

The Value of Attending OCDS Meetings
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What is so valuable about attending the monthly Carmelite Secular meeting that it is now mandated? I believe it is due to a growth in self-understanding that faithful attendance has become part of our constitutions.

The following are some good reasons why regular attendance is necessary:

- To obtain support from each other in living the Carmelite way of life.
- To learn Carmelite spirituality more surely.
- To foster a sense of belonging to the Carmelite family and to strengthen the bonds of spiritual friendships.
- To counteract worldliness and baneful secularism.
- To provide an opportunity to share Carmelite spirituality with those of a kindred spirit.
- To inculcate a spirit of discipline and effort to be present and keep current on required spiritual reading.
- To be spiritually enriched by the special presence of the Lord Jesus when we gather in his name (Mt 18:20).
- To hear the teachings of our holy parents Teresa and John as they are read and explained at the meetings, which are essential to maintain our Carmelite charism.
- To form the kind of close-knit community that is knowledgeable about the Carmelite charism in order to be able to live on a high spiritual level and bring Carmelites Secular up to par with the religious.
- To hear each month the renewed call to excellence and holy living.
- To greatly enhance the personal enrichment of the individual by the association and assimilation of the richness of the gifts of the greater community.
- To quicken the spiritualization of each member by the sacrifice of leaving one's self and preferences, thus leading them in the way of self-immolation in imitation of Jesus.
- To challenge the members to willingly and joyfully embrace God's will and call to the intensification of the Gospel way of life according to the Carmelite way, which has produced an extraordinary number of saints.
- To be vivified by the spiritual prodding each month from the teachings of our Carmelite parents and saints so we do not become complacent and overtaken by the terrible vice of spiritual sloth.
- To be prompted to live the spiritual life with all its intended intensity and thus live on the level of spirit so that we can enjoy full fruition of the kingdom of God in close association with the joy of the Master (Mt 25:14-30).
- To regularly foster the need to hear the Gospel call to holy detachment so that we will remain free for God and to fulfill the great commandment to love him with all our heart.
- To experience another opportunity to be near Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament.

- To participate in the joy and rich experience of chanting the divine office together and to be nourished by its divinely inspired words.
- To experience communion with God in each other and learn to treasure holy socializing.
- To experience the joy of communing with holy people and the polished image of God becoming more and more refined and radiant.

The Precautions
The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross
 Older book: Pg. 656-660
 Newer Book: Pg. 720-724

Against the Word
 The Third Precaution: No. 8, 9 (See James 3:1-12.)

Against the Devil
 The Second Precaution: No. 12, 13

Against the Flesh
 The First Precaution: No. 15

These *Precautions* are repeated in different words and variation in *Counsels to Religious on How to Reach Perfection*. Nos. 2, 3, 4; [Pg. 662-663(Older Book); Pg. 725-727 (Newer Book)]
 These *Precautions* and *Counsels* tell us how to live in community so as to be able to profit from the experience and attain perfection.

Afterthought by Gerald Alford:

The goal of our formation is to discern and prepare us for Definitive Promise, and then to enhance and sustain our living out that commitment for the rest of our lives. It is the Promise that makes us Carmelites, members of the Order and of the community to which we belong. Therefore, it is helpful to reflect upon the points presented above in terms of the Evangelical counsels to which we commit ourselves by our Promise.

By attending the meetings of our community we experience what it means to live with others in a relationship of chaste loving and strive to extend this experience to all our relationships. Our faithful attendance requires the spirit of poverty whereby we learn to lay down our lives for our friends by being present to and with them in community, which sometimes means sacrificing our desire to be somewhere else or do something else that seems more pleasurable to the senses. Our regular attendance too is a demonstration of our spirit of obedience since our Constitutions and Provincial Statutes call us to regular attendance.

Being faithful to attendance in community is a concrete way of practicing the Counsels we strive to follow by virtue of the Theological Virtues upon which these counsels are based so that our lives become more and more characterized by the happiness and blessings of the Beatitudes.

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