

INTRODUCTORY BOOKLET
CARMELITE FORMATION
ORDER OF CARMEL DISCALCED SECULAR (OCDS)



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Welcome to all new members of our Secular Community.

“We don’t know what we are asking for.

Let us leave it to the Lord.

For he knows us better than we do ourselves.

And true humility is content with what is received.”

(St Teresa of Avila, Way of Perfection).

A SHORT HISTORY OF CARMEL

The motto of the Carmelite Order is:

“Zelo zelatus sum pro Domino Deo exercituum.”



This powerful expression is a direct quote of the words of **Elijah** from the **First Book of Kings, 19:10**: *“With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts.”*

St Elijah

These words perfectly express the life of the Prophet Elijah.

For those of us who wear the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the motto of Carmel also perfectly conveys the mission to which we are each called.

Mount Carmel is mentioned as a **“holy mountain”** in Egyptian ancient records as a “high place,” it was long a centre of worship of idols, and its outstanding reference in the **Bible** is as the scene of Elijah's confrontation with the false prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18).

The Hermits

With the establishment of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1099 after the First Crusade and the return of Christian rule to the Holy Land, hermit life was able to flourish again in Palestine. Some Latin hermits, who were often pilgrims who chose to remain in the Holy Land, had formed themselves into a definite community between 1206 and 1214, after their example of the holy man and hermit prophet, **Elijah**. They

led a hermit life on Mount Carmel (to the south of present-day Haifa), building a small monastery in *Wadi es Siah*, a small, remote valley between the three hills that Mt Carmel presents at this point, which are depicted on the shield of the Order.

The Rule of St Albert



The hermits asked Albert, the Patriarch of Jerusalem, to provide them with a rule of life. Today, we date the existence of the body which became the Carmelite Order from the delivery of this Rule of Saint Albert, some time, between 1206 and 1214. In the Roman Catholic tradition, the Rule of St Albert, is the shortest of the rules in existence and is composed mainly around scriptural passages and precepts

In his prologue, Albert wrote,

“Whatever be their state in life, or the religious life they have chosen, they should live a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ and serve him zealously with a pure heart and good conscience”.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel

The hermits had a particular devotion to Our Lady, and when they had built the chapel, they dedicated it to her. This dedication implied pledging themselves to her service and placing their institute under her patronage and protection. They, therefore, later became known as the hermits of St Mary of Mount Carmel.

Our Lady of Mount Carmel is considered the patroness of the Carmelite Order. July 16 is the day that Catholics celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

The Teresian Reform

After the Muslims overran the Holy Land at the end of the thirteenth century, the Order transferred to the West and gradually moved away from the life of hermits and adopted the life of mendicant friars like the Dominicans or Franciscans. It took a while, until the middle of the fifteenth century, before the Carmelites started founding convents for enclosed nuns, known as the second Order (the Friars are the first Order).

A new development took place in 1562 when St Teresa of Avila, inspired by God, left the rather lax Carmelite convent she was living in in Avila and founded her first little, reformed monastery, to observe strictly the original Carmelite rule. That was just at the time that the Council of Trent was asking the religious orders to reform themselves, and the Carmelite Father General, who visited Spain five years later, was so pleased with St Teresa's convent, that he ordered her to found many more and also – uniquely – gave her permission to found reformed houses of the friars. Teresa did so, very successfully, over the next ten years, with the notable help of St John of the Cross. However, many of the existing Spanish Carmelite monasteries didn't want to be reformed and organised a persecution of Teresa and her reformed monasteries. With the support of the Spanish King, the reformed Carmelites were successful in 1580 in getting a papal brief allowing the reformed monasteries to be organised as a separate Carmelite Province in which they could live according to their own rule.

The word '**Carmel**' means 'Garden'. St Teresa likened the soul to a garden and wrote of the need for watering' the garden'.

Discalced Carmelites

In 1593, after Teresa's death, the reformed Carmelites were constituted as a separate religious order. They became known as the Discalced Carmelites because they had given up wearing shoes and instead wore the hemp sandals that the Spanish peasants wore [*calceus* is the Latin for shoe]: the original Carmelites, by contrast, were the calced Carmelites.

In later years, the discalced Carmelites (OCD) were often known as Teresian Carmelites. The calced Carmelites (O Carm) became known as Carmelites of the Ancient Observance, and later, in the seventeenth century carried out reforms of their own. The two Orders live fraternally, sharing the same inspiration, but remain separate orders, with their own charism.

SIX ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN A VOCATION TO THE SECULAR ORDER OF DISCALCED CARMELITES

1. One must be a practising member of the Roman Catholic Church

The Secular Order is a juridical part of the Order of Discalced Carmelites. It is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church and subject to the laws of the Church. People who do not belong to the Roman Catholic Church may not be members of the Secular Order, but they are welcome to attend community meetings if they have an interest in the spirituality of Carmel.

Roman Catholics who wish to become members of the Secular Order must be practising Catholics, i.e. they are able to receive Holy Communion with a clear conscience. A person living in a conjugal relationship with someone to whom they are not validly married could not become a Secular Carmelite. However, they could be welcome to attend community meetings if they have an interest in the spirituality of Carmel.

2. Devotion to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

There are many kinds of devotion to Our Lady, but the thing that distinguishes Carmelite Marian devotion is the quality of Mary's relationship to her divine Son which is highlighted in St Luke's gospel. After finding the boy Jesus in the Temple, his parents returned to Nazareth and we are told that Mary "treasured all these things in her heart" (2:52). It is this, the particular aspect of the Blessed Virgin Mary that must be present in any person called to Carmel - the inclination to meditate in the heart.

3. One must be inspired by St Teresa of Jesus

Those who have a vocation to the Secular Carmelites are inspired by the life and teaching of St Teresa and the other Carmelites saints. It is not necessary to be highly intellectual to benefit from their writings.

A person who has no interest at all in reading them has no vocation to the Secular Carmelites.

4. Commitment to Carmel

There are many people who love Our Lady, who meditate and who study the writings of the Carmelite saints, but they do not have a vocation to the Secular Carmelites. Why? Because they have no desire to commit themselves to the Order. When we join the Secular Carmelites, we become part of a new family. We share in its activities and communal spirit.

5. Commitment to the Church

When we join the Order as Seculars, there is a development in our Catholic identity – we become Carmelite Catholics. But we do not live our Carmelite lives in our own little, private world, isolated from the rest of the Church: we live very much within the Church. We are nourished by the Eucharist, by the Sacraments and by the teaching of the Church. We study the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Church documents. We play our part in the mission of the Church - which is to transform the world according to God's design. It was St Teresa's ardent desire that the Carmelite charism would strengthen and enrich the whole Church in her day. Indeed, commitment to the Church is what motivated Teresa to reform the Carmelite Order.

6. Seeking the Face of God

What is our Secular Carmelite charism? Our Constitutions give a detailed answer: but what is our charism in a nutshell? 9b of the Constitutions gets to the heart of the matter. It is to seek mysterious union with God by way of contemplation indissolubly joined to apostolic activity for the service of the Church.

Finally, in this matter of discerning vocation to Carmel as a Secular, it is not any one element that we are looking for: it is the combination of all six elements that is the mark of authenticity.

Fr Tony Cussen (OCDS).

FORMATION - A PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION

Formation is a life-long process. It is a gradual transformation to become more fully the unique person whom God desires each of us to be. Therefore, one of the criteria to be eligible to become a Secular Carmelite is to be open to formation. This means to have an open attitude and disposition: open to being changed to personal growth and ultimately, to transformation in response to the working of the Holy Spirit.

Through this continual process we are formed more truly into the image of God in which we are created. Specifically, within the Secular Order, the process of formation is to prepare the person to live the charism and spirituality of Carmel in its following of Christ. The local community assists applicants in this formation through a structured process. This process, through progressive commitments, moves toward a life promise to the Carmelite Order and to a Carmelite way of life.

The following recommendation is an extract from Chapter 3 of the Constitutions in paragraph 21: “Carmelite Seculars will commit themselves daily to spending a time in the practice of mental prayer.” This should be at least 10 minutes and they should try for at least 20 minutes.

From Chapter 3, paragraph 24: “They will try to recite Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer of the Hours in union with the Church, spread throughout the world.”

And: “The value of the sacramental and liturgical life in the Secular Order leads its members to take part in the celebration of the Eucharist, as far as possible.” In practice, almost daily Mass will be possible for some; for others, even one weekday Mass a week will be an achievement. Seculars will also want to fit in some study and spiritual reading of Scripture as the Constitutions recommends.

There is more about the spirit and purpose of formation on the OCDS website and in the *Ratio Institutionis*, (2009).

WE ARE UNIQUELY SECULAR

As Secular Carmelites, we share the same charism as the Friars and Sisters, the same traditions, the same call to holiness and the same apostolic mission. What is unique about the vocation of a Secular, is that we live the Carmelite charism not in a monastic community but 'in the world': we are lay people. Whether we are young adults, middle-aged or elderly; married, widowed or living a single life, we live our faith and Carmelite vocation in the midst of, and through that present situation. In our families, in our work and professional lives, in parishes, in school parents' groups, in nursing homes, in the supermarket, on trains and buses, wherever we are, as prayerful people, living in awareness of God's presence, we bring this presence into all these situations and so bring this presence to others.

Carmelite spirituality is not so much about doing certain things but rather about being a certain kind of person and so it affects every aspect of our lives, and every relationship or interaction we have with others. In such ways we contribute to the Order the benefits proper to our secular state of life.

The brown scapular is the habit of the Order of Carmel. We must wear it worthily by imitating Mary in the service of Jesus Christ.

We commend ourselves to the tender love and protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary who shows us the way of her son. We celebrate her solemnity as the Mother of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God. Mary is known as the Gate of Heaven and Morning star.

Let us entrust ourselves to Mary to guide us throughout our journey into Carmel.

(Reference: Discalced Carmelites of the Australia - Oceania Region).

A LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Dear Fellow Carmelites

I write this on 27th January 2019, Holocaust Memorial Day that remembers the day Auschwitz was liberated in 1945. Edith Stein, arrested at the Echt Carmel, in Holland on 2nd August 1942, died in Auschwitz a week later on 9th August. If you have visited this concentration camp in Poland, you will be deeply moved to see the long rail platform where she was selected for death on her arrival, the mountain of suitcases, perhaps one is hers, the mountain of shoes, perhaps her Carmelite sandals are buried there too. One of the gas chambers remains, perhaps where she died.

Just three years earlier, on the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross, when the nuns renewed their vows, Edith wrote a short text, *Hail Cross, our Only Hope!*¹ She tells us that, more than ever, the cross is a sign of contradiction. 'The Saviour today looks at us, solemnly probing us, and asks each one of us: Will you remain faithful to the Crucified? ... Taking and renewing vows is a dreadfully serious business.' Showing us how Jesus on the cross revealed the three evangelical counsels, Edith asks, how can we be true to the promise of obedience? He speaks to you in the holy Rule [of St Albert] and the Constitutions of the Order. He speaks to you by the gentle breath of the Holy Spirit in the depths of your heart. 'Jesus reveals the meaning of obedience to the Father's will; poverty, naked and destitute on the cross; purity, free of every earthly desire. Edith asks you and me, 'Are you now alarmed by the immensity of what the holy vows [or promises] require of you? You need not be alarmed. What you have promised is indeed beyond your own weak human power. But it is not beyond the

¹ The Collected Works of Edith Stein IV, *The Hidden Life*, p 94, ICS Publications 1992

power of the Almighty – this power will become yours if you entrust yourself to him ... He wants your life, in order to give you his.'

Edith takes us to the heart of our vocation as Secular Carmelites. For her the world was aflame, and so it is today. Now, as then, the Church needs our commitment and trust in God's power, especially at times of absence and emptiness. We can be living our promises even when we feel a 'failure' in answering our Carmelite calling, or when a sense of loneliness and isolation overwhelms us. After the grace-filled day of making our Final Promise, there is often a period of desolation, uncertainty and even fear. 'What have I done?' 'What is expected of me?' But perhaps THIS is the time of grace, when our state of weakness and fearfulness demands total reliance on God's power that Edith assures us will become ours if we entrust ourselves to him.

Annette Goulden (2019). National President (OCDS).

THE BROWN SCAPULAR

The scapular stands for:

- A commitment to follow Jesus, like Mary, the perfect model of all the disciples of Christ. This commitment finds its origin in baptism.
- It leads into the community of Carmel, a community of religious men and women, which has existed in the Church for over eight centuries.
- It reminds of the example of the saints of Carmel, with whom it establishes a close bond as brothers and sisters.
- It is an expression of the belief that the bearers of the scapular will meet God in eternal life, aided by the intercession and prayers of Mary.

The Carmelites insist that the scapular is not:

- A magical charm to protect someone.
- An automatic guarantee of salvation.
- An excuse for not living up to the demands of the Christian life.

It is instead, a sign which has been approved by the Church for over seven centuries and which stands for the decision to:

- Follow Jesus like Mary:
- Be open to God and to his will.
- Be guided by faith, hope, and love.
- To pray, at all times.
- To discover God present in all that happens around us.

(Catholic News Agency, 2021).



OUR CARMELITE IDENTITY, VALUES AND COMMITMENT

- **Living in allegiance with Jesus Christ.**

This is supported by the imitation and patronage of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, whose way of life, is for Carmel, a model of being confirmed to Christ.

- **Being diligent in meditating on the Law of the Lord.**

We seek mysterious union with God by way of contemplation and apostolic activity, indissolubly joined together, for service to the Church.

- **Giving particular time to prayer and to spiritual reading.**

The Word of God and the liturgy is conducive to relating with God as a friend, not just in prayer but in daily living.

- **Being nourished by faith**

Through the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the hours, through hope and above all, charity, in order to live in the presence and the mystery of the living God.

- **Being concerned for the needs and the good of others.**

To infuse prayer and life with apostolic zeal in a climate of human and Christian community

- **Living an intense life of faith, hope and charity.**

To live evangelical self - denial from a theological perspective, arming ourselves with the practice of the virtues

- **Seeking interior silence and solitude in our prayer life.**

Being faithful to the Teresian Carmelite identity

CARMELITE SPIRITUALITY

Allegiance to Jesus Christ as Secular Carmelites is the nucleus of Albert's Rule. Purity of heart keeps this allegiance ever prominent in our heart and mind. As we accept the transforming action of the Holy Spirit, we become more steadfast in our loyalty to Jesus. (Humphreys 2019). Members of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites are faithful members of the Church, called to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ, through friendship "with the One we know loves us" (Teresa of Jesus) and in service to the Church.

As a Christian spirituality, Carmelite spirituality is a way of following Jesus Christ and walking the path of the gospel. In the Rule of St. Albert, the Christian character of Carmelite spirituality is clearly expressed as living 'a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ'. This involves a gradual and progressive conversion and transformation – a putting on of the mind and heart of Jesus. St Teresa and St John of the Cross speak of prayer and contemplation as 'friendship with God' and 'union with God' respectively. Prayer and contemplation, as a relationship with God, in and through loving friendship with Jesus Christ, is not a technique or one of the many daily activities but embraces one's whole life. For the Carmelite, there is no experience in one's life that is outside the ambit of relationship with God.

ADVICE FOR LIFE AS CARMELITES

Mission

Our mission needs to be clear in our minds. It is of steadfast loyalty to Jesus Christ, seeking union with God by way of prayer and apostolic activity, joined together for service to the Church. We have been given so much and need to praise and constantly thank God.

How to worship God

We worship God through **faith, hope, and love**. These are the three most important virtues and are called theological virtues because they come from God and lead to God. As followers of Jesus, Faith makes us alive to communicate with the most humble and meek person of Christ.

Thoughts on prayer

The atmosphere in the Church and the presence of Christ in the tabernacle give a unique opportunity to relate to the Lord in prayer; while praying at home, in one's "inner room," helps to develop a sense of the presence of God who is always with us. Deepening our prayer life increases our commitment to the life and faith of the Church and to works of mercy.

The mind, the breathing and sense of time slow down. Then recollection is possible.

We remember what we already possess – or, more correctly, what (or Who) possesses us. We remember that God is, and that we are filled with His presence now. No matter how short the time available, we must enter prayer with a sense of spaciousness: we are crossing over into an infinite time scape. Move the attention away from time, for us to attune ourselves with the Timeless. Greet Him, welcome

Him and let the Ultimate One welcome us, embrace us. The Son of Man is coming, who is the light of our lives and the world. We must remain open to be startled and in awe – of the process of prayer, and the work of God.

Difficulties may come

Before her conversion, St Teresa of Avila confessed that through her faults she lost spiritual strength including abandonment of prayer which used to give her comfort. She also confessed that this comfort in prayer left her because she had left God.

God, however, was pleased to transform his servant into another person.

She also adds that by aiming high in our challenges for God, we need to be aware that we may not have the strength for them all at once; the soul takes a flight upwards and ascends high but, like a little bird, whose wings are weak, it grows weary and rests.

St Teresa tells us how upset she became when no matter how much she wanted to pray well and would try, there was not enough spirit, force and purpose.

Our Lord told her not to distress herself about this because in this life we cannot continue in the same state at one time. We may be fervent at one time, in another, not so, sometimes anxious and another time at peace, but tempted.

St Teresa was very clear that the starting point to be friends with God is to have real, mutual charity. She says there is no annoyance that cannot be easily borne by those who love one another. Teresa says, all she cared for then was that *as the enemies of God are many and his friends so few, these might at least be good ones*. She says it became imperative to ensure the community were his friends. She adds that as the sisters that she loved so much were all that she ever wished them to be, she hoped that she might be able to bring some comfort to Our Lord.

Obedience

This allows growth in goodness and humility. This gives us security when we doubt, whether we are straying from the heavenly road. Those souls who have really resigned themselves to obedience, are not attacked by Satan and Our Lord then never ceases calling us to him.

Our troubles

How can we identify with Our Lord? St Teresa says, if you have trials to bear or are sad, watch him on his way to the garden... see him bound to the column, full of suffering, wounded terribly, Or, look again at him, laden down with the cross.

He will look at you with those beautiful, compassionate eyes, full of tears and will forget his own grief to comfort yours, only because you went to comfort him and turned towards him.

GREAT SAINTS OF CARMEL

St Simon Stock



An English saint, who lived in the 13th century, St Simon was an early and influential Prior General of the Carmelite religious order, credited with founding many Carmelite houses in Europe. He has long been associated with a vision in which Our Lady is said to have shown him the brown Carmelite Scapular, although actual historical evidence for this is in short supply, and, very little is known about his life for certain. There are relics of St Simon at the priories in Kensington and in Aylesford in Kent.

Saint Teresa of Jesus (St Teresa of Avila)



One of the great mystics and religious women of the Roman Catholic Church, and author of spiritual classics, Teresa was the originator of the Carmelite Reform, which restored and emphasized the austerity and contemplative character of primitive Carmelite life. The first institution of Carmelite nuns was founded in 1452. In 1562, Teresa founded a small convent in Ávila that followed the original, stricter way of life. Teresa went on to establish many more reformed monasteries of nuns and friars, which became the order of Discalced Carmelites (OCD). At a time when women were effectively silenced in church, St Teresa of Ávila (1515- 82) represents an extraordinary exception. Early struggles with her spiritual advisers gave way to an increasing confidence that she was inspired by God. She reformed the Carmelite Order she had entered as a young woman, and founded convents all over Spain, yet still found time to write a series of spiritual classics on the life of prayer which are characterized by a

robust common sense, a directness of style, and a strong and positive vision of God's love at work in individual lives. Teresa taught that the true lover of God must care little for life and honour and must renounce the world's standards of wisdom to attain to true wisdom and believed that 'God alone suffices'. St. Teresa was elevated to doctor of the church in 1970 by Pope Paul VI.

St John of the Cross



John lived and learned through his experience with Teresa and her Sisters. Teresa provided John with knowledge of the importance of the way of life which was considered as important as the prayer life. For holiness, there needs to be clear understanding that for the Carmelite, living as a Discalced Carmelite is as important as prayer. At this time of Teresa and John, holiness was judged on externals and resulted in 'received esteem' in religious life. Some examples were 'fashionable' mortification. Established strict rituals and practices were to give way to a whole new way of an internal life. John was prevented from following the tendency to extreme austerity of the time and he was learning to temper this tendency and grow in his vocation. Real charity is an essential aid to living the Carmelite life.

John effectively gives Teresa the confidence to form the friars. People spoke highly of John who was living a life of great penance. Teresa listened to people and she believed John had what she was looking for. Teresa further believed Our Lord called John to this way of life, specifically to be the first, for a particular task. Just as the Lord called her early Sisters specifically to a particular mission; to be part of the first foundations.

St Thérèse of the Child Jesus



Generations of Catholics have admired this young saint, called her the "Little Flower", and found in her short life, more inspiration for their own lives than in volumes by theologians. Born in 1873, Thérèse died when she was 24, after having lived as a cloistered Carmelite for less than ten years. She never went on missions, never founded a religious order, never performed great works. Therese continued to worry about how she could achieve holiness in the life she led. She did not want to just be good, she wanted to be a saint. She thought there must be a way for people living hidden, little lives, like hers. "I have always wanted to become a saint. Instead of being discouraged, I told myself: God would not make me wish for something impossible and so, in spite of my littleness, I can aim at being a saint. It is impossible for me to grow bigger, so I put up with myself as I am, with all my countless faults. But I will look for some means of going to heaven by a **little way** which is very short and very straight, a little way that is quite new. The only book of hers, published after her death, was a brief, edited version of her journal called "Story of a Soul." But within twenty-eight years of her death, the public demand was so great that she was canonized in 1925 and became a Doctor of the Church in 1997.

St Edith Stein



Although she desired to become a Carmelite, Edith was advised to wait because her conversion had been so hard on her mother. She took private religious vows. At Speyer, she studied the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas and translated his treatise, "The Truth" into German for the first time. Soon she began lecturing widely in Europe, to women's groups, on the education and role of Catholic women. When the Nazis blocked her, as a Jew, from teaching, she was forced to make a life-changing decision. To her mother's dismay, she entered the Carmelites as Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. As a Carmelite

she wrote, among other works, "Life in a Jewish Family" and "The Science of the Cross", a study of Saint John of the Cross. She led a deliberate life of holiness and self-offering. Edith was murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz on August 9, 1942. Her sister Rosa, who had also converted and who stayed close to Edith, was killed with her. Several people have been deeply involved in the life of Saint Teresa Benedicta:

Teresa Benedicta McCarthy, a Boston-area child was miraculously cured in 1987 through Saint Teresa Benedicta's intervention. That miracle, verified by the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, allowed Edith's canonization.

St Elizabeth of the Trinity



Elizabeth was a French, Discalced Carmelite, a professed religious in addition to being a mystic and a spiritual writer. She was known for the depth of her spiritual growth as a Carmelite as well as bleak periods in which her religious calling was perceived to be unsure according to those around her; she, however, was acknowledged for her persistence in pursuing the will of [God](#) and in devoting herself to the charism of the Carmelites. As a professed religious she wrote in a letter: "I can't find words to express my happiness. Here there is no longer anything but God. He is All; He suffices, and we live by Him alone" (Letter 91). She was canonized as a saint on 16 October 2016 by Pope Francis.

St Mariam Baouardy



Born a Palestinian, Mariam's life was a story of childhood bereavement, sadness, and abuse. In 1865 she received the stigmata of Christ. In 1875, she helped found a new monastery in Bethlehem, the first of the Carmelite Order in that region. During her whole life, she experienced periods of religious ecstasy. She died in Bethlehem in 1878. She was canonized on 17 May 2015 by Pope Francis. We pray for her intercession in the conflicts in the Holy Land.

Saints Louis and Zélie Martin, the parents of St Thérèse of Lisieux



The first spouses to be declared saints as a couple in 2015, Louis and Zélie, are an inspiration for all parents and families. Married on July 12, 1858, in the Normandy town of Alençon, France, they embarked on a journey that would bring them experiences that beset families today: balancing work and family, bereavement, sickness, death of spouse, single-parenting, and dementia, to name but a few.

Sustained by their family and by their total trust in a loving God, they open a window into the potential holiness of everyday family life and reveal how the Sacrament of Marriage is a living and breathing revelation of God's presence and support. Zélie gives us, through her many letters, homely examples of bringing up five children (and losing four), and the impact of devastating war, revolution, disease and natural disasters on lives around her. She died of breast cancer when her youngest daughter, Thérèse of Lisieux, was only four and a half, leaving Louis to care for their five girls, before embracing his final vocation of dementia as an inpatient in the Caen psychiatric hospital.

These parents show us how the ordinary things of family life can be a source of heroic and hidden holiness, later to be exemplified by Thérèse of Lisieux in her *Little Way*.

A Prayer to Our Lady of Mount Carmel

O most beautiful Flower of Mount Carmel, fruitful vine, splendour of Heaven, Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin, assist me in this my necessity. O Star of the Sea, help me and show me herein that you are my Mother.

O Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, and earth, I humbly beseech you from the bottom of my heart, to help me in this my necessity. There are none that can withstand your power. O show me herein that you are my Mother.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you. (Repeat three times).

Sweet Mother, I place this cause in your hands. (Repeat three times).

A Prayer for Creation

Lord, you said you came into the world for us to have life and to have it more abundantly.

Help us to be careful and unselfish in the use of your generous, abundant, and beautiful gift of life.

Lord, forgive us because you have showered us with grace to live your way, which we have so often rejected.

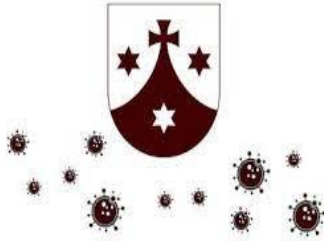
We ask that your plentiful world and your human and animal creatures, made ever more vulnerable by exploitation and abuse, will be protected by the insights given to their oppressors by your Holy Spirit.

Help all people to see your hand in creation and to realise the account required of us all in our treatment of your world and its human and animal creatures.

Amen.

Appendix.

THE FORMATION YEARS *



The following is a suggested guide for Directors of Formation and Mentors who will help aspirants wishing to obtain the graces of each **Promise**, made in a spirit of commitment to the charism of Carmel. Formation will be adapted to the needs of each individual and will take place within the circumstances of each Secular Carmelite community. This guide is not meant to be prescriptive but is a list which will help in discerning the progress of each aspirant.

- Aspirants to Secular Carmel, will not be members of any other Third Order or Secular Institute except in special cases and must be at least eighteen years of age.
- All stages of preparation require a certain amount of study.
- Acceptance for completion of the preparation in Carmel is agreed by the Council of the Community.

* The Appendix incorporates material from Teresa of the Andes OCDS Community, Danvers. MA.

INITIAL PERIOD OF INTRODUCTION TO CARMEL
TOWARDS ACCEPTANCE INTO FORMATION

The introductory period normally lasts for 6 - 12 months, requiring attendance at 6 - 12 introductory sessions after which a candidate may be admitted into the Community's Formation Programme during an official commitment ceremony, receiving a copy of the Gospels and the Constitutions of the Secular Order as signs of their commitment to live in allegiance to Our Lord Jesus Christ, following the doctrine of St Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross. They are also given a small scapular to wear as a token of the habit of the Carmelite Order.

GOALS:

Human formation:

- To aid aspirant in gaining self-knowledge

Christian formation:

- To introduce the aspirant to the life of prayer and service to the church of the layperson

Carmelite formation

- To acquaint the aspirant with Carmelite formation through a study of the Order's history, the lives of saints Teresa of Jesus and St John of the Cross
- The Constitutions and local statutes.

Materials: See the selected reading list (which applies to any stage of formation - page 32).

See also, the extensive suggestions on the OCDS website. Note especially the categories:

- General Information/History of the Order
- OCDS Constitutions/Provincial Statutes and *Ratio Institutionis*
- Liturgy of the Hours and Prayer (includes Lectio Divina)
- Writings of the Carmelite Doctors of the Church

Points of Evaluation:

Human:

- Awareness of true self
- Growth in interpersonal relationship
- More positive in personal outlook

Christian:

- Openness for spiritual formation
- Fidelity to prayer
- Desire for consecration

Carmelite:

- Growing awareness of God's love
- Fidelity to prayer
- Acceptance of Carmel as a way of life
- Practice of the essentials of Carmelite Spirituality
- Deepening of interpersonal relationship with members of the community

YEARS OF PREPARATION TOWARDS THE FIRST PROMISE

Preparation for the first Promise, requires a preparation period of approximately 24 sessions over a 2- year period, deepening the life of prayer.

GOALS:

Human Formation:

To acquire the capacity to transcend one's limitations and weaknesses.

Christian Formation:

To deepen one's prayer life through an understanding of the stages of the spiritual journey and through the practice of mental prayer.

Carmelite Formation:

To strengthen the candidates in embracing the ideals of Carmel through the teachings of Holy Mother St Teresa of Jesus and the other Carmelite Doctors of the Church.

Materials: See reading list, page 32.

Points of evaluation:

Human

- More reliable and self - disciplined
- Persevering in doing right
- Forbearing toward the values and beliefs of others.

Christian

- More willing to share with others.
- Better informed on the truths of faith
- Greater love and respect for the Church
- Increasing desire to serve

Carmelite

- Keeping the interest of the Order at heart
- Persevering in prayer
- Growing desire into becoming love at the heart of the Church

PREPARATION YEARS TOWARDS THE FINAL PROMISE

Preparation for the Final Promise is approximately 36 sessions over a 3- year period, preparing the candidate for a lifetime commitment to Carmel and a promise to tend towards the evangelical counsels and the spirit of the Beatitudes, for life.

The Evangelical Counsels

Secular Carmelites tend towards observation of three **counsels of perfection** which Christianity classifies as: **chastity, poverty** (according to our station in life) and **obedience**.

They are the counsels for those who desire to become perfect.

As Jesus stated in the gospels:

'Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.' (Matthew 5:48).

GOALS:

Human Formation:

To learn to reach out to others.

Christian Formation:

To acquire knowledge and understanding of the Theology of the Church.

Carmelite Formation:

To help the candidate to internalise the doctrine of St John of the Cross and the other Carmelite Doctors of the Church and to progress in the spiritual life.

Materials: See recommended reading list, page 32.

Indicators:

Human:

- More reliable, trustworthy, and self-disciplined
- Persevering in doing right
- More loving and caring for others.

Christian:

- More willing to share with others.
- Better informed on and living out the truths of faith
- Increasing desire to serve the local church.

Carmelite:

- Keeping the interest of the Order at heart
- Persevering toward perfect union with God
- Growing desire to becoming love at the heart of the Church.

Formation is ongoing throughout the lives of those who have committed to Secular Carmelite life within their communities and the wider Carmelite community.

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Recommended Reading List

NB. The suggested selection can be read at all stages of formation.

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5. Allison Peers, E. (2013). *St Teresa of Avila. The Interior Castle*. Walking Lion Press.
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7. Foley, M. (2016). *The Ascent to Joy. Selected writings of John of the Cross*. ICS. Publications. Institute of Carmelite Studies. Washington, DC.
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