurisdiction and, after consultation with the Council, appoint a Spiritual Assistant for communities<sup>[38]</sup>. In case of disputes, appeal will be made in the first instance to the Provincial.

44. The Spiritual Assistant to each community is usually a friar of the Order. His duty is to give spiritual aid to the community so that its members may be guided in their vocation and may correspond with it as perfectly as possible. He will also endeavour to promote solidarity between the secular community and the friars and nuns of the Order. At the invitation of the Council he may attend meetings of the Council, without a right to vote. At the different stages of formation of the candidates, he will be available to interview them. The Council may consult him about the suitability of the candidate to assume the responsibility of the vocation to the Secular Order. He will support the formation of the community by his availability to the director of formation. However, he may not be the director of formation. The Spiritual Assistant must be well-versed in Carmelite spirituality and well-informed in the Church's teaching concerning the role of lay people in the Church.

45. Only the General of the Order for those territories where there are no friars, or the Provincial within his territory, may appoint as Assistant one who is not a friar of the Order, always with the consent of the candidate's own superior. The General Delegate or the Provincial Delegate will assist in this appointment by interviewing the candidate. They will look for the same qualities as mentioned in number 44 of these norms.

46. The Council, composed of the President and three Councilors and the Director of Formation, constitutes the immediate authority of the community. The primary responsibility of the Council is the formation and Christian and Carmelite maturing of the members of the community.

47. The Council has the authority:

- a) to admit candidates to formation, the Promises, and the Vows;
  - b) to reduce, for adequate reasons, the period of formation before temporary Promises, with the permission of the Provincial;
  - c) to convene the community for the triennial elections;
  - d) to replace, for a serious reason, a member of the Council itself<sup>[39]</sup>;
  - e) to dismiss a member of the community, should this be necessary, after consulting the Provincial<sup>[40]</sup>;
  - f) to receive a member transferring from another community;
  - g) if a matter should arise that is outside the competence of the Council, it is the obligation of the President to bring it to the attention of the Provincial.
- The Council meets frequently and always when necessary in reference to taking care of formation programs and the growth of their own community.

48. The General Superior, the Provincial Superior and the Council of the community are the legitimate superiors of the Secular Order.

49. For the establishment of a new community it is necessary to present to the General Secretary of the Secular Order the following documents:

- a. a list of the current members, at least 10 members are required to form a community, two of whom must have made definitive promises;
- b. a letter from the Provincial Delegate requesting the establishment of the community;
- c. the permission of the Ordinary of the Diocese in writing<sup>[41]</sup>;
- d. the title of the community;
- e. the place of the community meeting.

50. Every three years, each local community of the Secular Order elects its President and three Councilors<sup>[42]</sup>. These four officers, after consulting the Assistant, elect the Director of Formation from among those who have made definitive promises. The Council then names a Secretary and a Treasurer. The procedure for the elections is to be determined by the Provincial Statutes, respecting the complete liberty of the electors, the preferences of the majority of the members. For the President to be re-elected to a third term as President, the permission of the Provincial Superior is required.

51. The President, elected from among those who have made final promises, has the duty to convoke and preside over the meetings of the community. He should show fraternal service to all the members of the community; foster a spirit of Christian and Carmelite affability, being careful to avoid any demonstration of preference for some members over others; coordinate contacts with those members of the community who because of age, illness, distance or other reasons, are not able to attend meetings; aid the Director of Formation and Spiritual Assistant in carrying out their responsibilities; in their absence, but only temporarily, he may take their place or designate another to do so from among those who have made definitive promises.

52. The responsibility of the three Councilors is to form, with the President, the government of the community and to support the director of formation. Generally they are community members with definitive promises. In particular circumstances, members with first promises can serve as councilors.

53. The Director of Formation, elected by the Council from among those who have made definitive promises, has the responsibility of preparing the candidates for first and definitive promises. The Director works in collaboration with the Assistant and with the support of the President. In the absence of the President, the Director of Formation is his substitute for any function.

54. The Secretary of the Council has the responsibility of keeping up-to-date the register of the community, recording the elections, admissions, Promises and dismissals. The Secretary is to present the register to the Council when it meets and to the community at the time of the elections. The Secretary attends the Council meetings and records the minutes of the meeting, without the right to vote.

55. The duty of the Treasurer is to take charge of the administration of the funds of the community. The Treasurer is to present a report of the funds to the Council every six months, to the community and the Provincial, or Superior of the Circumscription, once a year<sup>[43]</sup>. The local statutes are to determine how the community attends to the needs of the poor.

56. Members of the Secular Order, who for reasons of distance, age, or illness cannot participate in the regular meetings of a community, remain members of the Secular Order and, under the authority of the Provincial Delegate, are to be associated to a particular community. It is the responsibility of the President of the community to establish contact with those members and the responsibility of these members to maintain contact with the community.

57. Where there is an organized circumscription of the friars of the Order, the Secular Order is to form a Provincial Council to assist one another better in formation and the apostolate, but not for intervening in the government of the local communities. The President of the Provincial Council ought to be a member of the Secular Order with definitive promises. The Provincial Council must submit its statutes to the General Definitory for approval.

58. The Provincial statutes are to determine the following:

the development of an adequate program of formation;  
the acceptance and formation of those new members who do not live near an established community; in every case these new candidates must be identified with and formed by an established community. They are considered members of that community;  
the procedure for elections and the responsibilities of the three councilors;  
the remembrances for the deceased members of the community;  
the circumstances and the conditions for taking vows;  
the minimum and maximum age to accept new members;  
the maximum number of members of a community before dividing the community to form another;  
the coordination of apostolic endeavours within the community or Province;  
the form and use of the external signs of membership in the Secular Order;  
the practices of mortification and expressions of devotion to our Blessed Mother and our Carmelite Saints.

59. If a Secular Order community does not belong to any particular Province, the community is to establish its own statutes to determine the above matters. This community submits its statutes to the General Definitory for approval.

60. Other structures may be introduced at national levels where there is more than one Province, or at an international level, should they be thought useful or necessary for formation, coordination of apostolates of the Order, and for organizing Congresses. They do not, however, have any jurisdictional authority. These regional councils are to submit their statutes to the General Definitory for approval.

## EPILOGUE

The Constitutions of the Secular Order were drawn up to strengthen the life purpose of its members, who form part of the Order of the Teresian Carmel. They are called to "to testify how the Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid response.....to the problems and hopes that life poses to every person and society"<sup>[44]</sup>. This they fulfil as Carmelite Seculars if, beginning with a commitment to contemplation, they succeed in giving daily witness in their

family and social life to “an integrated approach to life that is fully brought about by the inspiration and strength of the Gospel”<sup>[45]</sup>. As Carmelite Seculars, sons and daughters of Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross, they are called to “stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and a symbol of the living God”<sup>[46]</sup>, by means of a life of prayer, of service to evangelization and by means of the witness of a Christian and Carmelite community. “All the laity as a community and each one according to his ability must nourish the world with spiritual fruits (cf. Gal 5:22). They must diffuse in the world that spirit which animates the poor, the meek, the peace makers - whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed as blessed (cf. Mt 5:3-9). In a word, Christians (and Carmelites) must be to the world what the soul is to the body”<sup>[47]</sup>.

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- [1]. LG 31-35.  
[2]. LG 31; CL 9.  
[3]. CIC 204-205.  
[4]. Rule 1.  
[5]. L 8:5.  
[6]. Cf Lk 2:51.  
[7]. Cf Jn 2:5.  
[8]. Cf Ac 1:14  
[9]. Cf 1 K chapters 17-19.  
[10]. L 7:18, 38:16.  
[11]. WP 21:2.  
[12]. IC V:3:11, VII:4:6.  
[13]. Cf. Sayings 46; LF 3:78; II A chapter 6, 29:6; Collect of the votive Mass of St John of the Cross.  
[14]. Sayings: 123; Letter 12/X/1589: 19.  
[15]. Cf. III A 23:1.  
[16]. Prec 1 and 6  
[17]. Rule 2 and 10  
[18]. DV 25; WP 21:4; M 1: 6, 11.  
[19]. AA 4.  
[20]. WP 4:2.  
[21]. CL 33.  
[22]. See AA 4 and 10; CL 16-17, 25, 28-29.  
[23]. IC V:3:11; cf. VII:3.  
[24]. Cf. AA 2-3.  
[25] (cf Christus Dominus, 11; Apostolicam Actuositatem, 86; Chirstifideles Laici, 25)  
[26]. VC 55.  
[27]. *OCDS Rule of Life* (1979) art. 8  
[28]. MC 37.  
[29]. RM 37.  
[30]. AA 28-29.  
[31]. CIC 298, 301.  
[32]. *Ritual*, Instruction: 9; 30-49.  
[33]. CIC 301, 303-306, 313.  
[34]. CIC 305, 311-315.  
[35]. “regional” refers to nations or a geographical territory of more than one province of the friars.  
[36]. CIC 307 ' 1; 314.  
[37]. CIC 328-329. *Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelite Friars* 103, Norms 56.  
[38]. CIC 317.  
[39]. CIC 318.  
[40]. CIC 308 and 316.  
[41]. CIC 312 ' 2.  
[42]. CIC 309.  
[43]. CIC 319.  
[44]. CL 34  
[45]. CL 34.  
[46]. LG 38  
[47]. LG 38.