

Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitane

CARMELITE FORMATION:

A JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION



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A JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION**



GENERAL CURIA OF THE CARMELITE ORDER
ROME 2013

COVER: Lower spring of Elijah at the wadi 'Ain-es-siah, Mount Carmel, Haifa.

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PRIORE GENERALE DEI CARMELITANI

VIA GIOVANNI LANZA, 138
00184 ROMA - ITALIA

Rome, 14th June 2013

Memorial of St. Elisha

Prot. 238/2013

Dear Brothers,

I wish to present you with a new edition of the 2000 *Ratio Institutionis (RIVC)*. I say “new edition” in that following a request made to provincials and formators in 2009, many responded indicating that few changes needed to be made. Having considered the positive recommendations and suggestions made by the members of the Order, a number of experts were asked to contribute material for inclusion in a revised final text. The International Carmelite Formation Commission then worked on all the material received and made some additions to the text of 2000. New or revised additions relate to the vows, human development, silence, liturgy, work, inculturation and child protection. These texts were presented to the Order’s formators in Camocim, Brazil, in 2010 and some changes were made. Finally, this new material was presented to the General Congregation in Niagara Falls, Canada, in 2011. To all who have contributed to this work I extend our sincere thanks. The text was approved by the General Council during session 306 held on 12th June 2013 according to our Constitutions (129).

The *Ratio Institutionis* continues to be one of our most significant documents of this post-conciliar period. It has indeed led many, throughout a life-long formation process, into a more profound journey of transformation. Work must now continue regarding formation within the Order, which is already finding new expressions throughout a rich cultural expansion across the globe. It must also be the task of the Commission in the future, to continue to work on a revised *Ratio Studiorum Carmelitarum*.

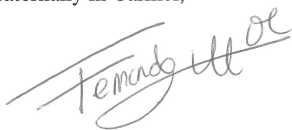
I am convinced, as I have said on many occasions, that formation is not only something that is academic and intellectual, but rather it is a question of an attitude that is both spiritual and life-oriented. To have an “attitude of formation” means to remain always attentive to the will of God and to our identity, which is fundamentally a response to that will, and to the signs of the times, through which, despite all their ambiguity, God is communicating something to us. Not to take account of formation, or not to take formation seriously, really demonstrates a serious lack of responsibility in relation to both the spiritual and the pastoral.

I believe that, among many other values, the *Ratio* brings together a series of values in a balance that is not always easy to achieve, values that have to be complementary to one another in the process of formation in an Order like ours. On the one hand, the *RIVC* brings together realism and idealism, in order not to fall either into a kind of formation that might be too abstract and theoretical, and far removed from the human situation of our candidates and our context, or into an absence of lofty and noble ideals that allow us to dream and to grow. Similarly, it brings together internationality and local culture in such a way that we can know that we are part of a universal order sharing processes, values and symbols that are common while at the same time respecting the diversity of local cultures. In this way, the *RIVC* integrates different nuances and expressions of the charism in a common project that includes a formation that preserves the fundamental values of our identity and of our spirituality. Lastly, the *RIVC* brings together the value of tradition (our history, our past, our symbols, our identity) and the creativity that is necessary in order to respond properly to the challenges of our time and to ensure that our charism is meaningful in the world of today.

I ask you therefore, that you look upon this new version of the *Ratio* as a very important tool in the task of formation and as a document of vital importance in our Carmelite life today. I encourage you to read it and to work on it, both individually and in community. I believe that we can all be enriched by reading it and we can feel challenged and encouraged in our vocation, whatever our age may be or whatever stage of formation we find ourselves now. Finally, I ask you that you accept it with all the affection that we have towards what is our own, for all that belongs to our family, and with the kind of generosity that will make this new version of the *Ratio* truly a precious instrument in the formation of the Carmelites of the 21st century.

May Our Lady of Mount Carmel, our Mother and Sister, continue to walk with us and may she, as the Star of the Sea, continue to guide us and to show us the way that will lead us one day to the haven of salvation.

Fraternally in Carmel,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Fernando Millán Romeral". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Fernando Millán Romeral, O.Carm.
Prior General

ABBREVIATIONS

Documents of the Second Vatican Council

- AG:** *Ad gentes*, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, 28 October 1965
- GS:** *Gaudium et spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 7 December 1965
- LG:** *Lumen gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 21 November 1964
- SC:** *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 4 December 1963

Documents of the Holy See

- CIC:** Code of Canon Law
- EE:** *Essential elements in the Church's teaching as applied to Institutes dedicated to works of the apostolate*, Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, 31 May 1983
- Cooperation:** *Cooperation between Institutes in the area of formation*, Congregation for Institutes of the Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 8 December 1998
- MR:** *Mutuae relationes*, Congregation for Bishops, and Congregation for Institutes of the Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 14 May 1978
- PdV:** *Pastores dabo vobis*, Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II on priestly formation, 25 May 1992
- PI:** *Potissimum institutioni*, Congregation for Institutes of the Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 2 February 1990
- VC:** *Vita consecrata*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, 25 March 1996
- Fraternal life:** *Fraternal Life in Community*, Congregation for Institutes of the Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 2 February 1994

Documents of the Carmelite Order

- Constitutions:** *Constitutions of the Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel*, approved by the General Chapter celebrated in Sassone (Rome) in the year 1995; Rome, 1996
- Carmel: a Place and a Journey:** *Carmel: a Place and a Journey into the Third Millennium*, O.Carm. General chapter 1995, Final document, AnalOCarm, Rome 1995, 236-250
- Rule:** *The Rule of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel*
- RIVC (1988):** *Ratio institutionis vitae carmelitanae*, Rome 1988

Other abbreviations

- AAS:** *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vatican City, from 1909
- AnalOCarm:** *Analecta Ordinis Carmelitarum*, Rome, from 1910

"The biblical concept of 'journey' reminds us of the first Carmelites' pilgrimage to Jerusalem (peregrinatio hierosolimitana) and of their forced return to Europe. It also reminds us of the inner journey, which requires us to seek God, undergoing the purification of the desert and of the dark night. With all those who journey alongside us, we discern the way ahead. The concept of 'journey' also demands that we develop and implement a plan of service to the Church. This implies a commitment to the work of justice and peace and to solidarity with all people of good will, and especially with those who are searching for community and striving to meet the demands of love."

Carmel - A Place and a Journey, 3.5

INTRODUCTION

1. Called to communion with God

God “loved us first”¹ and he called us to participate in the communion of the Trinity. We recognize his call in the experience of his love. Moved by the Spirit, we listen to the Word of Christ, who is the Way that leads to Life. In his footsteps, entrusting ourselves to God’s compassionate love, we set out on the journey to the summit of Mount Carmel, the place where we encounter God and are transformed in him.

As we journey towards Mount Carmel, God leads us to the desert, as he led the prophet Elijah. There, the living flame of God’s love transforms us, stripping away all that is not of him and all that obscures his gift, allowing the “new creature,” the new human being in the image of Christ, to emerge and shine forth in us.

Thus our minds and our hearts are gradually transformed, so that, in the light of Christ and in dialogue with the signs of the times, we may become more capable of cooperating with God in the work of transforming the world so that his Kingdom may come.

2. A call to community and mission

We are not alone on this arduous ascent of Mount Carmel: Mary, our sister and pilgrim in the faith, walks with us and encourages us, as mother and teacher.

We journey with others who have received the same gift and the same calling. Together we strive to build a community modeled on that of Jerusalem; a community centered entirely on the Word, the breaking of bread, prayer, the holding of all things in common, and service.²

We journey within the Church, and with the Church we journey throughout the world. Like Elijah, we journey side by side with the men and women of our time, trying to help them discover God’s presence in themselves; for the image of God is present in every human being, and must be allowed to emerge in complete freedom, even when it is darkened by inner contradictions or by injustices perpetrated by others.

We are invited to this path by the Rule, which for us echoes

¹ 1 John 4:19.

² see Acts 2:42-48; 4:32-35.

and mirrors the Gospel, and which is the expression of the founding experience of our Fathers. From this founding experience we receive our passionate love for the world, for its challenges, its provocations and its contradictions.

Our Fathers came from a Europe in transition, a Europe evolving through the tensions between war and peace, unity and fragmentation, expansion and crisis. In the Holy Land, they met people of other cultures and religions; on returning to Europe, they chose to be witnesses to attentiveness to God, living as brothers among brothers.

3. The world in which we live

For our Fathers, the world in which they were born and raised represented a challenge; in the same way, the world in which we live and work must be a challenge for us. It is a world rich in possibility and in opportunity, in a state of constant growth and evolution - but it is also a world full of contradictions.

Communication, facilitated by ever more sophisticated means, is both a promise and a challenge. The rapid development of science and technology makes life easier for many but oppresses others; rather than being respectful of the environment, it often exploits it mindlessly. Human rights have been solemnly affirmed many times, only to be violated again. It has been acknowledged that women's rights and functions are equal to those of men; yet many women are still victims of abuses. Some children are overindulged and spoiled, while others are abused and exploited to satisfy the greed of a few individuals lacking in any moral sense. Awareness of one's own rights increases sensitivity to the fundamental equality between individuals and between peoples; yet nationalistic and individualistic tensions continue to create reasons for new conflicts. Interaction among cultures, when it is not a source of conflict, becomes an incentive to dialogue, to mutual respect, to the search for new approaches to shared space. Economic and cultural globalization can offer all of us opportunities for harmonious development; but it also raises serious questions concerning the destiny of the poorer nations. The growing thirst for spirituality contradicts the presumptions of secularism, but does not always succeed in expressing itself in an authentic life of faith: it can become an escape from the heavy burden of daily life into esoteric cults, pseudomystical movements, and sects. Faced with lack of meaning, lack of moral values and various theoretical and practical forms of atheism, contemporary men and women of faith are challenged to seek shared and coherent responses, beyond religious barriers. Alongside a sincere

desire for interreligious dialogue, and concrete experiences of such dialogue, there are painful and even homicidal episodes of fundamentalism.

We are children of this world; we share in “the joy and hope, the grief and anguish” of our times.³ We belong to this world, we participate in its contradictions and we rejoice in its accomplishments.⁴ In this world we walk humbly, side by side with our brothers and sisters, attentively seeking to recognize, as Elijah did, the hidden signs of God’s presence and of his work.

4. Unity in diversity

Carmelites receive and share a common charism to live a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ, in a contemplative attitude which fashions and supports our life of prayer, fraternity and service.

It is by virtue of this charism that Carmelites in every place and time belong to the Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.

In its essential elements, the charism is one. Its universal application requires us to go beyond a limited, regional vision of the Order, in a constant effort to express and incarnate the charism concretely in various cultures, times and places.

There must be at all times an intimate link between the unity derived from identification with the essential aspects of the Carmelite charism and the pluralism derived from the different cultures, which enriches the charism’s many expressions.

³ GS, 1.

⁴ *Fraternal life*, 4.

PART ONE

THE PROCESS OF FORMATION

1.

CALLED TO FOLLOW CHRIST: *"IN OBSEQUIO JESU CHRISTI VIVERE"*

A. CALLED BY GOD'S LOVE

5. Called by the Father to follow Christ in the Spirit

The Father - who, through the action of the Holy Spirit, calls us to a spiritual experience of deep attraction to and love for Jesus Christ the chaste, poor and obedient One⁵ - is the source and the goal of religious life, and therefore of Carmelite life. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father consecrates us, transforms us and conforms us to the face of Christ, guiding us to communion with himself and with our brothers and sisters.

As individuals and as communities, we in turn choose Jesus as the one Lord and Savior of our lives.⁶ We commit ourselves to a path of gradual and progressive conversion encompassing every aspect of life, allowing ourselves to be conformed to Jesus by the action of the Spirit and to come to union with God.

6. Discipleship

The commitment to follow Jesus Christ with all one's being and to serve him "faithfully with a pure heart and total dedication"⁷ is a commitment to live in him, allowing him to guide our thoughts, our feelings, our words, our deeds, our fraternal relations and the use we make of things, so that everything may come from his Word and be done in his Word.⁸

Carmelites feel drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ and invited to a deep, constant, personal and living relationship with him, to the point of taking on his spiritual qualities and personality.⁹

⁵ see VC, 1:17-19.

⁶ see Rule, 2, 19, 23; Constitutions, 2; 3; 14.

⁷ Rule, 2.

⁸ Rule, 19; see also Constitutions, 20.

⁹ The many references in Carmelite tradition include the following: Saint Teresa of Jesus, *Life*, 9:4; 22:4, 7; Saint John of the Cross, *Ascent*, 1:13; 3:2, 7, 8-12; *Canticle B* 1:2-6, 10, *Living Flame* 2:16-20; Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, *Probatione*, 780; *Ammaestramenti*, XXXVI; John of Saint Samson, *L'Aiguillon*,

As they encounter Christ in prayer, in the Word and in the Eucharist, as well as in their brothers and sisters and in the events of daily life, Carmelites are transformed and motivated to witness to Christ and to proclaim him throughout the world.

Thus “the following of Christ is still and will always be for us the fundamental law, marking out the path we have to follow on the way to an ever-deeper experience of the love of God.”¹⁰ The commitment to live a deep relationship with Christ and to conform ourselves to him is therefore the very core of our formation.

7. Called within the Church

The Father calls us to holiness and to discipleship by calling us into the Church, which is his people, his bride and the body of Christ, filled with the Spirit. “All the faithful, by virtue of their new birth in Christ, share in a common dignity. All are called to holiness. All cooperate in the building up of the one Body of Christ, according to their particular vocations and to the gifts they have received from the Spirit (cf. Rm 12:3-8).”¹¹

The Church recognizes that the life of special consecration by means of the evangelical counsels “indisputably belongs to the life of holiness of the Church.”¹² Thus the consecrated life, “which mirrors Christ’s own way of life, is an especially rich manifestation of Gospel values and a more complete expression of the Church’s purpose, which is the sanctification of humanity.”¹³ Moreover, religious life lived in community is “an eloquent sign”¹⁴ of the Church, which is “essentially a mystery of communion”¹⁵ and an “icon of the Trinity.”¹⁶

Our vocation as Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel is a form of religious life which belongs to the Church. It flows from the Church and participates in its mystery.

8. Following Christ in his mission as a community

The vocation to the Carmelite life is God’s free and gratuitous initiative,¹⁷ which demands and generates a personal response:

3, 854-886 (f.362r); Michael of Saint Augustine, *Introductio ad vitam internam, tractatus tertius, sive Brevis Instructio ad vitam mysticam*, 27.

¹⁰ *Carmel: a Place and a Journey*, 2.2.

¹¹ VC, 31; LG, 32.

¹² LG, 44; see VC, 29.

¹³ VC, 32.

¹⁴ VC, 42.

¹⁵ VC, 41.

¹⁶ *Fraternal Life*, 9.

¹⁷ see VC, 17.

the fundamental choice of a life that is concretely and radically dedicated to following Christ.

We are called to share this life in community, “the eloquent sign of ecclesial communion.”¹⁸

We are called to give concrete expression to the mission of evangelization and salvation,¹⁹ in union with the Lord and with his Church, so that all may receive the Gospel message and become part of God’s family.

9. The journey in human development

As a result of 20th century advances in psychology, contemporary human experience is more fully understood for each person in terms of one’s physical, psychological, social and spiritual development. Growth in the knowledge of the uniqueness of each person’s experience helps us to understand how persons change and grow in the course of their entire life and thus how God’s grace is active in their life. This contemporary understanding of human and spiritual development is a deepening of our understanding of the Catholic optimism about the relationship of “nature and grace.” Thus, God’s grace can be discovered at work within the structures of psychosocial development. The vocational journey of each Carmelite contains the psychological challenges, crises, and tasks of human development, which present the opportunities and invitations to the transformation of the person in Christ Jesus.²⁰

10. Love as the driving force

Our transformational process can come about in different ways, by the discovery of personal strength and by a person’s unanticipated failure or as the experience of one’s own sinfulness. The call to Carmel is a journey of “pure, naked, dark faith,”²¹ and Carmelites as people of faith respond to and integrate these experiences into their adult lives, describing them as both a natural development and a surprisingly grace-filled event.

Thus, attentiveness to one’s human development throughout one’s life as a Carmelite is fundamental to ongoing formation in Carmel. Religious growth and transformation is seen in terms of a Carmelite’s *maturing sense* of:

¹⁸ see VC, 42, and the whole of Chapter II, *Signum fraternitatis*; see also *Fraternal Life*, 10:54-57.

¹⁹ see VC, 72, and the whole of Chapter II, *Servitium caritatis*; see also *Fraternal Life*, 58.

²⁰ see RIVC, 122.

²¹ see Saint John of the Cross, *Ascent*, Chapter II.

- identity as a person and as one called to live a “a life in allegiance to Jesus Christ,”²² growing in the contemplative dimension of one’s life;
- the ability to love and give of oneself in the context of community living;²³
- the capacity for responsible care and stewardship, expressed in “service in the midst of the people.”²⁴

B. CALLED TO AN EVANGELICAL JOURNEY

11. Profession of the evangelical counsels

The evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity, publicly professed, are a concrete and radical way of responding to the loving invitation of Christ to follow him as our model. They are “above all a gift of the Holy Trinity,”²⁵ whose eternal and infinite love touches “the very root of our being.”²⁶

When they are embraced with the generous commitment, which flows from love, the evangelical counsels contribute to purification of the heart and to spiritual freedom. By means of the evangelical counsels, the Holy Spirit gradually transforms us and conforms us to Christ.²⁷ We become “a living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting.”²⁸

Far from becoming estranged from the world by the profession of the evangelical counsels, we become a leaven for the transformation of the world,²⁹ and we bear witness to “the marvels wrought by God in ... the frail humanity of those who are called.”³⁰

12. Obedience – open to what God asks of us

The call to follow the Lord is realized obediently by attentive listening, by an openness to what God asks of us, leading to a radical journey based on the life and teaching of Jesus. Christ was obedient, even unto the Cross. He chose this lifestyle for himself, and he

²² Rule, 2, 10; Constitutions, 16-18.

²³ Rule, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 22, and 23; Constitutions, 19-20.

²⁴ Rule, 20; Constitutions, 21-24.

²⁵ VC, 20.

²⁶ VC, 18.

²⁷ LG, 46.

²⁸ VC, 22.

²⁹ see LG, 46.

³⁰ VC, 20.

proposes it to his disciples in order that they may become less self-centered and more open to the gift of God, who conforms them to himself for the building of the Kingdom. Obedience is realized through a process of discernment and dialogue, and it finds its ultimate expression through our surrender in joy and pain.

13. Poverty – to live in freedom

The Rule directs us to call nothing our own, but to have everything in common.³¹ The sharing that characterized the lifestyle of the early Christian community of Jerusalem is our ideal. We share our lives with our brothers in community. We put everything in common and the community provides for each of its members showing great care and concern for the needs of each. We share our gifts, our time and our energy with our community and with the people among whom we live and whom we are called to serve. To be poor means to be available and open for the needs of others.

As contemplatives we learn to become ever more aware of our inherent poverty and nothingness. We stand before God empty-handed. He looks down on our lowliness and fills us with his gifts, in order that we may share them with others. We become poor as we come to acknowledge and accept our failures, our frailty and our sinfulness. God's grace frees us from focusing on ourselves and on our needs, and enables us to live in true freedom, giving ourselves wholeheartedly to God and to others.

14. Chastity – loving passionately and purified

The Carmelite life in its mystical orientation is always focused on the loving union with God. Our model for this union is Jesus Christ himself. His love was truly chaste. He lived in a deep and intimate union with God whom he tenderly called "Abba"; at the same time he entered into close and also affective relationships with other men and women, disciples and friends. He was not afraid to share his life and love with them. He touched others in a tender and healing way and also allowed them to touch him lovingly. His relationships with God and people were chaste because he never became possessive, manipulative or exclusive – he simply accepted and loved the Other as the Other and he remained always free for the mission of his life that was greater than any particular relationship.

Therefore our chastity as Carmelite disciples of Jesus Christ means to allow the development and purification of our cap-

³¹ see Rule, 4.

acity for love in all its vital and affective dimensions including our sexuality so that we become more and more able to love God, other people and the whole of creation passionately in a respectful and non-possessive way. In a chaste life-style we do not escape the manifold challenges of love but we accept them as opportunities to grow in our relationships, with God, with the brothers and sisters in our communities and with all entrusted to our friendship and care. The more we let our hearts be transformed by the joys and pains of love, both human and divine, the more we will become open and ready for receiving the gift of union with God in contemplation – the heart of our vocation.

The Carmelite way assumes the vowed life in accordance with the evangelical counsels as the most appropriate path towards full transformation in Christ.³² Thus, the practice of the evangelical counsels is not solely a renunciation but also a means by which we grow in love³³ so as to attain fullness of life in God.

C. SETTING OUT IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL

15. Holiness and sinfulness

God's call, his free gift, does not fall on neutral ground; it is addressed to individuals, each with a particular story of grace and of sin. We all know the power of grace, which gives us the strength and life to cooperate joyfully in God's plan; we also experience the inner conflict which affects the process of growth. As Saint Paul said, "I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate... every single time I want to do good it is something evil that comes to hand."³⁴ The Lord's reassuring words to Paul are addressed to each one of us, in our frailty: "My grace is enough for you; my power is at its best in weakness."³⁵

16. Self-knowledge

Men and women, "in the depths of their beings, rise above the whole universe."³⁶ In our three dimensions - physical, psychological and spiritual - we are drawn to both natural and spiritual

³² see *Institutio primorum monachorum*, 1, 3-5.

³³ see *Institutio primorum monachorum*, 1, 6.

³⁴ Romans 7:14-25; see Galatians 5:13-14.

³⁵ 2 Corinthians 12:9.

³⁶ GS, 14.

values; but the attraction to spiritual values is dulled by social conditioning and by our own limitations. We must therefore be aware of the subconscious dimension within each of us, so that we may acquire a deeper knowledge of our selves, understand what motivates our actions, and respond freely to God's call.

Self-awareness - awareness of our potential and of our limitations - helps us to channel all our energies constructively towards the attainment of the ideals of our vocation.³⁷

17. Full maturity

There is a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between human maturity and religious maturity: the more we free ourselves from psychological difficulties, the more able we become to reach correct and appropriate personal decisions and to take responsibility for them. The more authentically we live the values of our vocation, the more fully we will live for transcendent values and the more we will feel fulfilled as human beings.

Formation must therefore help individuals to attain vocational maturity - in other words, to engage in a continual process of conversion in line with authentic ideals regarding community life and service, ideals which can support them, step by step, along the path of gradual spiritual transformation.³⁸

In addition, formation must contribute to psychological maturity, through which individuals come to know themselves and discover their particular ways of living out the ideals they have chosen, without distortions, despite possible limitations and resistance.

18. Conversion and personal growth

Formation is a lifelong process which involves individuals at every level and stimulates their conversion; in other words, it is a radical re-orientation and a progressive transformation of their selves and of their relationships with others and with God.

Growth to maturity takes place under the guidance of the Spirit, who conforms us ever more closely to the crucified and risen Christ, uniting us gradually with the Father, making us living stones in the construction of the temple of God.³⁹

Psychological growth also frees us to hear God's call and to respond to it more willingly. In this sense, conversion is also a journey towards the fullness of Christian freedom.

³⁷ see Saint Teresa of Jesus, *Life*, 13, 15; *Foundations*, 5, 16; *The Way of Perfection*, 39, 5; *The Interior Castle*, 1.2, 8.

³⁸ see Constitutions, 118.

³⁹ see 1 Peter 2:5.

Conversion at the intellectual level - in the form of new light, or revelation of Gospel values, and the ability to internalize them and recognize them in life - can also lead us to deeper self-awareness and a better understanding of our own motivations, and vice versa.

At the moral level, integrating Gospel values into life produces deep-rooted beliefs which promote the development of a strong identity and a mature personality.

At the emotional level, we become more capable of entering into relationships with others in appropriate ways. Mature relationships are never possessive; they give space to the other; they are committed and free, even to the point of giving one's self.

At the social level, we recognize our responsibility for the construction of society and we commit ourselves to cooperate with others for the common good.

Candidates must be helped to enter into this process of conversion, keeping in mind that time-frames are different for the different dimensions described above and that these dimensions interact differently in each individual. Full religious transformation should normally include all these dimensions; however, these must not be seen as necessary prerequisites, as they can also be the fruit of the journey of transformation.

D. THE JOURNEY OF FORMATION

19. An ongoing journey

Formation must be presented in such a way that individuals can understand and embrace it as a dynamic process which is to continue throughout their lives, and not merely as a way of attaining permanent membership in the Order.

The formative process can never be said to be completed: growth to human, spiritual, religious and Carmelite maturity progresses along with the unfolding of the lives of those who, having encountered Christ, answer his call and follow him in the Carmelite life, allowing themselves to be grasped and transformed by his love.

Therefore, formation should not be viewed as a way of accumulating a rich store of ideas and habits, or of adopting a rigid lifestyle. Rather, it should be viewed as a way of acquiring a capacity for discernment, flexibility and availability - qualities which enable us to constantly renew our lives and to constantly struggle to adhere radically to Christ according to the Carmelite way of life.

20. A personalized journey

Formation must be mindful of the individual, and must take into account the personal journey of each member. Formation programs must help individuals to assimilate the values they have freely chosen - to assimilate them gradually and ever more deeply, according to the model of the "hierarchical spiral,"⁴⁰ in a climate of dialogue and respect. As a pedagogical principle, whenever we propose a value, we must simultaneously provide an opportunity to incarnate the value concretely, to own it affectively and effectively.

Values must be integrated, so that we may become capable of taking responsibility for our own lives, through free responses to God's invitation to transcend ourselves in love. From the start, the process of formation must teach individuals to gradually assume functions of service to the religious and ecclesial community.

21. Journeying towards freedom

Formation must help individuals to attain a freedom which goes beyond their own lives, their own interests, their own selfish egos and personal needs, so that they may open themselves to the action of the Spirit and to growth in the love of God, of the Church, of the Order and of others. Religious seek transcendence, not self-gratification; they live, in communion with their brothers, for certain values, not for roles; they strive to mirror faithfully the face of God, not to achieve high productivity. It is the essential nature of the evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity to activate and express this dynamic of personal liberation at every level.

This kind of freedom, conditioned as it were by physical, psychological, educational and social factors, cannot be taken for granted; it needs to be monitored and encouraged in its growth.

22. Journeying together

The process of formation has socio-cultural dimensions. We all come from particular social and ecclesial contexts; we join communities which include individuals of different backgrounds, ages, cultures, roles, and so forth; and we are sent into society as witnesses and evangelizers. We must therefore not only be converted to Christ and to the values of the Kingdom,

⁴⁰ Each stage of formation absorbs the preceding stages and leads the individual towards a higher level of integration and interiorization of the values.

but must also be able to recognize and foster “the seeds of the Word”⁴¹ that are already present in society, and to respond to the challenges they present; we must allow ourselves to be questioned, challenged and evangelized by society - never forgetting, however, to be prophetic voices and critical consciences. We must be builders of a new world, through justice and in peace.⁴²

23. On the paths of Carmel

From the start, formation must be explicitly Carmelite. The Carmelite vocation and the Carmelite charism must be seen as potentially present in each candidate, as possibility and as gift, as a vocation to be built up and developed - not as external adjuncts, marginal to the individual's essential identity.

Formation aims to enable the individual to gradually identify with the Carmelite Order and develop a deep sense of belonging.

The process of identification is complex. It takes place in two ways:

- a) through the acquisition of a sense of identity which gives a constant sense of personal wholeness, persisting over time and despite changing circumstances. This involves the capacity to acquire new attitudes and to adapt to new situations - always, however, in relation to a concrete set of values;
- b) through identification with others, and especially with the Order, the Province and the community.

It is through this process of identification that our personal needs come face to face with our social needs in a dynamic encounter, as we experience the need to belong without renouncing our own essential identities.

E. “THIS WAY IS GOOD AND HOLY: FOLLOW IT.”

24. Principles and criteria of Carmelite formation

Carmelite formation is therefore inspired by the following principles and criteria:

- a) The calling to religious life is God's free initiative, and requires a free response from the one who is called.
- b) This response develops and makes concrete the baptismal vocation common to all the faithful, and involves a new and deeper commitment to Christ and to the Church and a new and deeper bond with both.⁴³

⁴¹ see AG, 11.

⁴² see GS, 39.

⁴³ see VC, 30-32.

- c) Vocation to the religious life demands total personal commitment; it is expressed concretely in a lifestyle shaped by the Gospel, in the practice of the evangelical counsels, and in communal living. It does not consist in assuming a role or in accomplishing a task; it consists in handing over one's life in self-abandonment and gift to God's transformative action and to his plan of salvation.
- d) The primary task of formation is to promote the integrated development of each individual's physical, psychological, spiritual, cultural and service dimensions, avoiding any dichotomy between being religious and being human, with a view to attaining maturity in Christ.
- e) The response to the call is lived out in communion and complementarity with one's own community, with the Province, with the Order and with the members of the Carmelite Family.
- f) The Carmelite charism is lived out and communicated in communion and complementarity with the other gifts and charisms of the Church; it participates in the common commitment to build up the one body of Christ in service to God and to the human race.⁴⁴
- g) The social environment in which we are called to live, and the historical demands which challenge the Church at any given time, provide further criteria for the concrete expressions of our charism, and consequently for our formation.
- h) The journey of formation is a lifelong journey. God renews his call day by day, and always expects a fresh response from us.

⁴⁴ see VC, 74; see also VC, 49-50, 52-54.

2.

CALLED TO THE CARMELITE LIFE: *CONTEMPLATIVE FRATERNITY IN THE MIDST OF THE PEOPLE*

A. RECEIVING ELIJAH'S MANTLE

25. The gift of Carmelite life

Individuals called to the Carmelite life recognize that the charism and the spirituality of the Order find a resonance at the very center of their hearts, which have been touched by the living God.

The process of formation gradually unfolds their Carmelite identity, in constant relation to the shared charism of the Order, contributing to their own growth to maturity and to the development of the Order itself.

26. Participating in a long history

To enter into the Carmelite experience is to become part of an ongoing story. It is to enter into a long human, spiritual, ecclesial and apostolic tradition which has been tested by time. Although there is a need to reread, re-interpret and deepen our understanding of this tradition, this does not mean that we must start from scratch. This work of continuous revision provides individuals with many opportunities to make their own contributions, with their specific gifts, thereby enriching, developing and renewing the life of the Order.⁴⁵

27. A common vocation

All Carmelites participate in the one and only vocation to Carmel, in various and complementary ways, according to the call and the gifts of each individual. Whether or not they are ordained, all make the same profession to religious life.⁴⁶ For this reason, basic formation to Carmelite life is the same for all; it is then supplemented with appropriate and specific formation to particular ministries and services.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ see MR, 12; Constitutions, 120; *Carmel: a Place and a Journey*, 4.6.

⁴⁶ see Constitutions, 175.2.

⁴⁷ see Constitutions, 161-162.

B. CONTEMPLATION: THE HEART OF THE CARMELITE CHARISM

28. Journeying towards our goal

“Contemplation is the inner journey of Carmelites, arising out of the free initiative of God, who touches and transforms us, leading us towards unity in love with him, raising us up so that we may enjoy his gratuitous love and live in his loving presence. It is a transforming experience of the overpowering love of God. This love empties us of our limited and imperfect human ways of thinking, loving, and behaving, transforming them into divine ways”⁴⁸ and enables us “to taste in our hearts and experience in our souls the power of the divine presence and the sweetness of heavenly glory, not only after death, but during this mortal life.”⁴⁹

The contemplative dimension is not merely one of the elements of our charism (prayer, fraternity and service); it is the dynamic element which unifies them all.

In prayer we open ourselves to God, who, by his action, gradually transforms us through all the great and small events of our lives. This process of transformation enables us to enter into and sustain authentic fraternal relationships; it makes us willing to serve, capable of compassion and of solidarity, and gives us the ability to bring before the Father the aspirations, the anguish, the hopes and the cries of the people.

Fraternity is the testing ground of the authenticity of the transformation which is taking place within us. We discover that we are brothers journeying towards the one Father, sharing the gifts of the Spirit and supporting one another through the hardships of the journey.

From the free and disinterested service, which only the contemplative can give, we receive unexpected assistance in our spiritual journey; this helps us to grow in openness to the action of the Spirit, and to allow ourselves to be sent out again and again, constantly renewed, to serve our sisters and brothers.

29. An inner journey

Through this gradual and continuous transformation in Christ, which is accomplished within us by the Spirit, God draws us to himself on an inner journey⁵⁰ which takes us from

⁴⁸ Constitutions, 17; see also Saint John of the Cross, *Canticle B*, 22:3-5; 26:1; 39:4.

⁴⁹ *Institutio primorum monachorum*, 1.2.

⁵⁰ among the many texts of the Carmelite tradition, see in particular *Institutio primorum monachorum*, 1.2-8.

the dispersive fringes of life to the innermost cells of our beings, where he dwells and where he unites us with himself.⁵¹

This requires a constant, radical and lifelong effort, through which, inspired by God's grace, we begin to think, judge, and re-order our lives, looking to his holiness and goodness as revealed and poured out in abundance in his Son.

This process is neither linear nor uniform. It involves critical moments, crises in growth and in maturation, stages where we must make new choices - especially when we have to renew our option for Christ. All this is part of the purification of our spirits at the deepest level, by which we may be conformed to God.⁵²

The inner process which leads to the development of the contemplative dimension promotes in us an open attitude to God's presence in life, teaches us to see the world with the eyes of the Divine, and inspires us to seek, recognize, love and serve God in those around us.⁵³

30. An evangelical journey

The Carmelite way assumes that life in accordance with the evangelical counsels is the most appropriate path towards full transformation in Christ.⁵⁴ He chose this lifestyle for himself, and he proposes it to his disciples in order that they may become less self-centered and more open to the gift of God, who conforms them to himself for the building of the Kingdom.

Obedience, which requires us to listen to the will of God and to implement it both personally and communally, allows us to attain genuine freedom.⁵⁵

By living poverty, we recognize and accept our frailty and our nothingness, without seeking compensations, and open ourselves increasingly to God's lavish gifts.⁵⁶

Through chastity, our capacity to love is freed from selfishness and self-centeredness so that, drawn by God's tender love for us, we become increasingly free to enter into intimate and loving relationships with God, with our brothers, with all people and with all of creation.⁵⁷

Thus, the practice of the evangelical counsels is not a

⁵¹ see Saint Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, 1:1, 3; 7:1, 5; Saint John of the Cross, *Canticle B*, 1:6-8.

⁵² see Saint John of the Cross, *The Dark Night*, 1:11, 3.

⁵³ see Constitutions, 15; 78.

⁵⁴ see *Institutio primorum monachorum*, 1:3-5.

⁵⁵ see Constitutions, 45-49.

⁵⁶ see Constitutions, 50-58.

⁵⁷ see Constitutions, 59-63.

renunciation but a means by which we grow in love⁵⁸ so as to attain fullness of life in God.

31. An ascetic journey

The process of transformation in Christ demands from us a continuous striving to “offer to God a holy heart which has been purified from every actual stain of sin. We attain this goal when we become perfect and in Carith - that is to say, when we are hidden in that love (*in charitate*) in which the Wise One says ‘all guilt is hidden’ (Proverbs 10, 12b).”⁵⁹

This process cannot take place if we rely merely on our own willpower, unaided by the experience of God’s transforming love, poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit,⁶⁰ which gives us the strength to respond to Christ’s radical invitation: “Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.”⁶¹

However, this process also requires “our efforts and the practice of the virtues.”⁶² Sustained by grace, we engage in a process of gradual transformation: in the encounter with Christ and in the process of union with him, the “new self” replaces the “old self”, we are clothed in Christ,⁶³ and we bear the “fruit of the Spirit.”⁶⁴

32. A journey through the desert

The first Carmelites, in tune with the spirituality of their time (the 12th - 13th centuries), attempted to live out this ascetic commitment by withdrawing into solitude. Their desert was more than a physical reality; however, it was a place of the heart - the context of living out this commitment for those who focus their whole beings on God alone. They had chosen to follow Jesus Christ, who denied himself and emptied himself to the point of dying naked on the cross. People of pure faith, they awaited the gift of new and eternal life, fruit of the Lord’s resurrection.⁶⁵ The desert, a place of solitude and aridity, blooms⁶⁶ and becomes the

⁵⁸ see *Institutio primorum monachorum*, 1:6.

⁵⁹ see *Institutio primorum monachorum*, 1:2.

⁶⁰ see Romans 5:5.

⁶¹ Matthew 16:25.

⁶² see *Institutio primorum monachorum*, 1:2.

⁶³ see Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 2:15, 4:24; see also EE, 45.

⁶⁴ see Galatians 5:22-23.

⁶⁵ Even the place they had chosen, with their cells spread out around the oratory, can be seen as an expression of this miracle of rebirth of life in the desert, effected by the presence of the Risen One; the liturgical rite of the Holy Sepulcher, which was celebrated for a long time in the Order, also testifies to this.

⁶⁶ see Isaiah 32:15.

place where the experience of God's liberating presence builds fraternity and inspires us to service.

In the footsteps of the first Carmelite hermits, we too journey through the desert, which develops our contemplative dimension. This requires self-abandonment to a gradual process of emptying and stripping ourselves, so that we may be clothed in Christ and filled with God. This process "begins when we entrust ourselves to God, in whatever way he chooses to approach us."⁶⁷ For we do not enter the desert by our own will: it is the Holy Spirit who calls us and draws us into the desert; it is the Spirit who supports us in our spiritual combat, clothes us in God's armor,⁶⁸ and fills us with his gifts and with the divine presence, until we are entirely transformed by God and reflect something of God's infinite beauty.⁶⁹

In speaking of this process of transformation, Carmelite tradition uses other expressions and images besides this symbol of the desert: for example, "*puritas cordis*" (purity of heart), "*vacare Deo*" (becoming free for God), the ascent of Mount Carmel, and the dark night.

33. Along the paths of contemplation

It is important, not only to be familiar with the theory of the contemplative process and to have a constantly renewed understanding of the vows and values of Carmelite spirituality, but also to acquire and to incarnate a contemplative lifestyle and contemplative attitudes.

In prayer and in the constant encounter with the Word of God, we learn to meet God in daily life and to entrust ourselves to him on the journey of inner transformation. In this way, we become capable of receiving accomplishments and joys as gifts, and crises and deserts as moments of growth; thus we become able to harmoniously integrate the fundamental values of Carmelite life.

C. PRAYER: THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD WHO TRANSFORMS US

34. The meeting of two paths

In Carmelite tradition, prayer has often been identified with contemplation. However, it is important to speak specifically about prayer, which is the door to contemplation.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Constitutions, 17.

⁶⁸ see Rule, 18-19.

⁶⁹ see Saint John of the Cross, *Canticle B*, 36:5; see also 2 Corinthians 3:18.

⁷⁰ see Saint Teresa of Jesus, *The Interior Castle*, 1:7.

God seeks us out, drawing us closer,⁷¹ invited by the Spirit to focus our attention on God,⁷² to listen, to welcome the Word, and to open ourselves to God's transforming action. Our search for God is a response to his voice, and the loving dialogue⁷³ which is the substance of prayer is at once God's initiative and the fruit of human cooperation.

Prayer, however, is above all the work of the Holy Spirit. He is present in us, and he not only suggests what we should do and say - because "we do not even know what we should ask for"⁷⁴ - but includes us in the prayer that Jesus, the beloved Son, addresses to the Father⁷⁵ in a continuous dialogue of love. Prayer "penetrates to the very core of the Word in the Father's heart."⁷⁶ Jesus associates us with his own prayer and leads us, step by step, into full communion with himself and with the Father in the Holy Spirit. Through fidelity to the Word and active observance of the commandment of love, we become open to the Holy Trinity who comes to dwell within us.⁷⁷

35. Preparing the way for the encounter

The Rule invites us to remain in solitude in our cells,⁷⁸ which "give warmth to the children of grace as to the fruit of their own wombs, nourishing them, embracing them and bringing them to the fullness of perfection, making them worthy of intimacy with God."⁷⁹ The cell is not merely an external structure; we must build it at the heart of our inner selves; therein dwells God,⁸⁰ who invites us to enter and seek the One who is.⁸¹

From the outset, our spiritual tradition invites us to immerse ourselves in "the silence of a solitary hiding-place."⁸² In order to listen to the voice of the Lord and to hear his Word, we must know how to be silent for "The Father spoke one Word, which was his Son, and he speaks it in an eternal silence; and in silence

⁷¹ see Hosea 2:16.

⁷² see Dominic of Saint Albert, *Exercitatio*, 24: "Cultivating holy prayer consists in genuine, total, and real attention to God."

⁷³ see Saint Teresa of Jesus, *Life*, 8:5.

⁷⁴ Romans 8:26.

⁷⁵ see John 1:1.

⁷⁶ Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, *I Colloqui*, 50, 922.

⁷⁷ see John 14:15-23.

⁷⁸ Rule, 10.

⁷⁹ Blessed John Soreth, *Expositio Paraenetica in Regulam Carmelitanam*, 13.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ see Saint Teresa of Jesus' poem, *Seek Yourself in Me*; Saint John of the Cross, *Canticle B*, 1:6-10.

⁸² see *Institutio primorum monachorum*, 1:5.

it must be heard by the soul.”⁸³ To learn God’s language and to begin to speak a few tentative words in response, we must allow ourselves, in every aspect of our lives (spiritual, psychological and physical), to adjust to the silent sound of God’s voice⁸⁴ and to God’s light.⁸⁵ From our brothers and sisters, masters of the spiritual life, we have received many teachings on this subject.

The silence which we must cultivate does not come from an inability to communicate or an impossibility of communication; on the contrary, it is the fullness of dialogue, where words are often unnecessary and can become obstacles. Solitude is not isolation; it is filled with the Presence, and it sends us back transformed to the company of our brothers and sisters.

36. Silence as the meeting place with the Other and others

The Carmelite way is marked by silence. On the one hand our Rule invites us to keep external silence to be quiet enough to speak in respectful and just ways, on the other hand it also speaks of the internal silence that, if we allow it, may lead us into the dark night of transformation.⁸⁶ In silence we, like the prophet Elijah, meet the noises, obsessions and illusions that fill our souls.⁸⁷ In silence we may experience fear. But if we embrace it, we become imbued with the awareness of our own nothingness and learn to wait attentively on God in naked surrender. Silence creates in us a completely empty space where we can meet God and others in their otherness, not reducing them to our own categories, images, and expectations. In silence we also learn to engage with God’s creation. Becoming silent in God’s silent presence, we become anchored in God who is imageless and inexpressible. Silence allows God to do his work in us.

The modern world teaches us never to be open to silence. The Liturgy constantly reminds us to “be still and know that I am God.”⁸⁸ But the silence that comes in the stillness will only happen when we create the space, the environment and the time for it, both in community and alone.

37. Alone before God

Prayer is essentially a personal relationship, a dialogue between God the human person. We are invited to cultivate it

⁸³ Saint John of the Cross, *Sayings of Light and Love*, 99.

⁸⁴ see 1 Kings 19:12; Saint John of the Cross, *Canticle B*, 15, 26.

⁸⁵ see Saint John of the Cross, *Ascent*, 2:9, 1; *The Dark Night*, 2:5, 3 and 5.

⁸⁶ Rule, 21.

⁸⁷ see 1 Kings 19:4.

⁸⁸ Psalm 46:10.

and to find time and space to be with the Lord.⁸⁹ Friendship can only grow through “frequent one-to-one encounters with the One whom we know loves us.”⁹⁰

Our tradition suggests various ways of praying. The Rule invites us to prayerful attention to the Word, which must “live abundantly on our lips and in our hearts.”⁹¹ Mary, the praying virgin who “cherished these things and pondered them in her heart,”⁹² is the sublime model for this form of prayer. From Elijah we learn how to remain in God’s presence.⁹³ As we become accustomed to his presence and as we learn to receive it silently, we begin to “breathe almost exclusively the essence of God, as we breathe the air around us.”⁹⁴

What is important, beyond all matters of form, is to cultivate a deep friendship with Christ: perfect prayer “does not consist in thinking much but in loving much.”⁹⁵ In prayer, the loving heart leaps towards God⁹⁶ and rests in him.

38. Along the paths of prayer

We must cultivate the various forms of prayer,⁹⁷ especially those that are dear to the Carmelite tradition, such as systematic meditation, *lectio divina*, the practice of the presence of God, the prayer of aspiration, and silent prayer. The Eucharist must be seen as the source and high point of our relationship with Christ.

In developing community plans, adequate time and space shall be set aside for prayer, in order that members may learn to pray and gradually develop their own personal styles of prayer so that prayer may permeate all of life. “Prayer is life, not an oasis in the desert of life.”⁹⁸

It is also important to ensure that the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours are celebrated in community, and to insist on the importance of faithful participation.

⁸⁹ see Rule, 10; Constitutions, 80.

⁹⁰ Saint Teresa of Jesus, *Life*, 8:5.

⁹¹ Rule, 15; see also Constitutions, 82.

⁹² Luke 2:19, 51.

⁹³ see 1 Kings 17:1, 18:5.

⁹⁴ Michael of Saint Augustine, *Introductio ad vitam internam, tractatus quartus, seu Fructiva Praxis vitae mysticae*, 14.

⁹⁵ Saint Teresa of Jesus, *Foundations*, 5:2; *The Interior Castle*, 4:1, 7.

⁹⁶ John of Saint Samson, *Le vrai esprit du Carmel*, 122:1; Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, *Story of a Soul*, Ms. C, 25r.

⁹⁷ see Constitutions, 66.

⁹⁸ Blessed Titus Brandsma, *Godsbegrip Rede uitgesproken...*, 26.

Finally, a climate of external and internal silence and a simple lifestyle must be developed and fostered, as these are conducive to prayer and reflection.⁹⁹

39. Together before God: the liturgical life of community

The Rule of Carmel puts liturgical life at the center of our community life both in practice and symbolically. The oratory is at the “center” not just architecturally but identifies it as central to who we are, and it becomes the place of the visible “assembly” of all the brethren where possible. We are reminded that the liturgy is the most outstanding means by which we express in our community the mystery of Christ. For it is through the liturgy that “the work of our redemption is accomplished.”¹⁰⁰ The Rule speaks of daily Eucharist and the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours as constitutive of the nature of our Carmelite community. This ought not to be merely routine or obligation but a truly contemplative action. Liturgy is the Church at common prayer – it is moreover the visible sign of the Order at prayer. People are formed and grow in faith through good liturgy. The presence of the Living God in Word, in Sacrament, in ritual, in silence, in gesture and in song is transformative – it changes the nature of our being community. The Word is addressed to us not just individually as in *lectio divina*, but “as community” and the bread is broken and shared, not just symbolically but as a sign of the sharing in the mystery of God and with the community of those in need. Good liturgical formation communities mark us for life. Through spiritual preparation, “meditating day and night on the law of the Lord,” we recognize the presence of Christ among us; through living out the Paschal mystery in our lives we come to celebrate the death and resurrection of the Risen One. It builds us into a holy temple of God. The resurrection celebration formed the identity of our Order over centuries through the Carmelite Rite. Thus liturgical practice and formation ought to be life-giving and life-celebrating, following the liturgical year in all its richness and diversity. Formation in liturgy is not just about liturgical studies for ministry or knowledge of the rubrics, but about a fraternal celebration of who we Carmelites are. Our formation communities are built up in the following of Christ and missioned to go in peace to serve the Lord, nourished by the Bread of Life and the Word of the Lord.

⁹⁹ see Constitutions, 67.

¹⁰⁰ see SC, 2.

D. COMMUNITY: SHARING THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

40. The path outlined by the Rule

The author of our Rule, Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, addresses the hermits as “*fratres*.”¹⁰¹ This means that we are called to live out our contemplative vocation together, in community, not on our own. The contemplative attitude, which enables us to discover God present in people and in the events of ordinary daily life, also helps us to value the mystery of each member of the community.¹⁰²

We have a common way of life, expressed by the Rule, of which the prior is guardian and guarantor.¹⁰³ The Rule proposes a set of attitudes and a path designed to consolidate community as it is lived out in practice, following the inspiration of the first community of Jerusalem. We nourish Carmelite fraternity¹⁰⁴ by listening together to the Word of God¹⁰⁵ and participating in the common liturgy - especially as we gather daily to celebrate the Eucharist;¹⁰⁶ by sharing material and spiritual goods,¹⁰⁷ mindful of the well-being of every member;¹⁰⁸ by discerning together the common journey;¹⁰⁹ by making important decisions together;¹¹⁰ by valuing silence as the “cult of justice”¹¹¹ and therefore the guarantee of non-oppressive, non-possessive relationships respectful of the other; and by sharing meals¹¹² and work.¹¹³

41. The journey towards community

“Before it is a human construction, religious community is a gift of the Spirit.”¹¹⁴ Like every spiritual gift, however, it must be built up day by day through the effort of each and every member.

¹⁰¹ Rule, 5, 6, 8, 12, 15, 22, 23.

¹⁰² see Constitutions, 19.

¹⁰³ Rule, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 12, 22, 23.

¹⁰⁴ see Constitutions, 20.

¹⁰⁵ see Rule, 7, 14.

¹⁰⁶ see Rule, 11, 14.

¹⁰⁷ see Rule, 14.

¹⁰⁸ see Rule, 12.

¹⁰⁹ see Rule, 12, 15, 16, 17.

¹¹⁰ see Rule, 15.

¹¹¹ see Rule, 4, 5, 6, 15.

¹¹² Rule, 21.

¹¹³ see Rule, 7.

¹¹⁴ *Fraternal life*, 8.

The awareness of having received a common vocation - a vocation which finds its concrete expression in a plan that is developed, implemented and verified communally - must be allowed to grow to maturity.¹¹⁵ The natural tension between the common plan and the personal journey must therefore be dealt with and resolved as a call to us all to journey together as brothers.¹¹⁶

The task of building fraternal community is a form of asceticism which requires continuous conversion and a sense of self-denial. No one presumes too much of the others, while each rejoices in what the others are capable of giving. The daily gathering, in which we move from the individual cells to the oratory at their center, is symbolic of the continual effort to come out of one's self, reach out to others, and build community with them: the Eucharist transforms individuals into brothers.¹¹⁷ From the eucharistic celebration, in which community is built, celebrated, and expressed, we are sent back to the labor of life, where we grow in mutual service and receptivity thanks to the strength provided by the Word and by the Bread.

42. Prophets of new relationships

Our joint commitment to a way of life, and our joint participation in moments of listening, of prayer, of celebration, of community and of communion, motivate us to proclaim joyfully and gratuitously the common calling to holiness and to full communion with God and among people. Thus Carmelite community becomes in and of itself a proclamation to the world.¹¹⁸ Our fraternal life becomes a prophetic sign of the possibility of living in communion, if one is willing to pay the price.¹¹⁹ Carmelites, who are also called to become experts in communion,¹²⁰ invite others to share in their communal prayer¹²¹ and in their life. Listening prayerfully to the word of God, they find in it the inspiration to become a living and prophetic presence in the Christian community and in the world. From the sharing of material and spiritual goods springs the need to share with every brother and sister all that the Lord has freely given.¹²²

¹¹⁵ see Rule, 15; Constitutions, 31e.

¹¹⁶ see *Fraternal life*, 24-25; see also Constitutions, 30.

¹¹⁷ see Rule 14, see also Constitutions, 20, 31a.

¹¹⁸ see *Fraternal life*, 54-55; see also VC, 25, 42, 46.

¹¹⁹ see *Fraternal life*, 56.

¹²⁰ see PI, 25.

¹²¹ see Constitutions, 20.

¹²² see *Fraternal life*, 56; VC, 51.

43. Paths to community

Certain attitudes and behavior patterns must become habitual if we are to develop an authentically fraternal life: we must be attentive and caring towards those with whom we live, engaging in open and honest dialogue with them, expressing interest in their lives and personalities, helping them on their spiritual journey, and cooperating with them willingly and eagerly. The presence of individuals of different ages in a community can be an important source of mutual enrichment and a valuable testing ground of the sincerity of younger people's motives. Elderly and ill friars can hand on the richness of their own life experiences to the younger members; for their part, young people can stimulate older members to renewal and nourish their hopes for the future.

Love for communal life and active and creative participation in common prayer, in meetings, in meals and in recreational activities help to increase sensitivity with regard to the community.

Gradually, members begin to identify with the community; they become capable of owning decisions which are made jointly, even when, initially, they did not fully agree with them.

It is important to recognize and develop personal gifts, talents and aptitudes; at the same time, however, we must train candidates to assume apostolic, missionary and professional commitments for and on behalf of their communities. In the framework of community we learn to share in its mission and in its service. The work of each individual expresses and makes concrete the mission of the entire community as we are sent by the community to work and act in its name and on its behalf.¹²³

However, it is not enough to identify with one's community. Each member must learn to feel that he is truly part of his Province and of the Order. Contact with the other communities in the Province, and international experiences, contribute to gradually develop a sense of identity with the Order, with its history, its tradition and its life, and to cultivate a spirituality of communion.

44. Work on our Journey

In our Rule, Saint Albert speaks about "some work" that has to be done.¹²⁴ This expression indicates that work is not an end in itself as it is often misunderstood in contemporary societies where people are valued according to the status, efficiency and outcome of their labor. The Carmelite Rule sees work on

¹²³ see Constitutions, 32-33.

¹²⁴ see Rule, 20.

the one hand simply as a means of supporting community. Every work has therefore to be understood as community work even if it is done in the greatest solitude. On the other hand, according to our Rule, work has a spiritual meaning within our journey towards union with God and builds up the Kingdom. Outside the times for prayer and community activities work helps us to be engaged in doing something with attention and concentration in order to be “occupied” so that we are not getting distracted from the very true meaning of our life. This is why the Rule requests us to work in silence. A healthy balance of prayer, work and time for rest will help us to remain always and everywhere with all our being focused and centered in God’s transforming love so that we may better recognize and follow His will for us.

As part of the institutional Church we are inclined to understand work more or less exclusively as pastoral or liturgical ministry. Our Rule instead gives us the example of the Apostle Paul who integrated two important dimensions of work in his own life: he practiced his profession as a tentmaker and lived from this physical labor of his hands. In his remaining time he devoted himself to working for the kingdom of God by proclaiming the Gospel. Every community, and in fact each Carmelite, has to pay attention to finding the right balance between these two dimensions of work.¹²⁵

E. SERVICE AMONG THE PEOPLE: THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD SENDS US INTO MISSION

45. Participants in Christ’s mission in the Church

A contemplative community’s authentic experience of God necessarily leads us to make our own “the mission of Jesus, who was sent to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God and to bring about the total liberation of humanity from all sin and oppression. Our ministry as Carmelites is therefore an integral part of our charism.”¹²⁶

As Carmelites, we are in the Church and for the Church, and together with the Church we are at the service of the Kingdom.¹²⁷ While we strive to enrich the Church through the

¹²⁵ For a fuller description of work, see RIVC, Formation to service, numbers 113-122, below.

¹²⁶ see Constitutions, 91.

¹²⁷ see Constitutions, 21; N.B., Love for the Church and for its mission is a constant element of Carmel. Only a few of the numerous references are mentioned here; e.g., Saint Mary Magdalene de’Pazzi, *Renovazione della Chiesa*,

specificity of our charism, we cooperate in building the one body of Christ in full communion with all the other members of the Christian community.¹²⁸ This communion is made concrete by means of our involvement in local churches.¹²⁹

46. Serving those who seek God

Carmelites share in their contemporaries' thirst for God. This thirst for spirituality goes beyond the limits of Christianity and is often to be found hidden even in those who profess no religion. As Carmelites, we must be able to recognize this thirst for spirituality, wherever it may be, and to enter into dialogue with anyone who seeks God, contributing to the discoveries individuals make in their own experience of the "holy places and mystical spaces"¹³⁰ where God comes to meet us.¹³¹ Faithful to the Order's spiritual heritage, we focus our work, in its various dimensions, on increasing the search for God, and we invite men and women of our time to the experience of contemplation, sharing with them the richness of our spiritual tradition.¹³² Our life as a contemplative community becomes a credible witness to the possibility of encountering the Other and others through silence, openness and sincere communication.¹³³

47. Brothers in the midst of the people

Communal life is in itself both a proclamation and a challenge.¹³⁴ A community that is full of life is both attractive and prophetic; it is a sign of the liberating presence of the Lord among his people.

Our lifestyle, which must be open and welcoming, invites us to share with others the communion of hearts and the experience of God which are lived within the community.¹³⁵

This way of being "in the midst of the people" is a prophetic sign of a new way of relating with people - one that is based on friendship and fraternity. It is also a prophetic statement about justice and peace in society and among peoples. It is "a choice to share with 'the little ones' in history, a choice to speak a word

Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, *Story of a Soul*, Ms. B., 2v-3v.

¹²⁸ see VC, 31, 46-56.

¹²⁹ see VC, 48-49; Constitutions, 97-98.

¹³⁰ *Carmel: a Place and a Journey*, 3.3.

¹³¹ see Constitutions, 96.

¹³² see Constitutions, 95, 99.

¹³³ see *Carmel: a Place and a Journey*, 4.5.

¹³⁴ see *Fraternal life*, 54-56; VC, 51.

¹³⁵ see Rule, 9; Constitutions, 23.

of hope and of salvation from within, more through life than in words.”¹³⁶

Carmelites set out on a journey, following the guidelines given by the Rule, along the paths marked out by the Spirit of the Lord.¹³⁷ They become companions to those who suffer, hope and commit themselves to building up the Kingdom of God, and they seek to promote every means of fostering community.

48. Brothers in mission

We must learn “to ‘leave the sacred precincts’ and ‘go outside the camp’ in order to proclaim ‘in the new marketplaces of the world’ that God loves humankind with an everlasting tenderness.”¹³⁸ Naturally, each situation requires a response that is appropriate to local needs and demands. Our lifestyle and our spirituality must be translatable into attitudes and actions capable of communicating our Carmelite spirit through an ongoing effort to inculturate our charism and the Gospel message.¹³⁹ Moreover, every culture into which we integrate ourselves will enrich both our own understanding of the Gospel message and of our charism, and the means which express them; for as we evangelize, we are in turn evangelized. As we take Christ to others, we encounter Christ present in them.

49. Mission *ad gentes*

In obedience to Christ’s command to “go and teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe my commands,”¹⁴⁰ the Order recognizes and promotes the continuation of a long missionary tradition which reached its high point when Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus was made patron saint of the missions, and is confident that “mission *ad gentes* will reveal in a new way the heart of the Carmelite charism.”¹⁴¹ “Missionary work is nothing other than the manifestation, or the epiphany and the realization, of God’s plan in the world and in history.”¹⁴² It is “the Church’s highest and most sacred duty,”¹⁴³ because the Church is missionary by nature.

¹³⁶ General Congregation 1980, *Called to Account by the Poor*, in AnalOCarm, XXXV, 1-2 [1980], 23; see also Constitutions, 24.

¹³⁷ see Rule, 17; see also Constitutions, 22.

¹³⁸ *Carmel: a Place and a Journey*, 1.3.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.2.

¹⁴⁰ Matthew 28:19-20.

¹⁴¹ Constitutions, 105.

¹⁴² AG, 9.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 29.

From the Lord's explicit command, from the Church's many emphatic statements, and from the tradition of the Order, it is clear that, for Carmelites today, missionary work *ad gentes* is not merely a possibility but a real necessity, as well as a privilege. We must encourage and promote "the unsuppressable missionary drive which distinguishes and characterizes consecrated life."¹⁴⁴

50. Inculturation

The Carmelite charism reaches beyond cultural differences, because the search for God is the heart of the Carmelite vocation and is also the deepest desire of the human heart. In this journey we discover what unites us to God, to each other and to all creation. It is truly joyful in that through it we enter a unity in Christ where there is no longer, division or difference.¹⁴⁵

Living at the center of the world's complexity, we are called to live the Gospel in unity.¹⁴⁶ We are an international Order, stretching across five continents in a global reality divided by language, national boundaries, race, wealth and poverty, differing ideologies, gods, and even different generation gaps. The call to unity is a gift in this diversity.¹⁴⁷ The Church reminds us that we are one family.¹⁴⁸ What is essential for us in this multicultural reality is our common identity. Solid formation in our Christian and Carmelite identity is the sure foundation for dialogue, negotiation and acceptance of the other. In fact, Carmelite communities of today are often a mixture of cultures, nationalities and age groups. This globalization requires that we be well grounded in our own Carmelite culture, so that we have flexibility to embrace difference and an international world-view.¹⁴⁹ The Gospel can appear in different clothing according to the different cultures, but it is the one Gospel.

We can no longer live as isolated realities, because events across the globe touch us, challenge us, engage us. The mendicant friar is not constrained by high walls, but enters the market place where many cultures interact. We are heirs to a

¹⁴⁴ VC, 77.

¹⁴⁵ see Galatians 3:27-28.

¹⁴⁶ see John 17:11.

¹⁴⁷ see RIVC, 4.

¹⁴⁸ AG, 22: "...the local traditions together with the special qualities of each national family, illumined by the light of the Gospel, will be taken up into a Catholic unity."

¹⁴⁹ "A fundamental virtue/skill to be developed is the ability to accept the other as authentically other. This is to say that genuine life-giving differences are to be affirmed and celebrated" (International Carmelite Meeting of Formators in Africa in 2004 reflecting on the theme of 'Inculturation').

great missionary tradition, opening our Order to new cultures and ideas, places where the “seed of Carmel has been planted.” The harvest is rich! For those in initial and ongoing formation programs, international experiences, exchange of personnel, diversity of way of life enriches the formation process and enables the Order to serve God’s people in our new multicultural society. Being open to diversity within the Order and in the greater society will enlighten the dialogue among ourselves and strengthen the common project of community living, which our Rule intimates.¹⁵⁰ “The Church.... travels the same journey as all humanity and shares the same earthly lot with the world: she is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God.”¹⁵¹

51. An inter-cultural project

Inculturation and inter-culturation envisage a plurality that underlines the need for exchange, conversion, a sharing of lives, and a freedom to be who we are in the global village. Thus the ministry of formation envisages:¹⁵²

a) Vocations:

1. To acknowledge and appreciate the multicultural reality of the Order in all its programs and materials.
2. Evaluate candidates to Carmel in terms of their ability to be formed in a holistic way.

b) Initial Formation:

1. Immersion study programs in multi-cultural settings.
2. Develop sensitivity to issues of justice and peace for the formandi (e.g., living with the marginalized).
3. Upgrading our libraries and study materials for students in our formation houses. Continued cooperation between Provinces to make the resources available.
4. Face the challenge of having joint novitiate programs and consider, where possible, joint philosophical and theological studies.

c) Formators:

1. Consider exchange of personnel between Provinces/Commissariats.
2. Train formators for forming candidates in the multicultural reality of the Order and Provinces/Commissariats.

¹⁵⁰ see Rule, 15.

¹⁵¹ see GS 42, §6; and also *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 854.

¹⁵² see Executive Summary of the 2006 International Formators’ Course in Nairobi, Kenya, available at: http://carmelites.info/citoc/citoconline/2006/online_74_2006.htm#3

d) Ongoing Formation:

1. Ongoing formation of Carmelites includes the multicultural dimension (e.g., inter-cooperation of Provinces to form communities).

52. Prophets of justice and peace

The contemplative dimension of Carmelite life allows us to recognize God's action in creation and in history. This free gift challenges us to commit ourselves to the working out of God's plan for the world. The authentic contemplative journey allows us to discover our own frailty, our weakness, our poverty; in a word, the nothingness of human nature - reminding us that all is grace. Through this experience, we grow in solidarity with those who live in situations of deprivation and injustice. As we allow ourselves to be challenged by the poor and by the oppressed, we are gradually transformed, and we begin to see the world with God's eyes and to love the world with his heart.¹⁵³ With God, we hear the cry of the poor,¹⁵⁴ and we strive to share the Divine solicitude, concern, and compassion for the poorest and the least.

This moves us to speak out prophetically in the face of the excesses of individualism and subjectivism which we see in today's mentality, especially in the face of the many forms of injustice and oppression of individuals and of peoples.¹⁵⁵

Commitment to justice, peace and the safeguarding of creation is not an option; these are urgent challenges, to which contemplative and prophetic Carmelite communities - following the example of Elijah¹⁵⁶ and Mary¹⁵⁷ - must respond, speaking out in explicit defense of the truth and of the divine plan for humanity and for creation as a whole. Our communal lifestyle is in itself such a statement: it is founded on just and peaceful relations, according to the plan outlined in the Rule,¹⁵⁸ which our tradition traces back to the experience of Elijah, who founded on Mount Carmel a community of justice and peace.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ see Constitutions, 15.

¹⁵⁴ see Isaiah 3:7.

¹⁵⁵ see *Carmel: a Place and a Journey*, 4.3.

¹⁵⁶ see 1 King 21.

¹⁵⁷ see Luke 1:46-55.

¹⁵⁸ see Rule, 21.

¹⁵⁹ see *Institutio primorum monachorum*, 3:3, 5.

53. Keeping alive the memory of Mary

The rediscovery of the Marian tradition in Carmelite spirituality inspires us today to offer the humble service¹⁶⁰ of those who attribute to Mary, primary model of discipleship, a specific role in spiritual and ecclesial life. This involves promoting an authentic renewal of Mariology on solid biblical, liturgical, ecumenical and anthropological foundations.¹⁶¹ In addition, we need to look more critically at our Marian tradition, in order to find a new language and new ways of expressing our relationship with Mary on our spiritual journey.

54. Paths which inspire service

Our apostolic service is too serious a matter to be left to improvisation, random impulse and wasteful dispersion.¹⁶² Formation to service - an essential element of our charism - must be addressed with the same care and attention as formation to contemplation, to prayer and to fraternity. Hence, we must create a climate of silence and of conversion capable of opening hearts, eyes and minds, so that, enlightened by the Word of God, we may learn to read the signs of the times, listen to others and be attentive to what is happening in the world and in the environment in which we live. To avoid unnecessary dispersion, we must learn to plan - to discern genuine needs and to organize, within the framework of a jointly developed project, the means and the methods required to reach identified goals. We must be free and available to go wherever the Spirit leads us.

The cultivation of a sense of belonging to the Church is an absolute imperative. This implies developing a special love for and interest in the Church and its mission, and learning to work with others in the service of the Kingdom.

Professional, cultural and theological training must be conducive to the integral development of each individual, in preparation for service and with a view to dialogue and cooperation with the intellectual, scientific and cultural worlds. To this end, it is essential to develop an understanding of modern technology and modern means of mass communication, and to acquire the skills necessary to make use of these technologies.

Sensitivity to the poor, the sick, the marginalized and the least, and the safeguarding of creation, are values which must be fostered and developed in a dynamic way, so that they may be translated into a coherent lifestyle.

¹⁶⁰ see Constitutions, 86, 95.

¹⁶¹ see *Marialis cultus*, 29-39; for biblical aspects, see Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, *Last Conversations*, 21 August, 3; the poem, *Why I Love You, O Mary!* (PN 54).

¹⁶² see Nicholas of France, *The Flaming Arrow*, 4.

F. ELIJAH AND MARY**55. In the footsteps of the prophet Elijah**

A few pilgrims, coming from the west to the Holy Land, chose Mount Carmel as the place in which to live in eremitic fraternity. They settled near the spring known as 'Elijah's spring',¹⁶³ thus continuing a long tradition of monastic and eremitic presence.

The memory of the prophet is still alive in this place: the prophet burning with zeal for his God, whose word is a flaming torch; the prophet who stands in God's presence, ever ready to serve him and to obey his Word; the prophet who points to the true God so that the people may no longer stand with their feet in two camps; the prophet who exhorts his people to choose to focus their existence on God alone; the prophet who is attentive both to the voice of God and to the cry of the poor, who knows how to defend both the rights of the one God and those of God's beloved ones, the weakest and the least.

Carmelites remember, and in some ways relive, the prophet's experience: hiding in the desert in times of dryness; facing the challenge of the false prophets of a dead idol who was incapable of giving life; following Elijah on the long journey back through the desert to Mount Horeb, to meet the Lord in new and unexpected ways, and to understand that he is present even where he appears to be absent; sharing in Elijah's thirst for justice; knowing themselves to be, like Elisha, heirs to the mantle that fell from heaven; and from the chariot engulfed in flames.

56. Near Elijah's spring

From this place, "close by the spring,"¹⁶⁴ the Carmelite hermits set out on the long journey charted by Saint Albert's Rule - a path that stretches through time to us. For them, and for those who followed them, Elijah thus became the first to incarnate the ideal of life which had motivated them to leave their homes. They felt themselves to be in some sense his children, heirs to a spiritual heritage which in various ways had been handed down to them.

They collected Judaic and Christian tales about Elijah; they reinterpreted them and made them their own. Thus Elijah, who in monastic tradition was already considered the first monk and the model for contemplatives, became for Carmelites the

¹⁶³ see Rule, 1 and Constitutions, 26.

¹⁶⁴ Rule, 1.

prototype of mystics, and the prophet intent on singing and teaching the praise of God to a community of disciples; the defender of God's rights, and the champion of the weakest and the least. The Carmelites of those early days, like the Carmelites of today, spoke of Elijah as their "Father" - not in any historical or physical sense, but in view of the values which he represents.

57. Mary guides us on our journey

In dedicating their oratory to Mary, the Mother of the Lord, the first Carmelites chose her as their patroness and entrusted themselves to her; consecrating their lives entirely to her service and to her praise - expressed primarily in their life, more than in their rituals.¹⁶⁵

Throughout their history, Carmelites have experienced and celebrated in song the constant and caring presence of their mother and patroness. Mary, the mystical star of Mount Carmel, protects her children, clothes them, and guides them along paths which lead to the joy of the transforming encounter with God.¹⁶⁶ She who first enjoyed the experience of full union with God in Christ helps us to discover the beauty of our calling, and supports us in the arduous ascent to "the peak of the mountain which is Christ the Lord."¹⁶⁷

The scapular is the sign and the reminder of this protection and of our trust in her; her feasts provide opportunities to give thanks to the Lord for the gift of Mary, "more Mother than Queen."¹⁶⁸

58. Journeying with Mary

On the journey towards God, Carmelites recognize the Virgin Most Pure as their sister; the new woman who allows herself to be transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit. Mary, pilgrim in the faith, becomes for them a sign of all that they want to be in the Church.¹⁶⁹

The young woman who heard the angel's words in Nazareth and welcomed the Word of God introduces us to the mystery of the Son of God and teaches obedience to the Spirit, which leads us to adhere fully to the will of the Father. As she hurries to

¹⁶⁵ see Constitutions, 27.

¹⁶⁶ see Preface II of the Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.

¹⁶⁷ see Collect of the Mass for the Solemn Commemoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel; see also Paul VI, Allocution of 22 June 1967, in AASLIX (30 September 1967), No. 12, 779.

¹⁶⁸ see Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, *Last Conversations*, 21 August, 3.

¹⁶⁹ see Preface I of the Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.

visit Elizabeth, Mary's example teaches us how to serve others in charity, the essential way of building community. Mary the Mother of God, who presents the God-child to us in Bethlehem, invites us to become "God-bearers"¹⁷⁰ in all the circumstances of life. Mary fleeing to Egypt with the Child and St Joseph, points to the paths of asceticism and purification, the necessary gate to the contemplative experience of God. Mary keeping and pondering all things in her heart teaches us to seek and to recognize the signs of God's presence in the ordinary events of daily life, and to become disciples of the Lord by listening to the Word and putting it into practice. In Cana, attentive to human needs, Mary points to Jesus as the one who gives the new wine of salvation, and invites us to do what he says. At the foot of the cross, Mary teaches us to be faithful to the end, whatever the consequences. Received by the disciples as their mother, she becomes the model of the praying Church, always open to receive and to share the gift of the Spirit.

Carmelites have a close and intimate relationship with Mary, our Mother and Sister, who is present in our personal lives and in our fraternal life in community.

¹⁷⁰ Blessed Titus Brandsma, Lecture to the Marian Congress of Tangerloo (August 1936); *Carmelite Mysticism, Historical Sketches*, Chicago IL, 1936, Lecture IV, 52-53.

3.

AGENTS AND INTERMEDIATES OF FORMATION: *OBEDIENT TO THE ACTION OF THE SPIRIT*

A. THE AGENTS: GOD AND THE ONE WHO IS CALLED

59. The story of a vocation

Religious life begins with a call which is a gift from God and which demands a response from the one who is called. But the call and the response are not given once and for all at the initial moment: the gift is offered and received anew each day; the call is always new and always demands a new response. This adventure, in which the agents are God and the one whom he calls, grows at the heart of an exchange between two freedoms and between two loves; but it involves a web of other responsibilities and influences, which mediate God's action and help the individual to respond to his call.

60. Vocation: God's gift and our response

Vocation to religious life is the initiative of God the Father, "creator and giver of every good thing, who draws his creature to himself¹⁷¹ with a special love and for a special mission."¹⁷² The Father's loving call is mediated by Jesus Christ, who asks of some of his disciples "a total commitment, one which involves leaving everything behind¹⁷³ in order to live at his side and to follow him wherever he goes."¹⁷⁴¹⁷⁵

Those who are called in this way and experience this gratuitous "eternal and infinite love which is at the very root of our being"¹⁷⁶ feel the need to respond by the total and unconditional gift of their lives.¹⁷⁷ Letting themselves be grasped by Christ, they leave all things behind to follow him¹⁷⁸ and seek, day by day, to "become one with him, taking on his mind and his way of life."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷¹ see John 6:44.

¹⁷² VC, 17.

¹⁷³ see Matthew 19:27.

¹⁷⁴ see Revelation 14:4.

¹⁷⁵ VC, 18.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ VC, 17.

¹⁷⁸ see Mark 1:16-20; 2:14; 10:21, 28.

¹⁷⁹ VC, 18.

The primary responsibility to say “yes” to the divine call, and to assume the consequences, belongs to the one who is called; however, both in the initial moment of response and in the daily journey that follows, this response is not possible without the action of the Holy Spirit, who awakens the desire to respond in this way and guides the growth of this desire. It is the Spirit who shapes and molds those who are called, configuring them to Christ and prompting them to make his mission their own.¹⁸⁰

Those who are called entrust themselves to the action of the Holy Spirit, with the humility of those who renounce the option of acting according only to the criteria of human wisdom, and who give ample space to divine wisdom. Because God’s action is discreet, though continuous and decisive, these individuals cultivate spiritual discernment, so that they may recognize the signs and the fruit of the Spirit’s presence in their own lives and in the world around them. The process of discernment is assisted by both initial and ongoing formation, and by frequent recourse to spiritual direction;¹⁸¹ psychology can also be a useful tool in helping us to understand ourselves better so that we may respond more freely to God’s call.

As the response to God’s call grows, self-giving and commitment, often purified by the crises of life, become more total.

B. PRINCIPAL INTERMEDIATES

61. The Church as the context of religious vocation

The intimate bond between the Church and consecrated life has certain implications for our formation. The vocation to the consecrated life is born within the Church and is ratified by the Church; in the rite of profession to religious life, the Church “invokes the gift of the Holy Spirit upon those who have been chosen, and joins their oblation to the sacrifice of Christ.”¹⁸² This vocation is nourished by the sacraments and by the Word, which have been entrusted to the Church, and it is lived “in full communion with the Church’s doctrine, her life, her pastors, her faithful, and her mission in the world.”¹⁸³

62. Mary, mother and teacher

The Virgin Mary, model, image and eminent member of the Church, draws us to God by her spiritual beauty. Perfect dis-

¹⁸⁰ see VC, 19.

¹⁸¹ see PI, 19.

¹⁸² VC, 30.

¹⁸³ *Fraternal life*, 10.

ciple of the Master; she is our teacher and spiritual guide; her example teaches us to realize, in the simplicity of daily life, the ideal which she was the first to receive and to live. With her maternal love, she accompanies and guides us on the paths that lead to God; she, who, by the will of the Father and the intervention of the Spirit, conceived Christ, continues to be associated with the Holy Spirit in the mysterious action of generating and forming Christ in believers.¹⁸⁴ Carmelites throughout history, and mystics in particular, have experienced and described Mary's influence on their spiritual lives.¹⁸⁵ The scapular is a symbol of Mary's desire to clothe us in Christ.

63. The complementarity of vocations

We must be open to the complementarity of vocations within the Church.

Vocations to the consecrated life are often born in families, or in associations of lay people, who, by their prayers and their spiritual support, continually accompany candidates.

The people among whom we live encourage us and challenge us by their faith, their wisdom, their efforts to provide for themselves and for their families - sometimes in situations of great poverty - and the ways in which they deal with the difficulties of life.

Throughout the journey of vocational discernment and initial formation, meetings, exchanges and cooperation with religious of other Institutes, with candidates to the ordained ministry and with ordained ministers help to define and shed light on the candidate's vocation and personal charism. These relationships will continue to be a source of support throughout the journey of religious life.

64. The local religious community as the context of initial formation

The candidates first experience the charism of the Order through the community in which they live. For this reason, there should be a certain oneness of mind and heart among the members of those communities in which candidates are present,¹⁸⁶ and major superiors shall keep this in mind when

¹⁸⁴ see LG, 63; PI, 20.

¹⁸⁵ see Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi, *Probatione*, 728-730, 30 October 1660; *I Colloqui*, 361-362; Michael of Saint Augustine, *De vita Mariae-formi et mariana in Maria propter Mariam*; Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, *Story of a Soul*, Ms A, 56v-57v; 75r; PN 5, 11.

¹⁸⁶ see PI, 27.

assigning friars to such houses. Even after a community is constituted, there must be constant dialogue among the members, in order to facilitate the work of formation and to avoid too much divergence of views. All the members of formative communities must be aware of their responsibility in the formation of candidates, for whom they are called to be concrete models of Carmelite life.¹⁸⁷ They must be careful, however, not to interfere in the specific work of the formators. A community must offer candidates a spiritual atmosphere, a coherent lifestyle, and an apostolic enthusiasm which will attract them to a radical following of Christ.¹⁸⁸ Community prayer and shared participation in the Eucharist, regular meetings, and shared meals and leisure time are all opportunities to deepen mutual knowledge and to transmit the living memory of our charism.

65. The local religious community as the place of ongoing formation

The ongoing formation of members takes place primarily within their own communities.¹⁸⁹ These provide an environment in which individuals can grow and mature as people, as Christians and as religious interacting with God and with their brothers. A community is not a group of people living together in a way which discourages individual creativity or the development of spiritual charisms; nor is it a place where individuals are judged only by what they do. Rather, it is a group in which each brother is valued because he is an image of God, and must be encouraged to develop his own personality in freedom and responsibility. Hence, it is important to find ways and opportunities to promote the "human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral growth"¹⁹⁰ of each brother. Community meetings can be times for sharing and opportunities for ongoing formation. Communities must pay particular attention to renewal, by providing retreats, spiritual exercises, courses, lectures, books, magazines, and other means. To ensure that this is possible and that all members have time for these activities, discernment must be used; members must not be overburdened with duties and responsibilities.¹⁹¹ In order to make this task easier for all communities, Provinces should develop joint initiatives involving all members.

¹⁸⁷ see Constitutions, 120, 144.

¹⁸⁸ see PI, 27.

¹⁸⁹ see *Fraternal life*, 43-46.

¹⁹⁰ Constitutions, 33.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

66. Formators

God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, forms the mind of Christ in the hearts of consecrated people.¹⁹² God's action is mediated by formators, who are placed as "older brothers" at the side of those whom God has called.¹⁹³ Their role is crucial to the success of formation.¹⁹⁴

The formator's task is a very delicate one; it requires thorough preparation and a continued effort of renewal. Today, one of our most urgent priorities is to train good formators.

Whenever possible, formators should not be individuals who have only recently completed their own initial formation; they should have had time to acquire some practical experience in contemplative life, prayer, fraternal life and apostolic service. Formators must have a certain degree of psychological and spiritual maturity; they must be relatively free of inner conflict; and they must be sufficiently self-confident to share, to enter into dialogue, and to work with others.

67. The prerequisites and responsibilities of the formator

Formators have the following duties and responsibilities:

- a) *to discern* - to help candidates recognize God's call and action, in the concrete circumstances of their lives, and discover the paths on which God is leading them. This requires formators to have not only a capacity for introspection and intuition, but above all a certain spiritual wisdom which is both a gift from God and the fruit of a constant habit of reflecting on one's own life and allowing the Word of God to shed light on it in prayer.
- b) *to accompany* - to assist candidates in their growth, especially through "personal dialogue, a practice of irreplaceable and commendable effectiveness which should take place regularly and with a certain frequency."¹⁹⁵ Formators must adjust to each candidate's pace and respect the rhythm and the stages of each individual's development; however, they should also present clearly the requirements of following Christ in Carmel. This task requires inner serenity, availability, patience, understanding, genuine affection and deep respect for the inviolability of the candidate's conscience; a sound knowledge of the fundamentals of education, psychology and the spiritual journey; and openness and sensitivity to the culture and/or subculture of each candidate.

¹⁹² see Philippians 2:5.

¹⁹³ see VC, 66.

¹⁹⁴ see PI, 30.

¹⁹⁵ see VC, 66.

Formators are themselves brothers journeying towards an ideal that can never be fully attained. They know from experience the joys and the difficulties of the journey to which God has called them, and to which he is now calling others. This enables them to understand the candidates who are entrusted to them, to share their joy and their pain, and to accompany them with the wisdom of those who are familiar with the journey.

- c) *to nourish* - to provide solid doctrinal, spiritual and experiential nourishment, and to transmit the living tradition of the Order, its charism and its spirituality - not merely through instruction, but first and foremost by the example of their own lives.¹⁹⁶ To this end, formators must have a solid theological and spiritual formation, extensive knowledge of the Order and a strong sense of identification with it.
- d) *to evaluate* - to monitor and evaluate the candidates' progress, on behalf of the Church and of the Order, striving to act in truth and in charity.¹⁹⁷ This requires formators to have a clear understanding of the criteria for evaluation,¹⁹⁸ which must be applied with discernment, with deep respect for the personal dignity of each candidate, and in a spirit of love for the Province and for the Order. Naturally, formators must take into account the gradual progression of the journey, and must therefore show understanding towards some inconsistencies or deficiencies in the candidates - always, however, speaking to them openly and clearly, while encouraging them to persevere to the journey's end.

68. Coordination of formation

If possible, there should be a different formator for each stage of initial formation. Coordination and cooperation among the formators assigned to the various stages is, however, essential, in order to ensure continuity throughout the process of formation.¹⁹⁹ To this end, each Province shall have its own Formation Commission, which shall consist of the Prior Provincial or his delegated councilor; the formators, and those in charge of promoting vocations. It shall be the task of this commission to draw up and to periodically review the Province's formation program, in accordance with the principles laid out in the present *Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitanæ*. The program

¹⁹⁶ see PI, 30.

¹⁹⁷ see Ephesians 4:15.

¹⁹⁸ see Appendix.

¹⁹⁹ see PI, 32.

shall then be submitted for approval to the Prior Provincial and his Council. In addition, the members of the commission shall evaluate the formation process itself, and may from time to time discuss the candidates' progress.

For each stage of the formation process, it is appropriate - and sometimes necessary - to appoint an assistant, or a team of assistants, to help formators in their task of monitoring and evaluating the candidates. Such teams, which may also include non-Carmelite members,²⁰⁰ shall work closely with the formators, and under their direct guidance. The formators shall remain at all times personally responsible for formation.²⁰¹

C. SUPPORT STRUCTURES AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF MAJOR SUPERIORS

69. The Order

By means of religious profession, candidates are incorporated first into the Order as a whole and, subordinately, into a Province or General Commissariat.²⁰² Hence, the Order as a whole must be involved in both the initial and the ongoing formation of its members. The one charism and the fraternal bonds which unite us find their concrete expression in cooperation at the international, regional and national levels, and, when appropriate, with other members of the Carmelite Family. Moreover, the need for qualified formators who have been prepared specifically for this task, and the need to continue clarifying and inculturating our charism, require us to promote such a policy of cooperation.

To this end, the Prior General and his Council shall establish an International Commission on Formation, composed of representative members of the various regions of the Order. The commission shall be under the leadership of the Prior General's Delegate for Formation, who will normally be one of the General Councilors. The commission shall promote cooperation in initial formation, coordinate periodic revision of the *Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitanae*, organize meetings and gatherings of formators, and assist the General Councilor or the delegate in fulfilling the tasks described in article 70 below.

A second group, under the leadership of the same delegate of the Prior General, shall have the task of organizing, at regular intervals, courses for ongoing formation which shall be open

²⁰⁰ see Constitutions, 123.

²⁰¹ see PI, 32.

²⁰² see Constitutions, 175.

to all the members of the Order and of the Carmelite Family.²⁰³

Provinces of the same country or of the same region are always to be encouraged to undertake joint initiatives in the areas of initial and ongoing formation. Today, perhaps the most necessary initiative is to open up formation programs to Carmelites for other Provinces, thus encouraging exchanges, a possible international approach and a better use of existing resources. Naturally, this must not be a way of avoiding responsibility for one's own candidates.

70. The Prior General and his Delegate

The general direction and guidance of all that pertains to formation within the entire Order is the prerogative of the Prior General.²⁰⁴ The Prior General shall fulfill this task primarily by paying special attention to formation during his visits to Provinces. It shall be his task and that of his Council to approve the *Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitanae* and to convene, at least once during each six-year term, a meeting of all the formators of the Order, to revise and update the RIVC.²⁰⁵

To assist the Prior General in his ministry in the area of formation, the General Council shall assign this area of responsibility to one of its members.²⁰⁶ If necessary, the Prior General may appoint a delegate who is not a member of the Council.²⁰⁷

The General Councilor or delegate shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- a) to direct formation in the Order, promoting the implementation of the *Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitanae* throughout the Order;
- b) to be familiar with and to monitor formation programs in all the Provinces;
- c) to promote discussions among Provinces on the subject of initial formation, and to facilitate exchanges of formators and of candidates;
- d) to develop and organize a training program for formators;
- e) to give special attention to the needs of formation in emerging areas;
- f) to convene and preside over the International Commission on Formation.

²⁰³ see Constitutions, 171.

²⁰⁴ see Constitutions, 125.

²⁰⁵ see Constitutions, 129.

²⁰⁶ see Constitutions, 303

²⁰⁷ see Constitutions, 129, 303.

71. The Prior Provincial and his Delegate

The general direction and guidance of all that pertains to formation in a Province is the prerogative of the Prior Provincial or his delegate,²⁰⁸ whom he shall normally appoint from among the members of his Council. The Prior Provincial and his Council shall be directly involved in initial formation - not only in decisions concerning the admission of individual candidates to the various stages of the formation program, but also through visitations, meetings, briefings and evaluations, which they shall undertake on a regular basis, together with the Formation Commission.²⁰⁹ The Prior Provincial shall choose formators with the greatest care, and he shall share in the burden of the formators' delicate task by encouraging them, supporting them, and being mindful of their general state of health.²¹⁰

The major superiors' responsibility for the formation of their brothers does not end at the moment of solemn profession or of ordination to ministry. Formation must be a lifelong process, and superiors have the responsibility of providing for ongoing human, spiritual, theological and pastoral formation. They shall take a personal interest in each one of the brothers, and promote opportunities for formation.

²⁰⁸ see Constitutions, 125.

²⁰⁹ see Constitutions, 124.

²¹⁰ see Constitutions, 122.

PART TWO

STAGES IN THE PROCESS OF FORMATION

72. A lifelong journey

The stages of initial formation are an initiation into the Carmelite way of life; they are intended to be the gradual and progressive beginning of a journey of transformation which is to last a lifetime.

The initial stages of the process should therefore be seen in the context of ongoing formation,²¹¹ which is a commitment to conversion of the heart and to spiritual transformation tending towards full maturity in Jesus Christ.²¹²

73. The stages of formation

Initial formation consists of the following stages: pre-novitiate, novitiate and the period of simple profession.

Each stage is part of a series of successive levels of development and deeper growth; it is a continuation of the preceding stage, but it is also characterized by its own particular features, derived from its specific objectives.

The vocations ministry, while not formally one of the stages of formation, is nevertheless included because it prepares the ground for the following stages. It allows individuals to discover God's call and to respond by entering the Order.

²¹¹ see VC, 69; Constitutions, 134.

²¹² see Constitutions, 118.

1.

THE VOCATIONS MINISTRY: *HELPING OTHERS TO FIND THEIR WAY*

A. OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

74. The nature and purpose of the vocations ministry

The calling to religious life in the Carmelite Order, like every vocation, is God's gift; in practical terms, however, it is recognized through various human mediations. Vocations are usually born through contact with one of our religious, with our lifestyle or with one of our activities, or, occasionally, simply through exposure to our classic spiritual writings.

Our love for the Spirit's gift of Carmel to the Church moves us to share it with others. We must therefore be attentive to the signs of the Carmelite charism in others and have the courage to put before them a specific proposal.

The main objective of the vocations ministry is to help others discover the gift which they carry within themselves, and respond to it by choosing the particular lifestyle which corresponds to it. The function of the ministry is, therefore, to accompany individuals on their journey of spiritual growth and to assist them in the task of discernment.

B. PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR VOCATION MINISTRY

75. Communities and Provinces

As Carmelites, we mediate the Lord's call by living and witnessing to the values of our charism, and by sharing the joys and the difficulties of our lifestyle. Not only the person in charge of promoting vocations and the members of the host community, but every community and every member, shall strive to awaken vocations by the enthusiasm with which they live their own lives and by introducing others to the values of our tradition and of our charism.

Each provincial vocations promoter has an assistant in each community.

The Prior Provincial shall ensure that vocations are a priority in the Province's plan. He shall ensure that a specific program for the promotion of vocations is developed, implemented and monitored in his Province.

76. The vocations promoter

In each Province there shall be one person responsible for promoting vocations. He shall have the following responsibilities:

- a) to encourage communities to develop the vocational dimension of their lives and of their various forms of service, so as to promote vocations;
- b) to promote and coordinate vocational initiatives together with local assistants - involving, in particular, Carmelites who are in initial formation;
- c) to discern the signs of a vocation in others, and to invite them to join the Order;
- d) to accompany individuals on the journey of vocational growth;²¹³
- e) to liaise with diocesan and national agencies responsible for the promotion of vocations.²¹⁴

C. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT**77. The vocational path**

Invitations to the Carmelite life may be made to individuals who are searching and trying to give meaning to their lives. To such individuals we offer the person of Jesus, his word and his lifestyle. Involvement in the life of the Church - through parishes, groups, movements and work experience - can help these individuals to evaluate their own progress and their growth in maturity, both in human and in Christian terms. Participation in the sacraments, prayer and spiritual direction are all necessary for authentic discernment of a vocation. The discovery of and introduction to Carmel and its values can attract individuals and motivate them to respond positively and concretely to the Lord's call.

78. Methodology, means and instruments

- a) It is for communities to develop their Carmelite character, making it recognizable and attractive. They can then say "Come and see!" to individuals who are asking questions or searching; they can invite them to experience concretely the Carmelite way of life for a more or less extended period of time. Thus communities become the

²¹³ see Constitutions, 131.

²¹⁴ see Constitutions, 133.

environment in which individuals can begin the process of decision-making, as they recognize in themselves attitudes and values which are typical of our charism.

- b) Each Province may assign this ministry of vocational reception to one particular community. Under the leadership of the provincial vocations promoter, such communities shall organize projects, gatherings and events designed to promote the proposal, the accompaniment and the discernment of vocations.²¹⁵ In some Provinces, this task may be entrusted, at least in part, to minor seminaries or to various associations which may encourage individuals to join the Order.
- c) The vocational dimension, like the capacity to generate, is intrinsic to our lives; we must therefore make it visible in all that we do. Parishes must promote their Carmelite character; pilgrimage centers and places of devotion must be sources of spiritual life inspired and enlivened by Carmelite values; schools and colleges must not forget that part of their educational mission is to help their students in their vocational orientation. Even in those activities which we undertake individually, we must be mindful of communicating the fact that we are Carmelites. Certain means are particularly suited to the promotion of vocations: assistance with spiritual growth, and especially spiritual direction, to which every religious shall give adequate time; the spread of Carmelite publications, books and audio-visual materials; the Internet; and so on.
- d) The vocations promoter shall accompany individuals who are searching, through regular meetings and conversations, encouraging them to take time for reflection and discernment with other candidates.
- e) What we say to those who show interest in joining the Order must set out all the possible options for life and involvement within the Carmelite Family.

D. CRITERIA FOR DISCERNMENT

79. Discernment of vocations

To be admitted to the pre-novitiate, candidates must show signs of a certain degree of human maturity, a living relationship with Jesus as Lord of their lives, a definite ecclesial and social awareness, and a Carmelite vocation. The evaluation of these signs shall be made by the vocations promoter, or by the

²¹⁵ see Constitutions, 132.

person who has accompanied the candidate on the journey, in dialogue with the vocations promoter.

It is important that the person responsible for this evaluation should know the candidate through contacts with his family, his neighborhood, his parish, and the movements or associations which have had a formative role in his life. In cases where candidates have had previous experience in diocesan seminaries or other religious institutes, information and letters of recommendation shall be obtained from those responsible for their previous formation.²¹⁶

²¹⁶ see CIC, c.645, 2, 4.

2

THE PRE-NOVITIATE: *PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY*

A. OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

80. The nature and purpose of the pre-novitiate

The pre-novitiate is intended to prepare candidates for entry into the novitiate, where their journey of Carmelite religious life will begin.²¹⁷

Pre-novices deepen their faith and learn to own it more personally, so that they can listen to the voice of Jesus, who calls them to follow him.

They deepen their knowledge of themselves, of their personal and social history, of their backgrounds, and of their Christian communities. This first experience of communal life provides them with an opportunity to test their ability to live with others.

Their first awareness of their own Carmelite vocation is tested against the first stages of knowledge and experience of Carmelite values, charism and spirituality. Through this encounter, and through the general discernment of their vocations, pre-novices are enabled to make an initial, tentative response, and to ask to be admitted to the novitiate.

B. PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PRE-NOVITIATE

81. Pre-novices

Individuals who ask to begin the journey of Carmelite formation feel themselves to be called by God and wish to respond affirmatively. They must be willing and able to take the steps and make the choices proposed by the vocational and formative process. To this end, they must be willing to entrust themselves to the guidance of those responsible for the process; to the host community or the community with which they are in contact; and to the companions the Lord will give them to journey alongside them. Above all, they must learn to become disciples of the Lord, who invites them to follow him in concrete and visible ways.

²¹⁷ see PI, 42; Constitutions, 135.

Pre-novices must be able to accept the demanding challenges of the formative process, and to choose to follow, freely and responsibly, their Carmelite vocation, for which they feel sufficiently mature.

82. Formators

Formators are the pre-novices' most direct points of reference. Formators help pre-novices to discern and to recognize the hidden inner signs of a calling to Carmelite life, so that they may follow Christ in a personal way. Formators act as links between pre-novices and communities; they make communities visible and intelligible to new candidates.

Formators accompany pre-novices in their human and Christian growth, helping them to discover within themselves the values and possibilities which will make them able and sufficiently mature to live the Carmelite life. In those cases where they recognize the absence of such values and possibilities, formators must know how to direct their brothers towards paths which are better suited to them.

83. Communities

During this stage, the function of host communities is to help pre-novices to experience for the first time the values which characterize our Carmelite fraternity. To this end, they must be flexible rather than rigid, welcoming rather than oppressive or intrusive. At this stage, there must still be a distinction between the life of the community and that of the pre-novices. The example that the community members give to the pre-novices in their daily life is of fundamental importance.

84. Formation commissions

To guarantee a unified approach to the journey of formation, communication among formators is important.

Dialogue with vocations promoters will assist formators in accompanying pre-novices and in completing the discernment of their vocations. In the same way, discussions with the novice directors will help them in their task of guiding pre-novices. Pre-novices should be brought into contact with the novice director and, if possible, with the house where the novitiate takes place.

85. The Prior Provincial

It is the prerogative of major superiors, or their delegates, to admit candidates to the pre-novitiate, after hearing the views

of those in charge of the pre-novitiate. It is also their duty to provide the appropriate environment and the necessary resources and formative opportunities for the proper unfolding of the pre-novitiate.²¹⁸

86. Other participants

During the pre-novitiate, the presence of a spiritual director, chosen in consultation with the formator, is essential. The spiritual director contributes to the process of discernment and accompanies pre-novices on their spiritual paths.

The input of a psychologist/counselor to facilitate the development of self-knowledge and the discovery of capabilities, possibilities, talents, inconsistencies and weaknesses is also recommended.

It is also desirable that the pre-novitiate program should include some input from experts and from lay and religious collaborators.

C. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

87. The pre-novitiate journey

For young people who are beginning to discover Carmelite life, the pre-novitiate is primarily a time of human and Christian growth. They need to become fully aware of their identities, of their gifts and of their weaknesses; they must open their eyes and look at the human environment in which they live, with its particular social and cultural realities, and enter into relationship with it; they need to grow in the area of interpersonal relationships.

Older people, on the other hand, enter the pre-novitiate with a certain experience of life, and we must keep in mind that their accumulated human, Christian and professional experience must be valued and utilized. Rather than simply encouraging human growth and maturity in the narrowest sense, we must help them to restructure their value system in preparation for the new lifestyle they are choosing. Those who were accustomed to living alone will need special help to become integrated into a community. They will need to work on their acquired personality traits, enhancing the positive aspects and identifying weaknesses. Professional skills and capacities for initiative, cooperation and involvement in projects must be taken into account.

²¹⁸ see Constitutions, 136.

All pre-novices must deepen their journeys of faith, growing in a relationship with God which is ever more authentic and personal, and developing an ecclesial consciousness. They must acquire the appropriate basic information and the necessary experience to support the choice they are preparing to make.

Each Province shall organize its pre-novitiate in whatever way seems most appropriate and responsive to local needs.²¹⁹ The duration of the pre-novitiate will depend on the individual's growth and maturity.

88. Methodology, means and instruments

- a) Pre-novices are not yet consecrated religious. They must therefore be introduced to the Carmelite experience, and to communal living, gradually. In addition, practical and financial arrangements shall be made, according to individual circumstances, by means of an agreement to be signed by each candidate before admission.²²⁰
- b) Formators shall have regular meetings with each candidate. During such meetings, they shall assist candidates to reflect on their personal experience and, through this reflection, to understand themselves and their fundamental choices, to estimate their strength in regard to God's calling, and to reflect on the possibility of living out this calling in a free, objective and personal way.
- c) Special attention shall be given to the pre-novices' participation in a healthy sacramental and liturgical life and to their attention to personal prayer.
- d) Integration into the life of the community, with the particular events and activities which characterize it, shall be attempted gradually, thus giving candidates a chance to become familiar with the life to which they feel called from within, in all its concreteness and with its particular demands.
- e) Dialogue and meetings with other pre-novices promote exchanges of experience, contributing to the development of bonds which will grow in the future; they help to clarify the choices each pre-novice is making, as well as providing opportunities for a first exercise in fraternity.
- f) During the pre-novitiate, special times shall be set aside for the experience of service, both within and outside the community; preferably, these shall be services of an ecclesial or social nature.

²¹⁹ see Constitutions, 137; PI, 44.

²²⁰ see Constitutions, 415.

- g) Candidates must acquire a basic level of education and general knowledge corresponding to that of individuals who have completed the normal level of schooling in the candidate's own country of origin.²²¹ In cases where candidates have not completed this level of basic education before entering the pre-novitiate, it is necessary to ensure that they complete it within this phase of their formation, before being admitted into the novitiate.
- h) The prescribed content of the Program of Carmelite Studies shall be presented at the appropriate times and according to the established schedule. These courses may be organized and managed in cooperation with other Institutes.²²²
- i) From the beginning, efforts shall be made to develop in candidates a healthy balance between the various dimensions of life - prayer, fraternal life, work, study, service, free time, and health and exercise.

D. CRITERIA FOR DISCERNMENT

89. Discernment

The pre-novitiate is by definition a time of discernment. Candidates examine their own vocations against the experience proposed by their formators and by the Carmelite communities. Retreats and spiritual exercises help to create the right climate for an evaluation of the call.

During the pre-novitiate - and with particular attention and clarity at the time of the evaluation for admission into the novitiate - the formators, having heard the views of the community, shall involve the candidate in the evaluation, applying the criteria defined below, in addition to those indicated in the Code of Canon Law,²²³ in the Constitutions²²⁴ and in the Appendix.

The first questions we ask are whether the candidate shows the signs of a vocation to Carmelite life, and whether he appears to have the human and Christian qualities required to live this life.²²⁵ It is important to be very clear from the beginning: if signs of a non-authentic or misdirected vocation are noticed, we must direct the candidate to his proper path; if, on the other

²²¹ see PI, 43.

²²² see *Cooperation*, 13.

²²³ see CIC, cc. 641-645.

²²⁴ see Constitutions, 138.

²²⁵ see PI, 43.

hand, what we note is a premature response to God's call, it is important to give it time to grow.

Pre-novices are free to leave the pre-novitiate at any time, and the major superior is free, in consultation with the formator, to send them away at any time.

3.

THE NOVITIATE: *SETTING OUT ON THE JOURNEY*

A. OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

90. Nature and purpose of the novitiate

The purpose of the novitiate is to initiate candidates gradually into life in the Spirit according to the Carmelite charism, with a view to a first commitment through simple profession. Religious life in the Carmelite Order begins in the novitiate.²²⁶

The novices' initiation involves growth in Christian maturity. This is growth in depth, in that the novices' experience is firmly anchored in the mystery of God. It is growth in scope, in that novices do not limit themselves to devotion or formal worship, but are encouraged to develop a contemplative attitude and are invited to strengthen their vocation, their apostolic zeal, their faith, their hope and their charity.

Throughout this process, comparisons, controls, and purification of motives and of personal perspectives on life are important so that novices may learn to ground their existence in God.

Novices therefore need time and space to clarify their vocation and to confirm their ability to live the religious life in the Carmelite way. This implies a process of identification with our way of life, and it is effected in a concrete community of brothers engaged in prayer and in service, rather than through indoctrination and communication of concepts. The actual experience of a new way of life on a daily basis is intended to lead to a first decision to choose the Order.

B. PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NOVITIATE

91. The novices

The principal responsibility for formation lies with the novices themselves: in responding to the Father, who calls them to follow Christ in the Carmelite way of life, they receive his Word and choose to model their lives on his and to live in disciple-

²²⁶ see CIC, c.646, 139, 151.

ship. Thus the fundamental quality of a novice is docility to the motions of the Spirit. In dialogue with their formators and with the community, novices shall allow themselves to be guided and accompanied in the daily experience of Carmelite life. They shall develop their capacity for discipleship by learning, day by day, to attune their lives to the Word, as Mary did. Novices shall gradually deepen the contemplative dimension within themselves, growing in their personal relationships with God through prayer and attentive listening to the Word. They shall set out decisively on the path of internal transformation which will lead them to walk every day in God's presence, to recognize him in their brothers, to see people and things with his eyes, and to proclaim him among the people.

92. The Novice Director

The responsibility for accompanying novices rests primarily with the formator, who is appointed by the Prior Provincial with his Council.²²⁷ The personality, the formation and the personal qualities of the formator are important factors in the novices' journey. In view of the importance of this service, formators shall dedicate themselves primarily to their work in the novitiate. For the novices, the formator does not only communicate knowledge; he is above all the one who accompanies them and helps them, by the way he lives, to clarify their own vocation and to come to a decision. Formators accompany novices along the path of inner transformation, helping them to discern the signs of the action of the Spirit in their lives, and to acquire and develop a contemplative attitude.

Formators are the novices' primary points of reference with regard to their personal journeys, their daily lives in the novitiate community, and their reflection on their experience as novices.

Every three months, formators shall report to the members of the community on the situation in the novitiate and on the progress of each novice, and shall hear their comments and suggestions.

93. The Community

The novitiate is a particular period in religious life; nevertheless, it must be lived in the ordinary daily context of a community. Only in this way will novices gain a realistic impression of how brothers live together in a Carmelite community. They will also have an opportunity to observe their own behavior in

²²⁷ see CIC, c.651; Constitutions, 144.

community, and to reflect on it. This experience is particularly important for novices who until entering lived alone.

Jointly, the brothers in a novitiate community have a serious responsibility as regards the witness they bear, the example they give, the atmosphere of the house and the success of the novitiate.²²⁸ Such co-responsibility - which is exercised in a special way at the periodic briefings concerning the progress of the novitiate, and at the time of the evaluation of novices - shall be taken into account when assigning members to the community.

94. The Formation Commission

To ensure continuity within the formation process, there must be ongoing communication among the members of the Provincial Commission for Formation. While formators remain responsible for the novitiate year at all times, these exchanges can be helpful to them in resolving difficult or problematic situations.

95. The Prior Provincial and his Council

The provincial government is co-responsible for the accompaniment of novices. This responsibility is not limited to legal matters;²²⁹ it concerns the entire process of formation and personal development of the novices. For this reason, the provincial government - always taking into account the principle of subsidiarity - shall organize visitations and meetings with the novices, the formators and the members of the novitiate community.

The Prior Provincial and his Council are also responsible for providing the proper conditions, including financial support, to ensure the good functioning of the novitiate community. The Province must train and make available the necessary personnel, provide the appropriate means, and monitor their functioning.

96. Other participants

Each novice, in consultation with the formator, shall select an appropriate spiritual director.

Formators may enrich the formation they offer by requesting the cooperation of lay and religious experts, bearing in mind that there may also be cooperative projects undertaken in conjunction with other Institutes.²³⁰

²²⁸ see Constitutions, 144.

²²⁹ see Constitutions, 138-155, *passim*.

²³⁰ see *Cooperation*, 14, 16.

C. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT**97. The novices' journey**

In the novitiate, novices begin to know Carmelite life, its values and its concrete expression. The community, in turn, begins to know the novices - their personalities, their potential and their capabilities.

During the novitiate, ample time and space shall be given to the presentation of the charism, the models, the tradition, the history and the present life of the Order. Novices shall learn to respect the values of Carmel and to make them their own, gradually identifying with them. They shall have the opportunity to take their first steps in following Christ according to the evangelical counsels, and to test their real capacity to live according to these counsels.

It is important to help the novices to express these values concretely, in attitudes and in a lifestyle which will allow God to gradually bring about their transformation. Novices need to realize that their primary goal, beyond the profession which they will make at the end of the year of novitiate, is a constant commitment to conversion, which is to last throughout their lives and open them to the possibility of a transformative union with God so that they may bear witness coherently to his presence in the world.

To be valid, the novitiate must last twelve months.²³¹ It may be extended, but not beyond two years.²³²

98. Methodology, means and instruments

- a) The novitiate is neither a continuation nor a new kind of school; rather, it is a process in which theory and praxis interact, each shedding light on the other.

The organization of the novitiate shall depend, to a large extent, on who the novices are and on what they bring to the process.²³³ Thus, theoretical knowledge, practice of Carmelite life, activities and opportunities for practical experience must be viewed as parts of a unified process. To promote responsible behavior, it is useful to involve the novices in the development of the program for the novitiate and of the community's activities. The capabilities and personal interests of the novices must be taken into account.

²³¹ see CIC, c.648.1.

²³² see CIC, c.648.2-3; Constitutions, 147-149.

²³³ see PI, 51.

- b) The novitiate is an ongoing dialogue between the Order's vision of itself and the novice's capacity to make a free decision based on his experience of God, of himself and of the community.

Periodically, the relationship between these two realities needs to be re-examined:

1. in the context of certain moments of community life in which novices participate and in which they begin to concretely experience Carmelite life: the Eucharistic Liturgy and the Liturgy of the Hours, *lectio divina*, community meetings, joint work, recreational activities, and so forth;
 2. in the context of personal prayer and spiritual reading, for which novices shall set aside significant amounts of time;
 3. in the context of retreat days and spiritual exercises;
 4. in the context of regularly scheduled conversations with the novice master, during which novices shall discuss their vocation, their motives, their current state, and their expectations and future plans, as well as their weaknesses and their strengths. In order to establish a genuine relationship between daily life and the values of our charism, it is necessary to discuss with the novices their concrete experience of daily life and their behavior in specific situations. Novices also need to be helped and accompanied in dealing with their new situation as Carmelites living in community. It is important to provide support in difficult situations and to encourage openness in times of crisis. At certain times it may be important for novices to have access to specialists and to a spiritual director.
- c) The themes suggested and described in detail in the Program of Carmelite Studies for the novitiate shall be adapted by the provincial formation program in accordance with the needs of particular cultural situations, and shall be presented in the ways and at the times that are best suited to the personal circumstances of the novices.
- d) The establishment of a joint novitiate may be advisable in view of the particular situation of a given Province, or of the existence of a common language in two or more Provinces. The organization, the personal and legal issues involved, and the forms of communication shall be agreed beforehand by the provincial superiors concerned.
- e) In order to enrich the experience of the novices, cooperation and exchanges with the novitiates of other Institutes are recommended. These meetings with male and female religious will broaden their horizons, develop communica-

tion and, through comparisons, contribute to the growth of a Carmelite identity.²³⁴

- f) Novice directors shall take part in meetings of formators organized at the diocesan, national and international levels to discuss issues concerning ongoing formation and exchanges.²³⁵

D. CRITERIA FOR DISCERNMENT

99. Discernment

At regular intervals, formators shall meet with novices to evaluate their progress, possibly in writing. This will help to identify both positive and negative points, as well as possibilities for further growth.

As regards the evaluation with a view to admission to simple profession, the fundamental questions - keeping in mind the suggestions included in the Appendix - are whether the novice has come to know the Carmelite charism, whether he recognizes it in himself, whether he has experienced it and whether he has begun to identify with the Province and with the Order.

Moreover, we must ask whether he has reached a sufficient degree of maturity - both human and spiritual - to live the Carmelite consecrated life with sufficient fidelity, and whether there is sufficient reason to hope that he will grow in the contemplative path in a community of brothers in the service of the Church.

100. Procedure

Each novice shall submit to the major superior a written request for admission to simple profession; the provincial formation program shall determine how long before the end of the novitiate this shall take place. The major superior, after examining the novice master's report and hearing the local Chapter, shall decide on the matter with a deliberative vote from his Council. Full procedures and requirements for admission to simple profession can be found in the Code of Canon Law and in the Constitutions.²³⁶

²³⁴ see *Cooperation*, 14-16.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

²³⁶ see CIC, cc.653-656; Constitutions, 153-155.

4.

THE PERIOD OF SIMPLE PROFESSION: *ON THE JOURNEY*

A. OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

101. Nature and purpose of the period of Simple Profession

Through simple (temporary) profession, novices come to participate in “the consecration proper to the state of religious,”²³⁷ are incorporated into the Carmelite Order²³⁸ and participate in its life and mission to the extent of their capabilities. The temporary nature of this commitment guarantees the gradual progression of the journey of formation.

During this period, the professed continue to develop the contemplative dimension according to the style that is proper to Carmel. The brothers deepen their dialogue with God in personal prayer and by participating in the liturgy and listening to the Word; integration into a community encourages them to live a fraternal life in a concrete and responsible way; through their first experiences of service and apostolate they learn to share the experience of God with their brothers.

Formation within the community shall be complemented by studies in theology, humanities and sciences and by practical experience and service, all of which are necessary to complete the process. Usually, during this period, novices shall also receive training in various aspects of service; this is discussed in the following chapter.

B. PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PERIOD OF SIMPLE PROFESSION

102. The Simply Professed

The story of each vocation continues along the path set by the simply professed member’s daily response to God’s call. He listens to the voice of the Father who speaks to him; he recognizes God present and active in his own life and in that of his

²³⁷ Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, *Renovationis Causam*, Instruction on the Renewal of Formation to the Religious Life, 6 January 1969, 7; also see PI, 59.

²³⁸ see Constitutions, 175-176.

brothers; he deepens and intensifies his experience of following Christ; and he lets himself be guided by the Holy Spirit along the path of inner transformation.

An authentic and true journey of formation requires the following attitudes from the simply professed member: openness both to his brothers within the community and to his brothers and sisters outside; willingness to share in their joys, their hopes, their sorrows, their expectations and their needs; and participation in the journey of holiness and purification of the Church, as well as in the Church's mission.

103. Formators

It is the specific task of formators in this stage to help the novices to deepen their awareness of their Carmelite vocation, so that their following of Jesus Christ may be expressed concretely in the various dimensions of personal and communal life. Formators accompany them and guide them, helping them to identify specific areas which require deepening, and experiential paths which require exploration, in various important disciplines - human, spiritual, Carmelite, technical, intellectual or service-related.

Formators are also responsible for the candidates' studies; they assist the simply professed members on their journey of cultural, professional and theological formation, suggesting choices which correspond to the simply professed members' personal inclinations and are in harmony with the orientation of the Province and of the Order.

104. The Community

The simply professed members journey together with the religious community to which they belong. The community receives them with all their uncertainties and all their potential. The other members of the community gradually make themselves known to the simply professed, and help them to become integrated into the rhythm of communal life and service. For their part, the simply professed bring with them new ideas and new energies, which the community must value and utilize.

Formators shall inform the community of the students' progress at regular intervals, and shall listen to their suggestions and comments.

When the time comes for the simply professed member's admission to solemn profession, the Prior Provincial shall call on the community to express their views.

105. The Formation Commission

In order to ensure continuity throughout the process of formation, communication with those in charge of the other stages of formation is necessary. This helps the formators to know the various members in initial formation and to accompany them through difficult and critical times towards the goal of solemn profession.

106. The Prior Provincial and his Council

The Prior Provincial shall take care to know the simply professed, in preparation for periodic evaluations in view of the renewal of temporary vows, and for the final review before admission to solemn profession - at which time he must decide, with the consent of his Council, whether to admit these candidates.²³⁹ He shall be assisted in this by the formators' periodic reports.

107. Other participants

The simply professed are active participants in the ecclesial community; in dialogue with the rest of the people of God, they discover their specific charismatic and missionary characteristics. Formators may be assisted by experts and specialists, who shall make their own particular contributions to the human and spiritual development of the professed. Possibilities of cooperation with other religious Institutes shall be considered.²⁴⁰

Spiritual directors, chosen with the consent of the formators, help to accompany the simply professed on God's paths, so that these paths may be recognized jointly by means of discernment, in order that the inner life and the external life of each candidate may increasingly be in harmony.²⁴¹

When it seems necessary, the support of a psychological counselor shall be offered, to assist individuals to know themselves better, overcome and integrate conflicts within themselves, deal with the demands of their new state in life, and mature in their interpersonal relationships.

²³⁹ see Constitutions, 157, 1c.

²⁴⁰ see *Cooperation*, 17.

²⁴¹ see PI, 63; EE, 11, 47.

C. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT**108. The journey beyond Simple Profession**

The period of simple profession must provide the simply professed members with opportunities to deepen their knowledge and experience of the essential values of Carmelite life. They shall be helped to gradually own religious life - and, consequently, consecration, the vows, fraternal life, and the life of service - according to the vision offered by the Carmelite charism and by the lived spirituality of the Carmelites who came before them.²⁴²

During this period, the simply professed shall continue to focus on the vitally important areas of human development, spirituality, Carmelite studies, practical and academic studies, and service-related subjects. It is important that they should understand the intrinsic unity of these areas of concentration, and that, as they mature, they should progressively and gradually integrate them.²⁴³ Growth in contemplation fosters such integration. It is essential to form simply professed members to fidelity, generosity and self-giving, which help them to deal with and overcome moments of crisis.

For a solemn profession to be valid, the candidate must have completed at least three years of temporary profession.²⁴⁴

109. Methodology, means and instruments

- a) The simply professed shall be involved in the development of their formation program, and shall begin to assume responsibilities within the group and within the community.
- b) Liturgical life, personal prayer, annual spiritual exercises and days of retreat shall nourish the spiritual life of the professed and contribute to their growth in the contemplative dimension, which enables us to recognize God's ways, even on the crooked paths of human history, in life's contradictions and inconsistencies as much as in its beauty.
- c) Integration into community life will contribute to the candidates' growth; it will make human and fraternal relations more concrete and real; and, where necessary, it will enable the simply professed to attain maturity in relationships, and to acquire the capacity to make decisions and to assume responsibilities.

²⁴² see PI, 59.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 60-62, 65.

²⁴⁴ see CIC, 655, 657; Constitutions, 155, 157.1b.

- d) This is the appropriate time for more specific experiences of apostolate, proclamation and involvement in issues of justice and peace.²⁴⁵ These experiences shall be chosen and undertaken in agreement with the formator, so that there may be joint reviews and evaluations. Preference should be given to those sectors of evangelization closest to the Carmelite spirituality and charism. An area which is frequently appropriate for the simply professed is that of promoting vocations. Through this, the simply professed will remain in contact with the social environment in which they work, dialoguing with the people, learning about their problems and circumstances, and walking with them.
- e) Through regularly scheduled meetings with their formators, and assisted by appropriate experiences and input, the simply professed continue to grow in self-knowledge. They learn to recognize their own potential and capabilities, and to deal with and integrate possible conflicts; they learn to re-appropriate and in time to reconcile themselves with their own history. They grow in the serene and positive integration of their emotions and their sexuality into their spiritual lives; they develop the capacity to build mature relationships and to live and work with others. The spiritual journey helps them to purify their image of God. In addition, they shall review their journey of appropriation of the religious life according to the Carmelite charism, their gradual unification of the various dimensions of life, and their preparation for future tasks.
- f) Every Carmelite should have, according to his capabilities, at least a basic knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and of theology, and the central issues of spirituality and religious life.²⁴⁶ All Carmelites must be able to develop the gifts and aptitudes which they have received from the Lord. Technical, artistic and musical talents are gifts to the community, as well as effective means of evangelization. All candidates shall receive a formation which is appropriate to the service or activity for which they are preparing. Those who are called to the ordained ministry shall receive appropriate preparation in the areas of philosophy and theology. The specific content of this preparation is described in the Program of Carmelite Studies.
- g) The simply professed shall have the opportunity to learn practical housekeeping skills and the necessary skills for the maintenance and upkeep of buildings and equipment. An understanding of the finances and management of the community and of the Province will contribute to responsible and active participation in community life.

²⁴⁵ see PI, 62.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

D. CRITERIA FOR DISCERNMENT**110. Periodic and final evaluations**

The simply professed shall review their progress with their formators once a year; this review shall be communicated to the community and to the Prior Provincial.

At the appropriate time, before the end of the three-year period of simple profession, each simply professed member - having completed the process of discernment with his formator - shall decide whether to submit to the Prior Provincial a request for admission to solemn profession²⁴⁷ or a request to renew the simple profession.²⁴⁸ Such renewals are authorized for up to six years, and extensions may be allowed in special cases; however, the total period of simple profession shall not exceed nine years.²⁴⁹

The major superior, with a deliberative vote of his Council and a consultative vote of the Chapter of the petitioner's community, shall decide whether or not to admit the candidate to solemn profession.²⁵⁰ Details concerning the relevant conditions and requirements may be found in the Code of Canon Law and in the Constitutions.²⁵¹

111. Discernment with a view to Solemn Profession

The central questions to be addressed are whether the simply professed can prudently commit himself to live forever in the Order, and whether the Order is prepared to accept him.

These are vital, fundamental and definitive questions; therefore, the report which is presented to the petitioner must be precise, detailed, realistic and honest. His strengths and weaknesses must be pointed out clearly, and the ways in which the religious dealt with and accepted them must be reported. The suggestions included in the Appendix should be kept in mind.

It is useful to refer to reports submitted at the end of previous stages of formation, and to indicate progress, possibilities, and limitations which have been confirmed or which have since emerged, and areas of growth.

²⁴⁷ see Constitutions, 155, 157.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 155.

²⁴⁹ see CIC, cc.655, 657.2; Constitutions, 155.1.2.

²⁵⁰ see Constitutions, 157:1c.

²⁵¹ see CIC, cc.656, 658; Constitutions, 157.

112. Preparing for Solemn Profession

While preparation for solemn profession begins in the novitiate, preparation for the final step shall be intensified towards the end of the period of temporary profession. The petitioner must be fully aware of the seriousness of this act and of the definitive nature of his consecration to the Lord and incarnation into the Order. Naturally, the simply professed must be reminded of the continuous nature of religious life and the need for ongoing formation.

For at least one month before solemn profession,²⁵² the simply professed shall prepare with prayer and with reflection on specific themes of Carmelite religious life. This period shall be organized by one or more persons who will monitor the petitioners and accompany them in their reflection. Relevant themes and methods are indicated in the Program of Carmelite Studies.

This month of specific preparation may be organized at the national level, at the regional level or even at the level of the entire Order.

²⁵² see Constitutions, 156.

5.

FORMATION TO SERVICE:
JOURNEYING FOR OTHERS

A. OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

113. Called to serve

Service is an integral part of our charism.²⁵³ Based on the Carmelite way of understanding and living contemplation, we are open to every kind of service, apostolate or profession. However, because “we Carmelites must fulfill our mission among the people first and foremost through the richness of our contemplative life,”²⁵⁴ we tend towards services which are more clearly spiritual. Thus, in whatever work we do, we are especially mindful of the spiritual journeys of those around us. Above all, our constant effort to live our contemplative charism is not only the source of our service,²⁵⁵ but is in itself the best service we can offer, because it is the essence of the mission we have received from God.²⁵⁶

While the Carmelite charism makes us one religious family, personal charisms enrich it, expressing its multifaceted beauty. They build up the community and define - always with due regard for the needs of the Province and of the Order - the particular service which each member is called to undertake. These charisms include the charisms of the ordained ministries; those who are called and accepted by the Church and by the Order shall be ordained to the diaconate and/or to the priesthood.

The charisms, in all of their diversity, are essentially equal: “There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of services to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them...”²⁵⁷ This vision supersedes every unjustified distinction among us, in accordance with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which stressed that “there remains a true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful in the building up of the body of Christ.”²⁵⁸ This echoes and highlights the serious-

²⁵³ see Constitutions, 91.

²⁵⁴ Constitutions, 92; see also 64, 68, 95.

²⁵⁵ see Constitutions, 18.

²⁵⁶ see Constitutions, 92.

²⁵⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; see also LG, 7.

²⁵⁸ LG, 32.

ness of our understanding of fraternity: "For us, to be brothers means to grow in communion and in unity, overcoming privileges and distinctions."²⁵⁹ Each brother has his particular place and his special role in the Order and in the Church, to contribute to the spread of the Kingdom of God.

114. The nature and purpose of formation to service

Formation to service is, rather than a stage of the formative process, a dimension which permeates all the stages. Thus, forming each member in initial formation to service means helping him to become aware of his personal calling and of the ways in which it coincides with the Carmelite vocation, so as to avoid any dichotomy between the individual's particular service and his spiritual and fraternal life. This is in response to the modern temptation to make an idol of individual work, or to use it as compensation for other, unfulfilled human needs. Formation to service also encourages us to respond with authenticity and willingness to the Lord, who calls us to be servants to one another and sends us to evangelize through our lifestyle and through specific forms of service.

Members in initial formation shall be formed to assume, responsibly and competently, the services to which they are called, and to develop the particular spiritual characteristics proper to the specific service. We must also keep in mind those services which need to be performed within the community, such as those of bursar, librarian, porter, sacristan, cook, and so on. It is also important to watch for aptitudes for leadership and formation, in order to channel suitable members towards these ministries and help them to develop these capabilities, which in due course may be made available to the community.

Formation to service shall take place gradually throughout the various stages of formation; however, such preparation will usually be intensified during the period of simple profession and the period immediately following solemn profession.

It is important to take into account the age, expectations and capabilities of each member. Older candidates require different approaches to formation than young people who have just left school.

B. PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR FORMATION TO SERVICE

115. The members themselves

Those in initial formation who are undergoing the process of clarification of their personal vocations discover that they

²⁵⁹ Constitutions, 19; see also *Carmel: a Place and a Journey*, 3, 4.

are also called to service, and begin to respond by preparing themselves appropriately through prayer, study and experience, learning from the very beginning to live out the Carmelite charism and service in unity as two dimensions of a single vocation.²⁶⁰

116. The community

All forms of service are performed within the community, on behalf of the community and for the good of the community. From the very beginning of initial formation, we must develop in those in initial formation the capacity for teamwork and the conviction that the work of evangelization is first and foremost a community effort, rather than an individual undertaking. Individual members shall be helped to discern which services they are to offer, in dialogue with the community and in harmony with its life. The community as a whole shall also undertake the evaluation of work that has been accomplished. Our contemplative and fraternal life shall determine the timing, the manner and the scale of our service - not vice versa.²⁶¹

117. The formator

Formators shall help those in initial formation to discover the dimension of service, accompanying them in the recognition and development of their gifts through pertinent experiences, and encouraging specialized training for various types of service. In addition, formators shall evaluate, together with the formandi themselves, their attitudes, qualities and gifts, with a view to helping them discern whether or not they are called to the ordained ministry.

Formators shall take care to foster in those in initial formation the integration of the service dimension into the one Carmelite vocation. They shall also help them to grow in their capacity to work with others, and to feel that they are part of every aspect of the community, including that of service.

In this, as in their other tasks, formators are assisted by the Provincial Formation Commission.

118. The Prior Provincial

The Prior Provincial shall monitor the process of formation to service, about which he shall receive reports from the formators at regular intervals. The Prior Provincial shall also

²⁶⁰ see PI, 108.

²⁶¹ see Constitutions, 32-34.

see that candidates to the ordained ministries receive the necessary academic and pastoral preparation, as required by Canon Law.²⁶²

In his capacity as Ordinary, the Prior Provincial is responsible both for admitting candidates to the formative process with a view to the ordained ministries, and for admitting individuals to each instituted or ordained ministry, after ascertaining that the necessary requirements are met.²⁶³ It is the prerogative of the Prior Provincial to confer the ministries of lector and acolyte,²⁶⁴ and to provide dimissory letters for those who are to be ordained to the diaconate or to the priesthood.²⁶⁵

119. Other participants

A spiritual director, chosen in agreement with the formator, shall, in particular, assist those in initial formation to unify the various dimensions of Carmelite life, to find the proper balance among them, and to grow in those spiritual attitudes which are necessary to service.

Professors of theology and other instructors play an important role during this phase, through their input towards the growth and maturation of each member in initial formation.²⁶⁶

Families, Christian communities, parish and base communities, and groups and movements in which religious are active all contribute to their growth; these groups help them to engage with the reality of the human network in which they live and function, and to learn to walk together with their brothers and sisters as witnesses, servants and spiritual guides.²⁶⁷

C. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

120. The process of formation to service

The process of configuration to Christ, to which the Carmelite is already committed by his vocation, is in itself the best preparation for service.

Each member must receive the theoretical knowledge and the practical skills which he requires in order to perform his particular service in close correlation with Carmelite life and

²⁶² see PI, 104-105.

²⁶³ see CIC, c.1025.

²⁶⁴ see *Ministeria quaedam*, 9.

²⁶⁵ see CIC, c.1019.

²⁶⁶ see PdV, 67.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

spirituality. The guidelines of the universal Church²⁶⁸ and of the episcopal conferences concerning studies and pastoral preparation shall be taken into account for those who are preparing to become lectors, acolytes, deacons or ordained priests.

121. Methodology, means and instruments

- a) Each Carmelite shall be conferred with the ministry, or entrusted with the service, which most closely corresponds to his personal vocation as revealed in the process of discernment described above. However, care must be taken not to diminish the dignity of the religious vocation, which has intrinsic value in the Church, beyond its relationship to any ministry or service.
- b) During the stages of initial formation, and in particular during the period following solemn profession, members shall be involved in collaborative projects in various areas of service and in the apostolate. Working with others in these areas increases the sense of communion and cooperation to which they must be formed.
- c) All Carmelites, and in particular those who are called to the ordained priesthood or to the diaconate, must be formed to the sense of ecclesial communion, so that they may serve in communion with the local church, bringing it the richness of their own charism and the Church's call to universality.²⁶⁹
- d) For members who are preparing for the ordained ministries, the ministries of lector and of acolyte have pedagogical value²⁷⁰ in that they help candidates to develop a sense of ecclesiology, of communion and of the sacramentality of the Church. Moreover, these ministries allow them to experience the complementarity between the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood. These ministries must not be diminished or considered merely as obligatory steps; they must be exercised fully

²⁶⁸ see Second Vatican Council, Decree on Formation to the Priesthood, *Optatam Totius*, 28, October 1965; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Presbyters, *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 7 December 1965; Paul VI, Ap. Letter, *Sacrum diaconatus ordinem*, 18 May 1967; Ap. Letter *Motu Proprio, Ad pescendum*, 15 August 1972; John Paul II, Postsynodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores dabo vobis*, 25 March 1992; Congregation for Catholic Education and Congregation for the Clergy, *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotis*, 19 March 1985; *Directorium pro presbyterorum ministerio et vita*, 31 January 1994; *Ratio fundamentalis diaconorum permanentium* and *Directorium ministerii et vitae diaconorum permanentium*, 22 February 1998.

²⁶⁹ see PI, 108-109.

²⁷⁰ see *Ministeria quaedam*, 11.

and authentically. The ministry of lector is an opportunity to develop the essentially Carmelite capacity of listening to and proclaiming the Word. The ministry of acolyte highlights the central role of the Eucharist, making it more intimate and concrete, while also encouraging those in this ministry to serve the weak and the sick.

Because they are essentially lay ministries, the instituted ministries may also be conferred upon friars who are not called to the ordained ministry or to the permanent diaconate,²⁷¹ if the need is felt and if they have a true calling.

- e) Some members are called to the permanent diaconate; others are called to the ordained priesthood, and receive the diaconate in preparation for Holy Orders. All members ordained to the diaconate, whether permanent or transitional, must have some concrete experience of the services of charity, of the Word and of the liturgy. The diaconate should therefore be exercised in all its dimensions, not limited to liturgical service.
- f) In addition to academic and pastoral preparation, the fundamental elements of Carmelite life are valuable resources for those who are called to the ordained priesthood. The Eucharist as the center of communal and personal life, as the fulfillment and source of the Church's life, helps them to grow in the capacity to give themselves to God in service to the community of brothers and sisters. Listening daily to the Word, they are gradually transformed and become more capable of proclaiming the Word through their lives and through their service. Continuous prayer increases their sensitivity to intercession and praise, for the good of the entire community. Involvement with the people of God and participation in their lives allows the necessary pastoral charity to emerge and grow within them. Spiritual direction and confession, as well as providing support for their personal spiritual journeys, help them to develop qualities such as the ability to listen and to welcome - qualities which will be useful to them in future, when they are called to serve others in their ministry.

²⁷¹ see *Ministeria quaedam*, 3.

D. CRITERIA FOR DISCERNMENT**122. Discernment with a view to admission to services and ministries**

A candidate to any ministry or service shall submit a request to the Prior Provincial. After hearing the formator and the members of the community, the Prior Provincial shall, with the advice of his Council, and taking into account the results of the candidate's experience during formation, make an evaluation and a decision.²⁷²

As regards admission to the ministries, discernment shall focus primarily on the candidate's specific aptitude for the ministry in question. Any opinions and feelings expressed by the broader community of believers, regarding the candidate's character and his capacity for the service, shall also be taken into account.

With regard to votations, the guidelines of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments shall be applied;²⁷³ the Appendix offers criteria which can be useful in relation to ministries. Naturally, the requirements of the Code of Canon Law shall always be taken into account.²⁷⁴

²⁷² see CIC, c.1051.

²⁷³ Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Circular letter on Scrutinies regarding the Suitability of Candidates for Orders*, 11 October 1997.

²⁷⁴ see CIC, cc.1024-1052.

6.

ONGOING FORMATION: *A CONTINUING JOURNEY*

A. OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION

123. The nature and purpose of ongoing formation

Formation is a lifelong task. Seen in this light, ongoing formation is not a specific stage, but the context within which the entire process of formation, in all its aspects, must be developed. It follows that ongoing formation is our way of living out our Carmelite identity as a continuing process of transformation towards full maturity in Christ: "The consecrated person can never claim to have completely brought to life the 'new creature' who, in every circumstance of life, reflects the very mind of Christ."²⁷⁵

The Father calls us each day, along paths that are always new and not always linear; to follow Christ and to be attentive to the promptings of the Spirit;²⁷⁶ for our lives are constantly changing, and it is normal that we should go through difficult times and crises. We must therefore learn to be creative in our fidelity, attentive to what the Spirit says to us through the events of our lives and of the world in which we live.²⁷⁷

Our journey is not a solitary one. We belong to the Carmelite fraternity; we must therefore care for the renewal of the Order, and be attentive to and interested in all that happens within the Order. We are part of the Church; in her and with her, we serve the world. For this reason, each of us, together with the entire Order, must be sensitive to change; we must respond, in ways that are always new, to the expectations of the Church and of the world, renewing our spirituality, our lifestyle, our apostolates and our pastoral methods.

124. Early years after initial formation

Provincials and Provincial Councils ought to pay special attention to the early years after the completion of initial formation to help the men to integrate into communities and ministries of the Province by providing personal and group times

²⁷⁵ VC, 69.

²⁷⁶ see PI, 67; Constitutions, 168.

²⁷⁷ see PI, 67; see also VC, 70.

on a provincial and/or regional level for reflection, support and challenge for the individual and the Province.

B. PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR ONGOING FORMATION

125. Carmelites

Each and every Carmelite is personally responsible for his own formation, for his own good, for the good of the Church, and for the good of the Order and of the people whom he serves. He must learn to grow in a holistic and unified way.²⁷⁸

We need to foster and to develop within ourselves an attitude of humility and poverty: religious must never think that their formation is completed; they must always remain open to new experiences, open to whatever the future may have in store for them, accepting whatever changes may happen.

126. The Prior Provincial and the Province

The Prior Provincial is responsible for the well-being and the spiritual health of the brothers. He shall therefore arrange for appropriate initiatives and projects to provide for the continued growth of each member. His meetings with the brothers offer opportunities to promote this process.

Each Province shall have a program for ongoing formation, which shall establish objectives in line with the Province's priorities, and shall analyze possible focuses for growth and renewal.²⁷⁹ One of the Provincial Councilors shall be given responsibility for the program for ongoing formation. The Prior Provincial shall entrust one of the brothers with the task of accompanying through the early stages those who have recently completed their initial formation.

127. The local prior and the community

The local prior shall promote gatherings, meetings, retreats and opportunities for renewal and spiritual growth; he shall keep members informed, and shall provide opportunities for participation in formation events organized at other levels.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ see VC, 71.

²⁷⁹ The responsibilities of the Prior Provincial and of the Province are outlined in article 71 of the RIVC.

²⁸⁰ The responsibilities of the Prior and of the community are outlined in article 65 of the RIVC.

C. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

128. The journey of ongoing formation

Ongoing formation is a process which requires continuous and daily effort; occasional activities are not enough. A holistic approach to formation must cover every aspect: the human and the communal dimensions; spirituality and the charism; and the apostolic, cultural and professional dimensions.²⁸¹

There are specific moments and circumstances when it is appropriate and sometimes necessary to offer opportunities for special formation, to accompany individuals in their transition from one situation in life to another, or in the assumption of new responsibilities.²⁸²

129. Methodology, means and instruments

A well-integrated approach to growth requires the following elements:

- a) At the personal level, we must:
 1. nourish our personal spiritual journeys through participation in the sacraments and in communal prayer, assiduity in personal prayer, annual spiritual exercises, and spiritual direction;
 2. participate from time to time in renewal courses on scriptural, theological, pastoral and spiritual themes, and especially on Carmelite spirituality; set aside time for reading and study; read the publications of the Province and of the Order; and keep abreast of events within the Carmelite Family, the Church and the world;
 3. be mindful of our physical and psychological well-being: eat appropriately, exercise regularly and adequately, build friendships, make time for leisure activities and develop artistic interests and hobbies.
- b) At the local level, we must:
 1. build lively and dynamic evangelical communities;
 2. give each member opportunities to take part in formative events organized at various levels;
 3. keep community libraries well-stocked and up-to-date.
- c) At the provincial level, we must:
 1. provide organic formative activities, possibly assigning the organization of such activities to a particular community;

²⁸¹ see PI, 68; VC, 71.

²⁸² see PI, 70; VC, 70.

2. organize formative activities specifically designed for homogeneous groups (priors, parish priests, formators, and so forth);
 3. build up in every Province a specialized library on Carmelite issues.
- d) At the level of the Order, we must:
1. organize meetings of homogeneous groups (priors, formators, parish priests, rectors of sanctuaries, and so forth);
 2. organize international courses for ongoing formation;
 3. coordinate Carmelite institutes for culture and research.

130. Safe environment for children and vulnerable adults

The ongoing formation programs throughout the Order of Carmelites should include education for members about creating and assuring safe environments for children and vulnerable adults. Such education would be in compliance with ecclesial²⁸³ and societal norms in providing safe environments and minimizing risk for minors and vulnerable adults including the following standards and criteria, possibly in cooperation with the other Provinces of the Region:

- a) have ongoing formation experiences to help develop a mature, integrated celibate sexuality,
- b) be educated to identify and address challenges to maintaining celibate and healthy intimate relationships,
- c) recognize that any member in solemn vows who abuses a minor or is unable to maintain appropriate boundaries with minors, despite clear guidelines and instruction, cannot be allowed in public ministry.

D. TIMES REQUIRING SPECIAL RESPONSES

131. Transition from the house of initial formation to another community

The end of initial formation coincides with the move from a formation community to another community, which often includes older members whose attitudes and behavior may be different from the idealism of the formation period to the real-

²⁸³ Circular Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to Assist Episcopal Conferences in Developing Guidelines for Dealing with Cases of Sexual Abuses of Minors Perpetrated by Clerics (3 May 2011), available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20110503_abuso-minori_en.html

ity of life within a community and within a Province; from a structured and accompanied journey to the responsibilities of autonomy; from theoretical reflection to concrete experience. These examples highlight the fact that, during this time of transition, it is particularly important for each new member to be accompanied by a brother to whom he can turn with questions, difficulties and problems. This person can also organize exchanges, meetings and formation opportunities for brothers in this particular stage.

132. When habit sets in

A few years after making solemn profession and entering into a life of service, we need to take stock of our lives and to renew our motivation and our enthusiasm, so that we may avoid becoming set in our ways, giving in to individualism, habit or temptation, becoming discouraged by the meager results of our efforts, or succumbing to indifference. We must always seek to unify our lives around our vocation and the person of Christ, allowing ourselves to be further transformed towards full maturity in him. This is a time for renewal courses, for a sabbatical year, or for some other specific formation project, which may be undertaken in cooperation with other Provinces.

133. Times of crisis

Being serious about our spiritual lives means that, in our journey of ever-growing intimacy with God, we must expect to experience spiritual crises, some of which may have an existential dimension. The path of inner transformation is far from linear; it involves frequent breaks and leaps. Nor is spiritual growth simply a matter of renewing our prayer life or some other activity: it involves our whole being.

In times of crisis, when we experience darkness and dryness, we are always tempted to stop praying or to reduce prayer to a mere formality. For this reason, it is important to reflect on crises with the help of a spiritual director or of a spiritual companion. This will help the individual to understand whether the crisis is a sign that he has reached a turning point on the path of transformation or God may be inviting him to persevere in personal prayer, to move on with complete openness and trust in God's transforming love to guide him to a new experience of God.²⁸⁴

In addition to such normal crises of the spiritual life, it is also possible to experience times of existential crisis. Every situation, however tragic, can be an opportunity for growth and further transformation, if it is lived in a mature way.

²⁸⁴ see Saint John of the Cross, *The Dark Night*, 1:9-10.

A spiritual director can help the person to understand this and to be open to God's action. Input from other experts, such as psychologists and psychotherapists, can also help him to understand himself better and to continue on his journey. At such times, it is important to have the trust, the support and the affection of one's brothers. The community should never judge or induce feelings of guilt; rather, it should offer encouragement and urge the brother to rediscover and renew his inner resources.

134. Assuming new responsibilities

Assuming a new ministry or a new service requires appropriate preparation. Those who are called to assume new functions or responsibilities need to internalize the necessary spiritual qualities and practical or professional abilities required to perform their new tasks.

In view of the particular delicacy of their task, formators especially must receive special training before they begin their service, and should have periodic opportunities for renewal.²⁸⁵

A religious who completes an assignment also requires special attention from superiors and confreres, to provide support during the period of transition, so that this may be for him a time of setting out purposefully towards new goals.

135. Advanced age

We must learn how to grow old and how to prepare ourselves to let go of things, roles, and attachments. We must learn to rejoice in the younger generations and be glad to give them space and freedom of action. The ability to communicate wisdom and experience of life gently and respectfully, and the ability to hand down memories and traditions, are gifts which characterize this stage in life.

Older members must be included in the life of the community; they must be cared for with attention and affection.²⁸⁶ Special meetings may be organized for the elderly, and opportunities for fraternal sharing and spiritual growth may be provided specifically for them.

The contemplative journey of transformation will have brought the Carmelite to be configured to Christ in the paschal mystery, making him ready to go in hope into the embrace of the Father, to the goal of transformative union with God towards which he once set out.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ see VC, 66; *Cooperation*, 23-26.

²⁸⁶ see Constitutions, 38.

²⁸⁷ see Saint John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*, 1:29-36.

PART THREE

PROGRAM OF CARMELITE STUDIES

136. The purpose of a Program of Studies

The present Program of Studies provides a frame of reference describing and situating the subjects and areas which must be covered to ensure a complete formation in the Carmelite life.

The means by which the content is communicated, and the organization of the various items, shall be decided by the formators, in accordance with the requirements and needs of individual Provinces and of particular cultural contexts.

A. THE PRE-NOVITIATE

137. The human person: foundations of personal and communal spiritual life

- Fundamentals of Christian philosophy of the human person
- Elements of psychology
- The dynamics of human and spiritual growth
- Group dynamics
- Emotional development and sexuality
- Understanding of one's personal social background
- Awareness of reality on a global scale
- Awareness of environmental issues and issues of justice and peace

138. General education

- Adequate academic preparation, preferably in the humanities. A certificate giving access to third-level education in a university or an institute of higher education, or completion of a technical or vocational course
- Knowledge of the culture and history of the candidate's country or of the country in which he is receiving his formation. Knowledge of the cultures of fellow candidates in the formation program
- Knowledge of relevant Christian literature
- Languages: at least one of the three official languages of the Order (Italian, Spanish and English); the classical languages; languages required for mission work within the Province
- Development of technical, practical, professional, artistic and musical skills

- Basic computer skills
- Where necessary, basic etiquette, health and personal hygiene

139. Elements of Christian life

- Familiarity with Christian formation, in particular concerning the Sacraments of Initiation and Reconciliation
- Introduction to the Scriptures
- Jesus and his Gospel
- Overview of Biblical history and of Church history
- Introduction to the liturgy
- Introduction to prayer

140. Carmel

- Basic elements of the theology of consecrated life (vocation, discernment, decision, vows, and so forth)
- General information concerning the Order and the Province
- General information on the history of Carmel
- Introduction to significant figures and texts
- Introduction to the charism and the spirituality of Carmel
- Elijah and Mary in the Scriptures
- Study of the *Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitanæ* (Part I and the pre-novitiate)

141. Practical experience

- Some experience of the main apostolates of the Province
- Some experience of social service, followed by discussion and reflection

B. THE NOVITIATE

142. The human person: foundations of personal and communal spiritual life

- Deepening and development of areas covered during the pre-novitiate, with a view to internalization and integration into life

143. Elements of Christian life

- Scripture: introduction to the psalms, the prophetic writings and the Gospels

- Elements of Christology
- Elements of ecclesiology
- Elements of spirituality
- Elements of liturgy

144. Theology of religious life

- Consecration and discipleship: biblical foundations, theology and spirituality
- The vows: biblical foundations, theology, spirituality, Canon Law and practice
- Community life: biblical foundations, theology, spirituality and practice
- History, forms, and legislation of religious life
- Conciliar and Post-Conciliar documents on religious life²⁸⁸
- The ecclesial character of religious life and its mission in the Church and in the world

145. The Rule, Constitutions and documents of the Order

- The historical context, the author, and the final approval of the Rule
- The central values of the Rule
- Various interpretations and readings of the Rule
- The Constitutions
- Study of the *Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitanæ* (Part I and Novitiate)
- The main documents of the Order since the Second Vatican Council

146. The Carmelite charism

- a) Contemplation
 - Dynamics of inner life
 - Contemplation in the Carmelite tradition
 - Asceticism and purification
 - Spiritual direction
- b) Prayer
 - Theology of prayer
 - Prayer in the Carmelite spiritual tradition
 - The Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours

²⁸⁸ In particular: *Lumen gentium*, 43-47; *Perfectæ caritatis*; *Christus Dominus*, 33-35; *Evangelica testificatio*; *Mutuae relationes*; 1983 Code of Canon Law (Book II, Part III); *Redemptionis donum*; *Potissimum insittioni*; *Fraternal Life in Community*; *Vita consecrata*.

- Initiation to the various forms of prayer important to our tradition (*lectio divina*, experience of the presence of God, the prayer of aspiration, silent prayer, meditation, and so forth)
- c) Fraternity
 - Structures and dynamics of fraternal life suggested in the Rule and in Carmelite tradition
 - Formation to dialogue in the Spirit: the communal project, revision of life, fraternal correction
- d) Service in the midst of the people
 - Learning to listen to and interpret the reality which emerges from the Church, from the world and from a specific area: possibilities and problems
 - Unity of the charism and diversity of services
 - Types of services emerging from the Carmelite tradition
 - If appropriate, some concrete experience of service, followed by discussion and reflection

147. The History of Carmel

- From the origins to the full affirmation of the Order (thirteenth century to early fourteenth century)
- Development: life, legislation, spirituality, culture, mission and service
- Ancient and modern geography of the Order
- The reforms:
 - a) Why reform the Order?
 - b) The Congregation of Mantua
 - c) The reform of the Generals (Soreth, Audet, Rossi, the Council of Trent)
 - d. The Teresian Reform
 - e) The Reform of Touraine and the "strict observance"
 - Major events: the Protestant Reformation; the French Revolution; suppressions (Napoleonic and national); the Spanish Civil War
 - Rebirth (nineteenth to twentieth centuries)
 - The Carmelite Family (nuns, sisters and lay people)
 - The Order since the Second Vatican Council (documents, facts and trends)
 - Historical trends in the candidate's Province

148. Elijah and Mary

1. Elijah
 - Elijah in the Bible
 - Elijah in the Jewish, the patristic and the monastic traditions
 - Elijah in the Carmelite tradition:

- a. Elijah as a model for life
- b. Elijah as “founder”
- c. Historical criticism
- d. Elijah for Carmelites today
- 2. Mary
 - Mary in the Bible
 - Elements of Mariology
 - Mary in the Carmelite tradition:
 - a. The Lady of the Place
 - b. Patroness and Mother
 - c. Most Pure Virgin and Sister
 - d. The Virgin of the Scapular
 - e. Mary’s role in the contemplative journey of Carmelites
 - f. Mary for Carmelites today

149. Saints and significant figures

- Carmel’s saints: the lives and works of those who are included in the Order’s liturgical calendar, in particular:
 - Saint Albert of Jerusalem
 - Saint Teresa of Jesus
 - Saint John of the Cross
 - Saint Mary Magdalen de’Pazzi
 - Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus
 - Saint Nuño Alvares Pereira
 - Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity
 - Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross - Edith Stein
 - Blessed Titus Brandsma
- Some information concerning the following Carmelite writers:
 - Nicholas of France
 - Sibert di Beka
 - John Baconthorpe
 - Philip Ribot
 - Michael Aiguani
 - Arnold Bostius
 - Miguel de la Fuente
 - John of Saint Samson
 - Michael of Saint Augustine
 - John Brenninger
 - Bartolomeo Xiberta
- significant figures in the candidate’s own Province
- Suggested readings:
 - Nicholas of France – *The Flaming Arrow*
 - De institutione primorum monachorum*
 - Saint Teresa of Jesus - *The Life*
 - Saint John of the Cross - an anthology

Saint Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi - an anthology
 Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus - *autobiographical manuscripts*
 Blessed Titus Brandsma - *The Beauty of Carmel*
 Lawrence of the Resurrection – *The Practice of the Presence of God*

C. THE PERIOD OF SIMPLE PROFESSION AND FORMATION TO SERVICE

150. General knowledge

Review and more in-depth study of subjects introduced and covered during the pre-novitiate and the novitiate, with particular emphasis on languages, music and/or the arts, computer and new electronic media skills, housekeeping and archive-keeping.

151. Theology and philosophy

Those who do not attend a regular theology course shall take part in a basic course of theological formation, according to individual abilities.

As regards preparation for the instituted and ordained ministries, see instructions from the Holy See and from the relevant episcopal conferences.

Ongoing formation for religious life must be provided.

152. Carmelite formation

Further in-depth study of all the subjects covered during the novitiate.

- Study of the Rule, the Constitutions and the *Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitanæ* (Part I: Simple Profession, Formation to Service, and Ongoing Formation)

- Major texts of the Carmelite tradition:

- a. Nicholas of France – *The Flaming Arrow*
- b. *De institutione primorum monachorum*
- c. *Medieval Carmelite Heritage*, ed. A. Staring, Rome, 1989
- d. Arnold Bostius - *De patronatu et patrocinio B. V. Mariæ*
- e. Blessed John Soreth - *Expositio paraenetica in regulam carmelitanam*

- Mary and Elijah: review and more in-depth study of themes outlined during the novitiate, through texts such as:

- a. on Elijah: Emanuele Boaga - *Nello spirito e nella virtù di Elia. Antologia di documenti e sussidi*, Rome 1990
- b. on Mary: Emanuele Boaga - *Con Maria sulle vie di Dio. Antologia della marianità carmelitana*, Rome 2000
- c. on both: the liturgical texts

- Spiritual masters: continued study of the spirituality and works of :

- a. Saint Teresa of Jesus
- b. Saint John of the Cross
- c. Saint Mary Magdalen de' Pazzi
- d. John of St. Samson
- e. Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus
- f. Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross - Edith Stein
- g. Others
- History of the Order
- Carmelite liturgy
- Spirituality
- The various apostolates and services of the Order in relation to the charism
- The contribution of the Order in relation to the mission *ad gentes*
- Relationships and cooperation with other members of the Carmelite Family

153. International experience

- Study of foreign languages abroad
- Participation in regional and international meetings
- Study exchanges, as appropriate

154. Practical and pastoral experience

- Opportunities for extended experience of Carmelite life and service outside the house of formation
- Opportunities for work experience

155. The month of preparation immediately preceding Solemn Profession

- A climate of silence and prayer
- Review and evaluation of personal vocational history in the light of the Word of God
- Review and integration of the fundamental themes of consecrated life, the vows, the charism and Carmelite spirituality (Rule, Constitutions, *Ratio Institutionis Vitae Carmelitanae*, Part I)
- Eight days of spiritual exercises

D. SPECIALIZATION

156. Special training

Those who have the ability and the opportunity shall always be encouraged to continue whatever studies and occupational

or vocational training are necessary for their formation and for service to the Order and to the Church. The concrete needs of the Province, as well as personal aptitude and interests, shall be kept in mind.

In choosing a theological specialization, priority should be given to the following areas, which are close to the charism and the life of the Order:

- scripture studies
- spirituality
- Mariology
- liturgy
- Religious Life
- missiology
- Church history
- Patristic studies

Adequate preparation shall be provided for every service and apostolate. The formation of future formators is of fundamental importance.

157. Safe environment for children and vulnerable adults

The initial formation programs throughout the Order of Carmelites should include ongoing education for members in initial formation about creating and assuring safe environments for children and vulnerable adults. Such education would be in compliance with ecclesial²⁸⁹ and societal norms in providing safe environments and minimizing risk for minors and would include the following standards and criteria:

- a) Members in initial formation must receive ongoing education about how to develop a mature, integrated celibate sexuality.
- b) Members in initial formation must be educated to identify and address challenges to maintaining celibate and healthy, intimate relationships.
- c) A member in initial formation who abuses a minor cannot be permitted to continue in formation.
- d) A member in initial formation who is unable to maintain appropriate boundaries with minors, despite clear guidelines and instruction, cannot be permitted to continue in formation.

²⁸⁹ Circular Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to Assist Episcopal Conferences in Developing Guidelines for Dealing with Cases of Sexual Abuses of Minors Perpetrated by Clerics (3 May 2011), available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20110503_abuso-minori_en.html

APPENDIX

The guidelines and criteria below are intended to serve as a frame of reference to help formators with their periodic evaluations of candidates, in particular with evaluations for admission to the novitiate, to simple profession and to solemn profession. These guidelines are neither exhaustive nor complete, and they must be adapted to individuals and to local and cultural situations.

Furthermore, formators must always keep in mind the principle of gradual progression in the process of formation, and the potential for growth, maturation and change which is present in every individual. In other words, it is not expected that the qualities indicated below should be fully developed in pre-novices, although it is required that at least the potential for these qualities be present. Naturally, there will be a different degree of expectation with regard to these dimensions and qualities when evaluating candidates for simple profession and for solemn profession.

Specific issues concerning passage from one stage to the next are discussed in the articles dealing with criteria for discernment; these issues must also be taken into account.

a. The human dimension

The candidate:

1. is willing to enter into a process of human and spiritual growth and to allow himself to be guided through it; is able and willing to examine realistically his personality and his personal history; has attained a certain level of self-knowledge; has achieved a certain balance between emotional and intellectual capabilities;
2. recognizes and accepts his sexuality and is willing to integrate it; is willing to enter into mature relationships with women and men, and to communicate openly and sincerely; is sensitive, capable of wonder and of empathy, and capable of accepting difference;
3. has a sense of responsibility; knows how to make decisions; is capable of finishing the tasks he undertakes; shows stability and self-control; is capable of dealing with conflicts, criticism, frustration and moments of crisis; shows a proper balance between attention to personal needs and attention to others;
4. is able to accept other cultures; is tolerant, or struggles to overcome his prejudices; shows an interest in the life, the history and the society in which he lives, and in that society's problems; is attentive to social realities, politics, culture, problems of justice and peace, and the protection of the environment;

5. is capable of integrating harmoniously a life of prayer, fraternity, service, study and recreation, and organizing his time in constructive ways; knows how to be alone;
6. has proved, during the preceding stage of formation, to be hard-working and responsible in various contexts.

b. Spiritual and Carmelite dimensions

The candidate:

1. has a good prayer life and nurtures his personal relationship with God present in the Word, in the Eucharist, in the candidate's inner self, in God's people and in the events of daily life; has made a clear choice for Jesus Christ, which is evidenced in his daily life; has a strong ecclesial sense;
2. accepts, in a personal and active way, religious consecration as it is expressed in our Rule, in our Constitutions and in the other documents of the Order; has true conviction with regard to each one of the vows and to the fact that fidelity to the vows contributes to the full development of his person; recognizes in himself the capacity to live out the Carmelite charism;
3. lives community life with commitment and imagination; shows an interest in the life of the Order and of the Province, with which he is familiar and whose life and mission he shares.

c. The intellectual dimension

The candidate:

1. shows an aptitude for study and studies regularly, with satisfactory results; nurtures a variety of interests, including some that are not strictly academic;
2. has begun to study one or more foreign languages;
3. is capable of integrating theory and practice at a personal level in theological, social, professional and other areas.

d. The practical dimension

The candidate:

1. has recognized, welcomed and developed the gifts he has received from the Lord, and has placed them at the disposal of the community;
2. has shown an interest in the house and in its management; has acquired some practical and technical knowledge or skills useful in communal life.

e. The service dimension

The candidate:

1. understands the mission of the Order, and indicates his willingness to participate in the various forms of service performed by the Province and by the Order as a whole; appears to have capabilities, qualities and interests which can be developed and utilized;
2. is sensitive to the cry of the poor, and wants to become involved in evangelization and in the promotion of justice and peace; is interested in mission *ad gentes*;
3. has attempted, during the period in question, to become involved in particular forms of service - his efforts must be evaluated as appropriate.

At the end of his report, the formator shall express his personal judgment and provide an evaluation of what can be expected from the candidate. In addition, he shall note the views of the local community, providing a clear explanation of any conflicting evaluations.



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T

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