

**A Touch of OCDS History**  
by  
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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 13<sup>th</sup> century asked St Albert for a Rule. One would consider that the order was officially created with the giving 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>1</sup>

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>2</sup>

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>3</sup>

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 including 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>4, 5</sup>

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>6</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.

In actuality, the early Discalced Carmelites were rather disinclined to have tertiaries. When Fr. Jerome Gracian 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>7</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>8</sup>

Toward the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

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>9</sup>

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.

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>10</sup>

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. 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>11, 12</sup>

A trial version of the Rule was received in Oct 1970 for a 5 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>13, 14</sup> The final version of the Rule was approved in 1979 but was not until 1982 that it was printed in English.<sup>15</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>16</sup>

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.

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 community, 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.

In spring 2002, a draft of the constitutions was released. Fr. Aloysius, our Secretary General (and from our province) 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 5 year experimental period. On June 19<sup>th</sup>, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life\* approved the Constitutions definitely, not experimentally. However, Fr. Aloysius does plan to receive feedback over the next five years and then ask for amendments/revision.

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 Felix decided that a Congress of Tertiaries in the Southwest should be organized to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Third Order (marking when Bl John Soreth received permission to start it).<sup>17</sup>

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).

Currently 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>18</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.

## References:

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