

Constitutions no. 9

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West Midlands Regional Day, 14th April 2018

(To be read in conjunction with the OCDS Constitutions, paragraph 9)

This paragraph gives us the *fundamental elements of the vocation*. It must be read in the light of what has gone before (1 and 2) about the origins and charism of our Order.

What does it constitute to *live* this life? No. 1 refers to us as “sons and daughters”, particularly of St Teresa. We all share the same charism, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, each according to their state in life. This is reiterated by St Teresa. We are ONE FAMILY, each with a call to holiness. Our mission is a gift, a call.

9 a) We live in *allegiance to Jesus Christ*, with Mary as our model. We imitate Mary, especially her prayer life, her contemplative prayer. As our patron in the original feudal sense, she gives us a sense of belonging and mutual dependence. As our patron, Carmel is her territory and domain and we receive her gifts. As our mother and sister, she gives us a model of living in allegiance to Jesus Christ.

9b) Seeking *Union with God* is the fruit of a life of contemplation (cf. John of the Cross *Ascent*), through grace and a deeper working of God, *at the service of the Church*. St Marie-Eugene titled his book on Teresa as *I am a daughter of the Church*. The vocation is not a personal gift. We live it building up the Body of Christ in our world.

9c) Prayer is integral to and draws from the Carmelite tradition. It is inconceivable to be a Carmelite and not give particular importance to prayer. Without prayer, we couldn't be who we are.

The first Carmelites were Biblical people. Carmel is a Biblical mountain, a place of meeting with God. therefore, our origins, our *roots* are in the Bible. A Carmelite is a person of the Word of God; this is the core of the Rule of St Albert because Albert *saw* in the community of hermits on Mount Carmel a people living the Bible. The Bible was their liturgy.

Prayer is friendship with God: listening to the Word and in all daily living. For a Carmelite it is impossible *not* to be praying! The whole of life is a prayer. But this is not in a casual way, it is a commitment. It demands living a life of faith, hope and love. St John of the Cross shows us in his sketch of the mountain, that the top of the mountain is life lived in the presence of the living God.

9d) Community is another essential Carmelite element. Here, it refers not to a particular community but to an orientation of one's mind, a community mentality that is lived in deep relationship with others.

9e) *Evangelical self-denial from a theological perspective* means God comes first. This is not a human endeavour. It comes from a right understanding of God and ourselves.

9f) This refers to the mission and ministry of Carmelites. We are all called to share this ministry of Carmelite spirituality. We do everything as Carmelites, as witnesses to the resurrection, to what it means to be a Carmelite. This is who we are by the fact that, for the rest of our lives, we are totally committed to being Carmelites and will be transformed by it.

Paragraph 9 a) to f) together

These six elements of Paragraph 9 cannot be taken separately. You can't teach a person how to be Carmelite and give them an exam! We were born to be Carmelites: it is a journey of growth, and formation is a journey of becoming who we were created to be.

Each element is taking the person to who they are. The starting point is deep within. A Carmelite is not a person who ticks the boxes, but a person who has become who they're meant to be, who lives from deep within.

These six elements express who the person is, the kind of life he or she is living. It is impossible to be a Carmelite and omit one element. If it is missing, there is not a Carmelite vocation being lived here.

It may not be obvious because it is deep within, but the mentality of commitment to Jesus will be there. Whoever has this sense of belonging to Church, whose life is Church, lives a life of prayer.

There is zeal for the apostolate. Each of the six elements is a way of life. Any one element describes a life rooted in the Carmelite tradition. The person's life, personality, and outlook will be truly themselves, and their selves will be truly Carmelite.

Look at any Carmelite saint: each lived these six elements in their particular way and entered very deeply into them. Each element is like a doorway into these saints, it explains who they are.

Use these six elements as sources of prayer and meditation, as guides to *live* our Carmelite lives, rather than understanding them intellectually. The mature living of each of these elements is a life-long process.