

Community: Constitutions 6 a) to h)

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The Acts of the Apostles show how the early Christian community shared; everything they had was held in common, personal gifts, talents etc. Nobody was in need of anything.

Community is a place where a person's real needs are fulfilled. The ideal is important; the reality may be very far away. But both the ideal and the reality are important, are the work of God. In struggles, disappointment, failure, and distance from ideals, the Holy Spirit is at work *there*.

The Carmelite community: what is it? It does *not* consist of a list of who we are; it is the *core* of who we are. It is fundamental, our identity.

The Rule of St Albert is a cradle of Carmel, a voice of the Holy Spirit, from the *lived experience* of the first community on Mount Carmel.

Constitutions, Paragraph 6

A person has a community mentality. Community provides nurturing, formation, inspiration and much more, and the person brings his or her gifts to the community.

- a) *Living in allegiance to Jesus Christ* How does Jesus live in community? He is the ideal. Everything about his life (Nazareth family, other groups, 12 disciples) is service to the community.
- b) *Being diligent in meditating on the law of the Lord* This went hand in hand within the life of Jesus.
- c) *Giving time to spiritual reading* We do this on our own and in community.
- d) *Participating in the Church's Liturgy*: the entire Church is our community.
- e) *Being concerned for the needs and the good of others in the community*
This applies to *every* dimension of the other in the life of the community. It is not a consumer community that just takes, that picks and chooses. Community is a place of giving and of service. The community isn't there to serve *my* needs!
- f) *Arming ourselves with the practice of the virtues* Cf the Ascent of Mount Carmel. Self-knowledge is increased when community is not a comfortable place, but a place of maturing.
- g) *Seeking interior silence and solitude in our life of prayer*
Silence and solitude are the essentials of community: to be able to be silent together. Solitude brings a person into a *deeper* relationship with others, e.g., on a silent retreat.

h) *Using prudent discretion in all that we do* Be gentle, respect people, do what works. There is *no* place for rigidity or controls.

It is only when a community is working well that prayer develops, in communion with God and with each other. This is healthy, wholesome and life-giving.