



*Constitutions of the Secular Order
of Our Lady of Mount Carmel
and Saint Teresa of Jesus*

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, opened to all by baptism. Through Baptism we take part in the triple mission of Jesus: regal, 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.¹

The great Teresian Carmelite family is present in the world in many forms. The nucleus of this family is the Order of Discalced Carmelites: 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.

¹ Lumen Gentium 31-35.

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.

OUR IDENTITY, VALUES AND COMMITMENT

1. Secular Carmelites, 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.

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,² called to live "in allegiance to Jesus Christ"³ through "friendship with the One we know loves us"⁴ 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,⁵ providing for us an example of contemplation. At Cana she

² Code of Canon Law 204-205.

³ Rule [of St Albert], 1.

⁴ Life [of St Teresa], 8,5.

⁵ Cf. Lk 2:51.

counseled to do what the Lord commanded.⁶ Mary is an example of apostolic service. On another occasion, she waited, persevering in prayer with the apostles,⁷ 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 Carmelite lives 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.⁸

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.

⁶ Cf. Jn 2:5.

⁷ Cf. Acts 1:14

⁸ Cf. 1 K chapters 17-19.

7. The origin of the Discalced Carmel is to be found in St Teresa of Jesus. She lived with profound faith in God's mercy⁹ which strengthened her to persevere¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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.¹²

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;¹³

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;

⁹ Life 7:18, 38:16.

¹⁰ Way of Perfection 21:2.

¹¹ Interior Castle V:3:11, VII:4:6.

¹² Cf. Sayings 46; LF = Living Flame 3:78; II A = Ascent chapter 6, 29:6; Collect of the votive Mass of St John of the Cross.

¹³ Maxims & Counsels, 40; Letter 12/X/1589: 19.

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.

FOLLOWING JESUS IN THE TERESIAN SECULAR CARMEL

10. Christ is the center 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 fulfill 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 the married life, both as spouses and as parents. This promise is renewed once a year at Easter time.

The commitment of 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.¹⁴ In this promise the Secular Carmelite seeks the freedom to love God

¹⁴ Cf. III A = Ascent 23:1.

and neighbor unselfishly¹⁵ 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 of 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 in 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 of 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” (Acts 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 of 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, neighbors and co-workers, families and friends. By promising to live the beatitudes in daily life,

¹⁵ Precautions 1 and 6

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)

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”.¹⁶ 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 fulfillment 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.”¹⁷ God’s Word will nourish the contemplative experience of Secular Carmelites 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 Secular Carmelite will be able to see through events and discover God in everything.

19. Occupying a privileged place in nourishing the prayer life of Secular Carmelites 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 the commitment to follow Jesus.

20. The Secular Carmelite 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 personal and intimate meeting with Him. This will lead to living 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

¹⁶ Rule 2 and 10

¹⁷ Dei Verbum 25; Way of Perf. 21:4; Meditations on the Song of Songs 1: 6, 11.

relation to mankind's final goal.”¹⁸ Thus they will achieve a union of contemplation and action in history, integrating faith and life, prayer and action, contemplation and Christian commitment.

21. Secular Carmelites 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 of 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.”¹⁹ Secular Carmelites accept from the viewpoint of faith, hope and love, the work and suffering of each day, family worries, the uncertainty and limitations in 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 Order 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 Secular Carmelite, 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 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. Secular Carmelites strive to discover in liturgical prayer the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit, living and demanding something of us in the 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, as far as possible, in the celebration of the Eucharist. They will try to recite Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer of the Hours in union with the Church spread through the world. When it is possible

¹⁸ Apostolicam Actuositatem 4.

¹⁹ Way of Perfection 4:2.

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.

a) The Church, the family of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is a mystery of communion.²⁰ In fact, Jesus came among us to reveal to us this Trinitarian love and the vocation to participate in a communion of love with the Most Holy Trinity; this is something to which every human person created in God's image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-27) is called. In light of this mystery, the true identity and dignity of every human being, and specifically of every member of the Church, is revealed.²¹ Being spiritual in nature, the human person grows and matures by being in an authentic relationship with God and with others.²²

Therefore, the local community of the Secular Order of the Teresian Carmel, a visible sign of the Church and of the Order²³, is a place to live and promote personal and communal fellowship with God in Christ and in the Spirit and with other brothers and sisters (cf. Rom 8:29) in accordance with the teresian charism. The person of Christ is at the center of the Community. Members meet regularly in his name (cf. Mt 18:20), drawing inspiration from the group formed by Jesus and the twelve Apostles (cf. Mc 3:14-16, 34-35)²⁴ as well as the early Christian communities (cf. Acts 2:42, 4, 32-35). They seek to live in accordance with the unity requested by Jesus (Jn 17:20-23) and his commandment to love as He loves them (Jn 13:34). They promise to strive for evangelical perfection²⁵ in the spirit of the evangelical counsels, of the Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12) and of the Christian virtues (cf. Col 3:12-17, Phil 2:15), and in the awareness that this reality of communion is an integral part of Carmelite spirituality.

b) St. Teresa of Jesus initiated a new model of community life. Her ideal of community life is based on the certainty of faith that the Risen Jesus is in the midst of the community and that it lives under the protection of the Virgin Mary.²⁶ She is aware that she and her nuns are gathered together to help the Church and to collaborate in its mission. Relations are marked by the virtues of a love that is genuine, gratuitous, free and unselfish, as well as by detachment and humility. These are fundamental virtues for the spiritual life and they bring peace both internally and externally.²⁷

²⁰ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 4; *Gaudium et spes*, 24; cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 19. *Ratio Institutionis OCDS*, 25. Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Congregavit in uno Christi amor*, 8-9.

²¹ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 8.

²² Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et spes*, 23.; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 34. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, 54. Cf. n. 34.

²³ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 40.

²⁴ Cf. St Teresa of Jesus, *Way of Perfection*, 24.5; 26.1; 27.6. *Way* (Escorial), 20.1.

²⁵ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 11.

²⁶ Cf. St Teresa of Jesus, *Life*, 32.11; *Way of Perfection*, 17.7; 1.5; 3.1.

²⁷ St Teresa, *Way*, 4.4, 11.6-7; cf. *Interior Castle*, V, 3.7-12.

Teresa is aware of the importance of mutual support on the road of prayer and the importance of friendship with others in the common search for God.²⁸ She also considers as fundamental to such friendship, culture, the human virtues, gentleness, empathy, prudence, discretion, simplicity, kindness, joy and availability, as we seek to “walk in truth before God and people”.²⁹

The doctrine of St. John of the Cross points to union with God by means of the theological virtues.³⁰ Based on this principle, the Saint also sees the purifying and unifying effect of the theological virtues in sisterly and brotherly relations. This is particularly so in the exercise of love for others: “Where there is no love, put love, and you will draw out love”, because that is what the Lord does: by loving us, He makes us capable of loving.³¹

c) A person, loyal to their Christian faith, begins to be part of the Secular Order through the promise made to the Community before the Superior of the Order.³² With the promise, a person is committed to live in communion with the Church, with the Order, with the Province and especially with those who are part of the Community, loving them and encouraging them in the practice of the virtues.³³ In smaller communities³⁴ it is possible to establish a true and deep relationship of human and spiritual friendship, as well as mutual support in charity and humility.

St. Teresa appreciates the assistance of another in the spiritual life: love grows where this is respectful dialogue, the purpose of which is to know oneself better so as to be pleasing to God.³⁵ Community meetings take place in a congenial atmosphere of dialogue and sharing.³⁶ Prayer, formation and a joyful atmosphere are essential for deepening friendly relationships and ensuring for everyone mutual support in the daily living out of the Teresian Carmelite lay vocation in the family, at work and in other social situations. This requires regular and active participation in the life and meetings of the Community. Absences are only allowed for serious and just reasons, evaluated and agreed to with those in charge. The Provincial Statutes are to

²⁸ Cf. St Teresa of Jesus, *Life*, 15.5; 23.4.

²⁹ Cf. St Teresa of Jesus, *Interior Castle*, VI, 10.6; cf. *Way* 40.3, 41.7.

³⁰ Cf. St John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mt Carmel* II, 6.1; *Precautions*, 5.

³¹ St John of the Cross, *Letter* 26 to M. Maria of the Incarnation, 6 July 1591; cf. *Letter* 30, to a religious of Segovia; *Ascent* III, 23.1; *Dark Night*, 1, 2.1; 5.2; 7.1; 12.7-8. Cf. *Sayings*, 27.

³² Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 12.

³³ Cf. *Interior Castle* VII, 4.14-15.

³⁴ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 58g and the Provincial Statutes on the maximum number of members in a Community.

³⁵ Cf. St Teresa, *Life*, 7.22; 16.7.

³⁶ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 18.

establish a limit on unjustifiable absences, beyond which, an individual will be considered inactive and liable for dismissal from the Community.

d) The collective and individual responsibility of the Community for formation³⁷ requires that each individual member commit to fraternal communion, in the belief that a spirituality of communion plays an essential role in the deepening of the spiritual life and formation process of the members. The Eucharistic life lived in faith³⁸ and attentiveness to the Word of God³⁹ help create and sustain communion.

The local authority of the Community fulfills its service in faith, love and humility (cf. Mt 20:28; Mk 10:43-45, Jn 13:14). It encourages a familial atmosphere as well as the human and spiritual growth of all the members. It promotes dialogue, personal sacrifice, forgiveness and reconciliation. It avoids all attachment to power and favoritism in the exercise of office.

Prayer for one another, mutual concern that includes instances where there is material need, contact with members who are far away, visiting the sick, the suffering, the elderly, and prayer for the deceased members, are also signs of communion.

The Secular Carmelites also realizes and expresses communion through meeting and solidarity with other communities, especially within the same Province or Circumscription, as well as through communication and collaboration with the entire Order and family of the Teresian Carmel.

So, with this witness to communion in accordance with the Teresian charism, the Community of the Secular Carmel cooperates with the evangelizing mission of the Church in the midst of the world.⁴⁰

e) 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 Church⁴¹, but likewise members must faithfully fulfill their duties in relation to the community, as laid down in the Constitutions.

In order to dismiss⁴² a member for the reasons set out in the Code of Canon Law (public rejection of the Catholic faith, abandonment of ecclesiastical communion, or being under

³⁷ *OCDS Ratio*, 28.

³⁸ John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43.

³⁹ Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, 40.

⁴⁰ Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 13.19. John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, 31-32. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 20.

⁴¹ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 208-223; 224-231.

⁴² Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, 308; Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 47-e.

imposed or declared excommunication⁴³) or other provisions in the Provincial Statutes, the Community Council shall observe the following procedure: 1) verify the certainty of the facts; 2) warn the member in writing or before two witnesses; 3) allow a reasonable time for repentance. If after all this there is no change, it is permitted, after consulting the Provincial, to proceed with the dismissal. In all cases, the member retains the right to appeal to the competent ecclesiastical authority.⁴⁴

In the case where a member, after a serious evaluation and discernment with the Community Council comes to the decision to voluntarily leave the Community, the request is to be made in writing to the competent authority of the Community, to whom they are committed by reason of their promises.⁴⁵ The Provincial is to be informed of all of this.

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."⁴⁶ 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 witness to God's presence,⁴⁷ 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, Secular Carmelites 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"⁴⁸ reminds the Secular Order that graces received ought to have an effect on those who receive them.⁴⁹ Individually or as a community and, above all as members of the Church, apostolic activity is the fruit

⁴³ *Code of Canon Law*, can. 316§1.

⁴⁴ Id. Can. 316§2. Cf. can. 312§2.

⁴⁵ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 12.

⁴⁶ *Christifideles Laici* 33.

⁴⁷ See *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 4 and 10; *Christifideles Laici* 16-17, 25, 28-29.

⁴⁸ *Interior Castle* V:3:11; cf. VII:3.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2-3.

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.⁵⁰ 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 evangelizing mission under the direction of the bishop. For this reason, each one will have an apostolate, either in collaboration 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",⁵¹ 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 environments.⁵²

WITH MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS

29. In the interior dynamism of following Jesus, Carmel has contemplated Mary as Mother and Sister, as "the perfect model of the disciple of the Lord"⁵³ 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.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Christus Dominus*, 11; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 26; *Christifideles Laici*, 25

⁵¹ *Vita Consecrata* 55.

⁵² *OCDS Rule of Life* (1979) art. 8

⁵³ *Mariatus Cultus* 37.

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”,⁵⁴ helps us understand the meaning of mission. She, Mother and Sister, who goes before us in the pilgrimage of faith and in following the Lord Jesus, keeps us company so that we may imitate her in 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 in order 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 honor.

a) In the Teresian Carmel, love of Mary, Mother and Queen, is united with love of her spouse Saint Joseph. The Father also gave him, “a just man” (Mt 1:19), guardianship of his Son Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Incarnation.

Following the example of St. Teresa, members can find in St. Joseph a role model for a life of humble adoration and prayerful communion with Jesus, as well as a master of prayer⁵⁵ and silence. Patron of the interior life, he is an example of faith and of being “constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God’s presence and receptive to God’s plans”⁵⁶. Being a chaste and faithful spouse, he is the model of a father solicitous in care of the family and of a responsible laborer who considers his work as an “expression of love”⁵⁷.

In communion with the Church and the Order, who venerate him as their “provident Protector”⁵⁸, members of the Secular Order find in Saint Joseph an incomparable protector to whom they can entrust the hopes, the struggles and the work of every day.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ *Redemptoris Mater* 37.

⁵⁵ Cf. St Teresa of Jesus, *Life*, 6.6-8; 33.12. Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor Custos*, 25, 27.

⁵⁶ Francis, *Homily for the inauguration of his Pontificate*, 19 March 2013.

⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 22-23.

⁵⁸ *Constitutions of the OCDS Friars*, 52; cf. *Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelites*, 59.

⁵⁹ “St Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies; ...he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need for great things – it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic.” (Paul VI *Insegnamenti* VII, 1969, cited in John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 24).

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, Secular Carmelites seek to be men and women who are mature in the practice of their 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 Secular Carmelite a human, Christian and spiritual maturity for service to the Church. Human formation develops the ability for interpersonal dialogue, mutual respect, tolerance, the possibility of being corrected and correcting with serenity, and the capacity to persevere in our 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 laity⁶⁰ 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.

⁶⁰ Apostolicam Actuositatum 28-29.

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 gives 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.

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.⁶¹

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

⁶¹ Code of Canon Law 298, 301.

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 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.⁶² 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.⁶³

41. The Secular Order is juridically dependent on the Discalced Carmelite Friars.⁶⁴ 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 welfare of the Secular Order.

42. The General Definitory of the Order approves the regional,⁶⁵ provincial, and local statutes of the Secular Order.⁶⁶

⁶² Ritual, Instruction: 9; 30-49.

⁶³ Code of Canon Law 301, 303-306, 313.

⁶⁴ Code of Canon Law 305, 311-315.

⁶⁵ "Regional" refers to nations or a geographical territory of more than one province of the friars.

⁶⁶ CIC = Code of Canon Law 307 '1; 314.

43. The Provincial Superior, usually aided by the Provincial Delegate, is the Superior of the Secular Order within his territory.⁶⁷ 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.⁶⁸ 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 endeavor 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 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;

⁶⁷ CIC 328-329. Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelite Friars 103, Norms 56.

⁶⁸ CIC 317.

- d) to replace, for a serious reason, a member of the Council itself;⁶⁹
- e) to dismiss a member of the community, should this be necessary, after consulting the Provincial;⁷⁰
- 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;⁷¹
- 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.⁷² 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.

⁶⁹ CIC = Code of Canon Law 318.

⁷⁰ CIC 308 and 316.

⁷¹ Code of Canon Law 312 '2.

⁷² Code of Canon Law 309.

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.⁷³ 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.

⁷³ Code of Canon Law 319.

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:

- a) the development of an adequate program of formation;
- b) 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;
- c) the procedure for elections and the responsibilities of the three councilors;
- d) the remembrances for the deceased members of the community;
- e) the circumstances and the conditions for taking vows;
- f) the minimum and maximum age to accept new members;
- g) the maximum number of members of a community before dividing the community to form another;
- h) the coordination of apostolic endeavors within the community or Province;
- i) the form and use of the external signs of membership in the Secular Order;
- j) the practices of mortification and expressions of devotion to our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph 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. The 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 testify how the Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid response... to the problems and hopes that life poses to every person and society.”⁷⁴ This they fulfill as Secular Carmelites 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.”⁷⁵

As Secular Carmelites, 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,”⁷⁶ 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.”⁷⁷

⁷⁴ CL = Christifideles Laici 34

⁷⁵ CL 34.

⁷⁶ Lumen Gentium 38.

⁷⁷ Lumen Gentium 38.

