

Saint Albert of Jerusalem

17 September 2009

To the Provincial Superiors, Provincial Delegates and members of the Secular Order,

My Dear brother and sister Carmelites,

The General Definitory is happy to present the Ratio Institutionis of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites. The text of this Ratio was developed over the period of the previous sexennium by the General Secretariat for the Secular Order. It was presented in substance to the General Chapter of Fatima in April of this present year. The Chapter members made some suggestions. After incorporating the suggestions in the text, it was presented to the General Definitory. The Definitory also made some amendments to the text and approved the English translation of final version in June of 2009. During the summer of 2009 careful attention was paid to the Italian, Spanish and French translation. All of these texts have now been finalized.

A Ratio Institutionis is not in itself a formation programme. Each jurisdiction of the Order is responsible for the design and application of its own programme of formation. The Ratio is a document which seeks to present the fundamental principles that guide the process of formation, the philosophy behind the formation of the members of the institute. Formation is done in the name of the Order in each of its territories and jurisdictions. There is always, and there must be, a local flavour to the formation given in the local community. As there is always, and there must be, a general direction that guides the formation. This document presents those guiding principles.

The document comes in two main parts. The first part, from numbers 1 to 93 is the Ratio, accompanied by two sections. The first section contains those numbers of the Constitutions which touch on the theme of formation. The second section is a presentation of principles to help in the discernment of the vocation to the Secular Order. The second part is a model of a developed programme of formation. It is offered as a model. Each jurisdiction of the Order is responsible for developing its own programme of formation. Any Province that has already developed a programme and has submitted it to the General Definitory for approval will substitute its own programme in the place of this model.

I present this Ratio Institutionis in the name of the General Definitory with the sincere hope that it will guide the members of our Secular Order to a deeper appreciation of their call to holiness in love of God and service to the Church.

Saverio Cannistrà, OCD

Superior General

RATIO INSTITUTIONIS OF THE SECULAR ORDER

1. This Ratio Institutionis seeks to present the purpose of a program of formation for the members of the Secular Order of Carmel and to offer a general outline of a syllabus to achieve that formation.

2. Article 46 of the Constitutions of the Secular Order states in the first sentence the composition of the “immediate authority” of the OCDS community. In the second sentence it specifies as the “primary responsibility” of that authority “formation and Christian and Carmelite maturing of the members of the community.” The primary responsibility of the defined authority according to the OCDS Constitutions is the formation of the entire community.

3. This is to indicate the purpose of the existence of communities of the Secular Order. Our communities have as specific understanding the Carmelite identity in the world today and the service that identity necessitates to God, the Church, the Order and the world. Governance, in the sense of control or organization, comes as a secondary and supportive role to the primary purpose. In fact, if the formation is adequate governance becomes minimal.

4. Number 32 of the Constitutions states that the purpose of formation is “to prepare the person to live the spirituality of Carmel”. This sentence of the Constitutions gives a very important emphasis to the purpose of formation, indicating those elements that are not the priorities in the program of formation. The purpose of the formation program is not to produce experts in Carmelite spirituality, nor to obtain a university degree in spirituality or spiritual theology.

5. The purpose is to “prepare the person”. The stress on the person who is to be prepared helps the formation community understand that the process must be directed to the individual in a concrete way. The people who come to the Secular Order of Carmel are, with few exceptions, people who have many commitments, especially with families and with work. The program of formation must be flexible enough to adapt to the circumstances of each person who is to become a member.

6. The purpose of formation is the preparation of individuals inspired by the Holy Spirit to live a spiritual life according to the principles of Discalced Carmelite spirituality. Only when this is clearly understood, will the Council then be able to help the individuals either new members or those already present. This also underlines the need for an adequate discernment of the call to Carmel.

7. Good formation depends on good information. At the same time it must be clear that formation is distinct from information. The primary role of the person responsible for formation in the Secular Order community is to accompany those in formation, to help them put into practice what they learn through the process of formation. The information they are given through reading and classes is meant to be a help to the person’s spiritual growth.

8. It will a great help to the functioning of the formation program if the person who is responsible for formation in the name of the community forms a team for the presentation of the necessary materials. There may be some in the community who are able to present certain themes or topics and others capable of other input, which, altogether will present a more effective program. This also helps to reduce the burden on the person responsible for formation.

9. The period of introduction to the life of the Secular Carmel is a process of six years duration. This process is described in the Constitutions, number 36 as “gradual”. In addition to flexibility on the part of both the beginner and the community, both must also be patient with the process to do things step-by-step. Generally, those who approach the Secular Order are sincere in their love of God and desire for a deeper spiritual life. They often come with a love of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the scapular. They come to Carmel already convinced of the need to pray. And generally, these convictions and these desires need to be guided by sound theological, liturgical and spiritual principles.

10. The community, the Council, the formator, those who give classes, and the Spiritual Assistant of the community must be willing to help the new members of the community by example and by direction. And the new members themselves must be intellectually and personally open to the new ways of the spiritual life they will find in Carmel.

11. In the program of formation as outlined in the Constitutions it is always the Council that has the right and the obligation to discern the progress of the candidates. It is always the Council that has the right to admit the candidates to each stage of the formation process. For this reason, the Council itself must be interested in the process of formation and support the formation director in his or her task.

12. The Constitutions themselves offer the basic and most necessary elements of formation. The syllabus presented here is intended to be a guide to the Secular Order throughout the world. It contains a process of going through the material of formation in an organized way. The essential elements are presented and ought to be included in any program of formation. It must, however, be adapted according to the circumstances of each nation and region.

ESSENTIALS OF FORMATION

13. Human Formation develops our:

- ability for interpersonal dialogue, mutual respect and tolerance
- readiness to the possibility of being corrected and to correct others with serenity
- capacity to persevere in our commitments

14. Christian Formation enhances our:

- capability to receive the necessary theological foundation by means of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and Church Documents
- appreciation of our baptismal consecration
- zeal for conversion, Christian commitment and holiness of life
- fervour to live the demands of following Jesus by taking part in His saving mission in unfolding our prophetic, kingly and priestly calling.

15. Carmelite Formation confirms our Carmelite identity in the:

- study and spiritual reading of the Scriptures and in the practice of *Lectio Divina*
- importance of the liturgy of the Church, especially the Eucharist and the *Liturgy of the Hours*
- spirituality of Carmel, its history, the writings of the Order's Saints
- formation in prayer and meditation
- formation for the apostolate based on the teaching of the Church and on understanding our role as Seculars in the apostolate of the Order

Agents of formation in the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmel

The Principal Educator: the Holy Spirit

16. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, is the principal teacher of the Church. The one called to life in Carmel, aware of the indwelling grace of the Spirit, should become conscious of that ineffable Presence. It

will lead to a knowledge of the truth, especially with regard to a personal vocation. The Spirit, infused to bring about a new birth through Baptism, animates the one called to live the mystery of the Trinity in an ever deeper way, and also to bear more abundant fruit by the gift of self (realized in “good works, good works”).

The Blessed Virgin Mary

17. Intimately united with the action of the Holy Spirit is that of the Virgin Mary. Mother of Christ and our Mother, she is involved in the spiritual life of everyone, but especially in that of one called to life in Carmel. Under her protection, expressed in Carmel by the scapular, all those in formation in the Order are spiritually protected and formed. Mary, the Mother of believers, is for us a model of committed and prophetic contemplation. She welcomed the Good News with enlightened discernment, and promptly undertook its demands. She treasured the Word, pondering on it prayerfully in her heart, and proclaimed it freely and courageously in the Magnificat. This contemplative-apostolic example of hers should be stressed in the course of formation, to help the students understand and practice what it really means to follow Christ. Mary is the perfect model of a disciple of the Lord.

The Church

18. The Church is inseparable from Christ. He established it as a sign and instrument of his salvific design. It is the People of God journeying throughout the ages as it goes to meet its Lord. In the Church the evangelizing presence and activity of Jesus is prolonged on earth through the preaching of the word, and through the sacraments; which are agents of grace to counteract the agents of sin in society. In following Christ, the Carmelite secular has the support and nourishment of the Church. By the Promise the Carmelite secular manifests more than ever the inherent power of the sacraments, especially Baptism, the Eucharist, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Every candidate, then, should become immersed in the reality that is Church, which calls on him to strive for holiness. In response, the one called will experience a growing need to give himself to the Church in some way.

The Carmelite Order

19. The Order of the Discalced Carmelites constitutes a specific, charismatic and legal religious family. The communities of the Secular Order depend juridically on the Discalced Carmelite friars (religious Order) and thus have a character distinct from other associations the faithful. The religious superiors have a responsibility toward these communities according to Constitutions of each branch. The Constitutions which govern the communities of the Secular Order give them a specific and legitimate autonomy.

20. The Lord brought the religious family of the Discalced Carmelites into existence, equipped it with its proper charism and continues to direct it by His Spirit. The Secular Order receives new vocations with joy but also with a feeling of responsibility, so that in them also the charism may be daily understood more deeply, bear fruit and expand. The new candidates are an enriching grace and a springboard for real spiritual renewal for the local Secular Order community.

21. The Discalced Carmel, after the example of its Founders, has its own formation program. It has its own style, based on persons who were so mature in their faith as to be saints and authorities for the whole Church: the Doctors, Teresa of Jesus, John of the Cross and Saint Thérèse. The tradition begun as a result of the lived experience of Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross constitutes the formative patrimony which pervades Carmel. Today the task of the Order is that of continuing the uninterrupted line of educators who prepare for our times men and women for the Church, just as Elizabeth of the Trinity, Edith Stein and Raphael Kalinowski were.

The Candidate

22. It is the candidate who have the primary responsibility for a “yes” to the call and for accepting the consequences of a personal response. This does not mean that the candidate must be the arbiter of own their destiny or self-educated; deep down in the conscience the candidate knows the need of divine and human assistance. The candidate will be open to a continuous growth in Gospel wisdom, which is a far cry from that of the world.

23. The candidate is called to profound dialogue with God in prayer. But this would be meaningless in the absence of a trusting relationship with the members of his community, especially the educators. With a progression suitable to the various stages, the candidate should get a clearer idea of how important, indeed necessary, our charism is for personal life. To do so, the candidate should learn from the example of those experienced seculars who are living Carmelite spirituality and sharing it with those in formation, and also with the important documents of our family: the Constitutions and the writings of our saints.

The Community

24. The secular community of Carmel is an association of Christ’s faithful, inspired by the ideal of the primitive church which had “only one heart and soul” (Acts 4, 32). Its members are animated by the spirituality of the Discalced Carmel.

25. The secular community expresses the mystery of the Church-Communion. Indeed, it arises from the communion between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit by which it is nourished; it takes part in the mission of the church of calling the people to this communion (LG 1, 19).

26. Fraternal life is inspired initially by the “primitive” rule of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Mount Carmel given by Saint Albert, patriarch of Jerusalem and confirmed by Innocent IV. Faithful to the teaching of our Holy Mother Teresa, the members are conscious that their commitment cannot be carried out by one alone; their fraternal life is a privileged place where they are deepened, formed and matured.

27. It is Christ in his Pascal mystery who is the model and sustainer of fraternal life. This fraternal life constitutes an evangelical way of conversion which requires the courage of self-renunciation to accept and accommodate the other within the community. This renunciation becomes a way of life, in order to live as Jesus did.

28. Because of this identity of the Secular Order Carmelite community, it is the appropriate place for the formation of the candidate seeking admission. The community should give a good example of how to live Secular Carmelite life, even if it does not reach the ideal. Only by way of exception, in extraordinary circumstances, may a candidate enter the Order as an isolated member. The secular order community as a whole, and each of its members, have a formative responsibility, to be fulfilled in the manner determined in cooperation with the Director of formation and the Council.

29. The Community Council will take special care to select suitable seculars for the formation team, people of prayer and culture, open-minded and anxious to share their Carmelite experience with the candidates. Provided the formators all agree in their objectives and methods, the better qualified and even diverse they are, the more successful will be the education of the candidates. An important formative role is exercised in the community by senior, ill or otherwise incapacitated members who, in their regular contact with the candidates, should be a very good example by reason of their experience.

The President of the Community

30. First among brothers and sisters, the president, together with the Council, directs the community in a spirit of faith and is heard in the same spirit in an atmosphere of dialogue. In exercising the service of authority, the president must not fail to use it, but the role should be one of service rather than that of a control. Let the chief concern be to establish communion in a spirit of charity.

31. It is the task of the president to see that the Council team draws up a suitable program, guide its implementation. The president arranges that Council meet to review the program and consider changes. All of this should be done with prudent regard for the competence and independence of the Director and collaborators.

The Director of Formation

32. The Carmelite secular who is directly in charge of formation is given the title of Director. The director should be a person of mature faith and well versed in the Carmelite life. As indeed each secular should be who is in charge of the candidates during any one of the stages of formation.

33. All that is mentioned here applies to every member of the formation team; it deals with the essential points valid for every stage of formation. In due course, mention will be made of the features that are proper to each stage.

34. The principal task of the Director is to accompany, following closely the progress of each candidate. Next to the candidate, the director is the main contributor to the formation process. The director is in a privileged position, for which grace will not be lacking. For this reason the director will consider himself or herself a humble disciple and a servant of the one Director, Jesus Christ. At the same time, the director is aware that he or she is fulfilling an important role of mediation between the candidate on the one hand and the Church and the Order on the other. The community Council may appoint one or more assistants to help in the direct work of formation. They are to form with the director a small team who should work together in harmony.

35. The Council retains its responsibility and competence in those matters laid down in the Constitutions, namely, regarding the suitability of candidates and the consent for admission to formation, to first promises, for final promises, and for vows. Special deference will be given to the judgment of the Director and his assistants because of their position in the work of formation.

36. A Proposed Methodology:

1. Formation class starts and ends with prayer
2. Morning Praise or Evening Prayer with time given for silent prayer
3. Discussions and lectures
4. Points for Reflection
5. Points for Study and Discussion
6. Film showing and other audio-visuals
7. Retreat, immersion and desert experiences

37. Basic Resources for a Program of formation:

1. The Holy Scriptures
2. The Liturgy of the Hours
3. Catechism of the Catholic Church

- 4 Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*
5. Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*
6. Dogmatic Constitution of the Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*
- 7 Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*
8. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World *Christifideles Laici*
9. Pope Paul VI, *Marialis Cultus*
10. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary *Redemptoris Mater*
11. General Instructions on The Liturgy of the Hours
12. The Rule of St. Albert
13. The OCDS Constitutions
14. The Provincial Statutes
15. The Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus
16. The Works of Saint John of the Cross
17. The Works of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus
18. The Works of Edith Stein
19. The Works of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity

In addition to the above listed references it will be necessary that each region augment the possible resources with those things that are available in the region and in local languages.

APPENDIXES

I. Formation in the Constitutions of the Secular Order (Extracts)

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. (OCDS Constitutions, 1)

2. The members of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites are: faithful members of the Church; called to “live in allegiance to Jesus Christ” through “friendship with the One we know loves us” in service to the Church; under the protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel; in the biblical tradition of the prophet Elijah; inspired by the teachings of St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross; seeking to deepen our Christian commitment received in baptism. (OCDS Constitutions, 3)

3. 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, providing for us an example of contemplation. At Cana she counselled to do what the Lord commanded. Mary is an example of apostolic service. On another occasion, she waited, persevering in prayer with the apostles, 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 4)

4. 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 5)

5. The origin of the Discalced Carmel is to be found in St Teresa of Jesus. She lived with profound faith in

God's mercy which strengthened her to persevere 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. Her teachings on prayer and the spiritual life are essential to the formation and life of the Secular Order. (OCDS Constitutions, 7)

6. 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 8)

7. 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;

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; and

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. (OCDS Constitutions, 9)

8. 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 11)

9. 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 12)

10. 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". 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 17)

11. "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". 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, 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 25)

12. 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" reminds the Secular Order that graces received ought to have an effect on those who receive them. 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 (OCDS Constitutions, 26)

13. 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. 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 27)

14. 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", 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 28)

15. 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 32)

16. 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 33)

17. 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 34)

18. 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 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 35)

19. 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 six (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 (2) 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 (3) years.

d. In the last three (3) 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 36)

20. 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 37)

21. The Council, composed of the President and three Councillors 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. (OCDS Constitutions, 46)

II. Discernment of the Vocation to the Secular Order

59. To discern is to ascertain God's will for the person, "it is to be led by God." In this search the following principles act as guidelines:

- God does not hide from us, but rather reveals Himself to us;
- He respects the gift of free will that has been given to us;
- human living implies responsibility, that is, freedom to respond.

60. There are three active parties in this discernment God, the candidate, and those responsible for formation.

61. The Council also has a role in this formation process. Consequently, the responsibility for discernment belongs as much to the candidate as to the Director of Formation or the Council of the community. Discernment is not limited to one particular moment, and does not happen all at once. Special moments are those of transition

from one stage of formation to the next.

62. For discernment to be valid it is important that those involved in the process of formation know the candidate. When the Lord calls people, we are confident that He will give them sufficient ability to respond to the living of that call.

63. A divine call is always a mysterious grace that cannot be reduced to a list of qualities. But there are certain qualities that indicate that a person is essentially suited to the vocation of a

Secular Carmelite. Among these are:

64. At the human level:

- a stable personality
- common sense
- emotional maturity
- ability to trust and be open
- readiness to cooperate
- realism, tolerance and flexibility
- a certain self-knowledge
- fidelity to principles;

65. At the level of Christian life:

- a willingness to cooperate with God, in a spirit of faith
- dedication to prayer
- love of the Scriptures
- commitment to the Church and involvement in the local parish community
- a compassionate and active love;

66. At the level of the Teresian charism:

- a taste for prayer and
- a desire to establish a personal and friendly relationship with God
- a contemplative and active spirit
- a love for the Church
- a desire to familiarise oneself with Carmelite spirituality.

67. Some counter indications are:

- symptoms of a lack of psychological equilibrium;
- the presence of family situations which make the living of the Constitutions impossible;
- an incapacity for personal integration into the life of the community;
- overwhelming emotions of anger, anxiety, fear, depression or guilt;
- preconceived ideas of Carmel which impede learning and personal growth;
- fundamentalist or apocalyptic notions of the Church;
- membership of organisations with a distinct spiritual path;
- membership in groups based on private revelations.

68. It would be unrealistic to expect any candidate to possess all these qualities before they enter the Secular Order, or indeed at any of the stages of their formation. Nevertheless, there should be a predisposition for these qualities and a gradual maturation in them. This maturation in living the Teresian charism is the most genuine

sign of a vocation.

69. A Secular Carmelite is:

- a practising member of the Catholic Church who,
- under the protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel,
- and inspired by Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross,
- makes a commitment to the Order
- to seek the face of God in prayer and service
- for the good of the Church and the needs of the world.

A Practising Catholic

70. Persons may be admitted to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites provided:

- they are practising Catholics;
- they respect the authority of the Pope and the Magisterium of the Church

71. The word practising specifies something about the person who can be a member of the Secular Order. As a basic test of “practising” the Catholic faith is the capacity to participate fully in the Eucharist with a clear conscience. The Eucharist is the summit of Catholic life and identity. So, if one is free to participate in the Eucharist, then that person is also free to participate in the Secular Order.

72. The Secular Order is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church and subject to the laws of the Church. The Holy See approves its legislation. Therefore, someone who does not belong to the Catholic Church may not be a member of the Secular Order. People of other Christian Churches or faiths with an interest in the spirituality of Carmel are certainly welcome to participate in whatever way a community might invite them, but they cannot be members of the Secular Order.

Under the Protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel

73. Secular Carmelites:

- look to Mary as the model of their life in Carmel;
- aid the Church by maintaining a mature love and devotion to Mary with all possible perfection:
- wear the scapular as the external sign of Mary’s motherly protection, of our dedication to her service, and an incentive to live the theological virtue of hope;
- venerate Mary each day through some act of piety and commemorate her mysteries, especially in the Liturgy.

74. An essential quality of a Secular Carmelite vocation is a capacity for meditative. Mary, for a Secular Order member, is the model of a meditation. She attracts and inspires a Carmelite to a contemplative way of understanding the life of the mystical body of her Son, the Church. In the formation programme, which the person finds in Carmel, it is this aspect that must be developed in the person.

75. The particular aspect of the Blessed Virgin Mary that must be present in any person called to Carmel is that of an inclination to “meditate in the heart”, the phrase that St Luke’s gospel uses twice [2:, 19,51] to describe Mary’s attitude in regard to her Son. All the other aspects of Marian life and devotion can be present, for example, the Scapular, the Rosary. They are, however, secondary to this aspect of Marian devotion. Mary is our

model of prayer and meditation. This interest in learning to meditate or inclination to meditation is a fundamental characteristic of any OCDS. It is perhaps the most basic.

Inspired by Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross

76. Secular Carmelites:

- immerse themselves in the writings of our Carmelite saints, particularly those of our founders, Saints Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross that they may become imbued with the spirit of Carmel;
- cultivate a filial devotion to our Carmelite saints and honour them on their feast days;
- find inspiration and nourishment in Sacred Scripture, the Rule of St Albert and the teachings of our saints for the formation of their inner life as well as support for the duties of their state in life.

77. Special importance is given to St Teresa of Jesus, to whom, in our tradition, we refer as Our Holy Mother. The reason is because she is the one to whom the charism was given. St John of the Cross was the original collaborator with our Holy Mother in both the spiritual and juridical re-founding of Carmel in this new charismatic way. So he is called Our Holy Father. To know their histories, their personalities, and, most importantly, their doctrine confirms every Carmelite in his or her identity.

78. The writings of St Teresa of Jesus are the expression of the charism of the Discalced Carmelites. The spirituality of the Discalced Carmelites has a very sound intellectual foundation. There is a doctrine involved here. Any person who wants to be a Discalced Carmelite must be a person with an interest in learning from the teachers of Carmel. There are three Doctors of the universal Church, Teresa, John of the Cross and Therese.

79. There is an intellectual aspect to the formation of a Discalced Carmelite. There is a doctrinal basis to the spirituality and identity of one who is called to the Order. As the friars and nuns, the seculars too ought to have a good intellectual and doctrinal formation since as members of the Order they represent and give witness to a mature and profound spirituality.

80. This intellectual basis is the beginning of an attitude that is open to study. It leads to a deeper interest in Scripture, the teachings and the documents of the Church. The tradition of spiritual reading, *lectio divina* and time for reading is the backbone of the spiritual life.

Makes a Commitment to the Order Constitutions; 11, 12

81. The members of the community highly value the regular meetings give it priority in

their lives. They are an occasion to pray together, to further spiritual formation, to grow in fraternal charity and to deal with the business of the community. They are faithful in attendance at meetings for their own spiritual good and as encouragement to one another

82. One of the essential qualities of a Secular Carmelite vocation is a genuine commitment to the Order and to the Church. The fourth element of the description is *who makes a commitment to the Order*. There are many committed Catholics who are devoted to Mary or who are even experts in St Teresa, St John of the Cross - or one of our saints - who do not have a vocation to the Secular Order. These people may be contemplatives or even hermits, who spend hours in prayer and study each day, but do not have a vocation to be a Carmelite.

83. What is the element that distinguishes those called to be Secular Carmelites? It is not the spirituality, nor the study, nor the devotion to Mary. Simply put, the Secular Carmelite is moved to commit himself or herself to the Order: to commit himself to the service of the Church through collaboration and cooperation with the goal of the

Order. This commitment in the form of the Promise is an ecclesial event and an event of the Order in addition to being an event in the life of the person who makes the Promises.

84. Remembering always the person's context of family, work and responsibilities that are involved in his/her life, the person who commits him/herself, becomes characterised as a Carmelite.

85. An important aspect of this commitment is a commitment to the community. A person who wishes to be a member of the OCDS must be able to form community, be part of a group that is dedicated to a common goal, show interest in the other members, be supportive in the pursuit of a life of prayer and be able to receive the support of others. This applies even to those who for various reasons cannot actively participate in a community. In the formation of the community, this social characteristic is one that should develop.

To Seek the Face of God in prayer and service

86. For the members of the Secular Order it is an honour to be part of the Carmelite family. The privilege of sharing its spiritual heritage and graces brings with it the responsibility of prayer for others, and to be examples as members of the mystical body of Christ. The Secular Carmelite seeks intimate union with Christ in the world through the lived experience of the Promise made according to the Constitutions of the Secular Order.

87. Monthly meetings are an aid to ongoing formation. The study of Scripture and *Lectio Divina* help us to share with others the riches of the Word of God. Likewise, the study of the teachings of the Church and Carmelite spirituality helps to deepen our relationship with God and enhances our ability to witness to the Kingdom.

88. "To seek the face of God" - This element expresses the content of the Promises. It could be rephrased in various ways, "to pray", "to meditate", "to live the spiritual life". Perhaps this formulation best expresses the nature of contemplation – a thoughtful reflection of God's word and work in order to know, love and serve Him. The contemplative aspect of Carmelite life focuses on God, recognising always that contemplation is a gift of God, not something acquired as a result solely by one's efforts. This is the commitment to personal holiness. The Secular Carmelite wants to see God, wants to know God and recognises that prayer and meditation now become more important. The Promise is a commitment to a new way of life in which the "allegiance to Jesus Christ" marks the person and the way this person lives.

89. To seek the face of God requires a very specific discipline in the classic sense of the word – "disciple, one who learns". We recognise that we are forever students, never masters. We have a sense of awe and surprise at what God does in the world. God is forever a mystery. The call to holiness is a burning desire in the heart and mind of the one called to the Secular Order. It is a commitment that the Secular is called to make. The Secular is drawn to prayer, finding in it a way of life and an identity. This prayer, this pursuit of holiness, this encounter with the Lord makes the Secular a more committed member of the Church. The Secular's life is more Church-centered. As the life of prayer grows it produces more fruit in the person's personal life (growth in virtue) and in the person's ecclesial life (apostolate).

For the Good of the Church and the Needs of the World Constitutions, 25 - 28

90. Secular Carmelites:

- cherish their vocation and give thanks 'always and everywhere' for the gift that has been given them through the providence of God for their own salvation and the good of the Church;
- organise their day around the commitment to spend at least half an hour in quiet prayer so that by "frequent solitary converse with the One we know loves us" prayer will become the basis of our entire life and of our service to the Church.

91. Contemplative prayer, for Saint Teresa, is at the heart of the Church and is essentially apostolic. Secular Carmelites aim to live the gospel in a spirit of prophetic hope at the heart of the Church and of society.

92. Secular Carmelites:

- support their parish priest and according to each member's circumstances and gifts will become involved in the life of their parish, especially in those areas which relate to prayer;
- undertake and encourage one another in group apostolates as and when there is a need in accord with our charism;
- those who are unable to participate actively will support their fellow members with their prayers.

93. Initial and ongoing formation in the Secular Order of Carmel strive to assist its members reach both human and Christian maturity in their apostolic lives according to the spirit and charism of Carmel under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.