

Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

Formation I

Year A

The Way of Perfection



“So, Sisters, strive as much as you can, without offense to God, to be affable and understanding in such a way that everyone you talk to will love your conversation and desire your manner of living and acting, and not be frightened and intimidated by virtue.”

(WP 41:7)

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***California-Arizona Province of St. Joseph Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse
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SYLLABUS FOR FORMATION I, Year A

Preparation for making the First Promise

The purpose of this stage of formation is to steep the candidate in the Teresian tradition of prayer as the foundation and basic activity of his/her daily life. Studying the legislative documents within the context of the evangelical counsels and beatitudes imparts to the candidate a deeper understanding of the Discalced Carmelite charism and community life. With emphasis given towards preparation for the First Promise, the candidate should commit him/herself to meditating upon and assimilating the writings of the Carmelite saints, the teachings of the Church, and Holy Scripture. The discernment process continues as the candidate integrates the experience of God with the experience of life. (This stage of formation normally takes two years.)

Requirements

Each candidate will work toward gradually implementing the following requirements in his/her life, practicing them consistently by the end of the formation period:

- Attend and participate in monthly community meetings and formation sessions.
- Be diligent in the study and internalization of assigned lessons and topics.
- Practice meditative/silent prayer daily for at least half an hour (Ratio 90).
- Develop proficiency in praying the Liturgy of the Hours (Morning and Evening Prayer), individually and with the community. Recite Night Prayer when possible (Constitutions 24).
- Continue the habit of studying the OCDS Constitutions and Statutes.
- Continue to use Sacred Scripture regularly as an aid to meditation.
- Participate in daily Mass when possible.
- Engage in a daily examination of conscience.
- Participate in the community apostolate.
- Participate in community retreats and days of recollection.

Introduction to Formation I, Year A

Secular Carmelites are called to immerse themselves in the writings of our Carmelite saints, particularly those of our founders, Saints Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross (Ratio:76a). “Special importance is given to St. Teresa of Jesus who, in our tradition, we refer to as Our Holy Mother. The reason is because she is the one to whom the charism was given. St. John of the Cross was the original collaborator with Our Holy Mother in both the spiritual and juridical re-founding of Carmel in this new charismatic way. So he is called Our Holy Father. To know their histories, their personalities, and, most importantly, their doctrine confirms every Carmelite in his or her identity” (Ratio: 77).

Saints of Carmel used vivid images to illustrate and explain their journeys to eventual union with God. St. John of the Cross uses the image of a mountain and its ascent as a metaphor for the spiritual life of intimate friendship with God. St Teresa of Avila, also known as Teresa of Avila, uses the wonderful image of a castle and its seven dwelling places to understand the progression in prayer and the mystery of the human person. The modern saint, Thérèse of Lisieux uses the image of an elevator to explain her passionate journey to reach God in Carmel: “I wish to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus... The elevator which must raise me to heaven is your arms, O Jesus!” (Story of a Soul, chapter X). While these different sensory images complement each other in understanding the movement of the Holy Spirit in prayer, one cannot fail to recognize the common theme of “ascent” weaving through their journey to Mount Carmel.

Our life in Carmel is intended to help us in our ascent of this holy Mountain. The function of a community’s structured formation program is to shape our response to God’s call to reach the summit. “There is an intellectual aspect to the formation of a Discalced Carmelite. There is a doctrinal basis to the spirituality and identity of one who is called to the Order. As the friars and nuns, the seculars too must have a good intellectual and doctrinal formation, since as members of the Order they represent and give witness to a mature and profound spirituality” (Ratio: 79).

Further, we are formed into community for aid and support on our ascent; no one can climb this Mountain alone. “In the experience of community life, we find the movement and guidance of the Holy Spirit as the most effective way to grow in virtue. The call to ‘be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Mt. 5:48) helps us to live three key principles of Carmel: to give ourselves entirely to God; to strive for purity of conscience; and to foster an intimate union with God. Through community life, we learn love, gentleness, and respect for others, which enables us to bring more souls to Christ. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the formation that begins in our Secular Order community comes to fruition in the experience of our whole lives. It is our responsibility to set aside specific times for personal prayer and study each day, and to be of service to one another.” (Courtesy: OCDS Website of the California-Arizona Province of St. Joseph)

The writings of St Teresa of Avila are the expression of the charism of the Discalced Carmelites. The syllabus for this year of Formation I introduces St Teresa's The Way of Perfection. Each

session focuses on one theme or sub-theme to explain the life of prayer experienced and taught by St Teresa.

“The Way of Perfection is an excellent introduction to the understanding of Teresian Carmelite spirituality and its main element of contemplative prayer. Through the sharing of her own experiences, Teresa explains the fundamental elements of prayer, while giving counsel on the weakness of the human condition and its struggles in prayer as one ascends the mountain of Carmel to seek Divine Union with the ‘One Whom we know loves us’” (Courtesy OCDS Washington Province).

The goal of studying The Way of Perfection is to become familiar with Discalced Carmelite spirituality, identify the foundations of prayer, and explore the diversity of paths and practical insights presented by St Teresa of Avila.

Because Secular Carmelites are called to live by their Constitutions, it is crucial for all candidates to become familiar with the OCDS legislative documents. It is important during this period of formation to develop the habit of frequently reading and reflecting on the OCDS Constitutions and local statutes.

Formators are recommended to assign small portions of the legislation for monthly study, and then spend ten minutes at the beginning of each formation session discussing the assigned reading.

Finally, continue to recognize the importance of community meetings and the purpose of the vocation. Subsequent to all that was said and done in prayer, St Teresa succinctly reminds that the most important element of community life is the attitude and practice of the virtue of humility: “So, sisters, strive as much as you can, without offense to God, to be affable and understanding in such a way that everyone you talk to will love your conversation and desire your manner of living and acting, and not be frightened and intimidated by virtue.” (WP 41:7)

This introduction is an opportunity to welcome you to the call of Carmel, to invite you to begin living the life of a Discalced Carmelite Secular and to open your heart to exclaim the words of St Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, who wrote, “O My God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to Love You and make You Loved, to work for the glory of Holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in Purgatory.” (*Act of Oblation to Merciful Love*)

The Essential Themes for Formation I, Year A

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection, St Teresa of Avila. Purchase either the Study Edition by Kieran Kavanaugh or Volume I of the Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila, both are published by ICS Publications. Other required reading is included in the appendices.

Assigned Meditative Readings: Various bible verses, passages from Carmelite writings, and other materials are listed. One day a week, the candidate chooses one of these for his/her mental prayer. Where there are more than four choices listed, the candidate may choose those that seem most appealing. Meditative readings are for private use only; they are not intended to be discussed in the sessions.

Additional/Optional Reading:

A biography of St Teresa, such as:

Saint Teresa of Avila by Walsh, William Thomas, the Bruce Publishing Company, 1944

Saint Teresa of Avila by Auclair, Marcelle, St Bede's Publications, copyright 1988

The Book of Her Life: Chapters: 1-10 and 23-40 in The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila. Vol 1. ICS Publications

Alvarez, Tomas. St. Teresa of Avila: 100 Themes on Her Life and Work. Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D. Washington, D.C., ICS Publications, 2011.

To help better understand some of the terms used by St Teresa, the glossary from The Way of Perfection Study Edition is included in the (Appendix A). Candidates are encouraged to read the entire glossary at the beginning of the year, and then refer to it again as listed in the "Additional Reading" recommendations.

Other additional/optional reading materials are included in the appendices.

Required Reading for the Formator: The Way of Prayer: A Commentary on Saint Teresa's Way of Perfection, by Gabriel of St Mary Magdalen, OCD, Ignatius Press, 2017.

The **prayer quotes** at the beginning of each session are for personal reflection.

Session One: Introduction: An overview of the life of St Teresa of Avila: Early Years, Life at the Monastery of the Incarnation

*“Let nothing disturb you,
Let nothing frighten you,
All things pass away;
God never changes.
Patience obtains all things.
He who has God lacks nothing;
God alone suffices.”
— St Teresa of Avila*

Required Reading: The Book of her Life Introduction (Appendix B). *Biographical Timeline – St Teresa of Avila.* (Appendix C.)

Additional Reading for the Formator: Life: 9:1-3 26:5

Essential Points to Discuss:

Briefly go through the biographical timeline of St Teresa and highlight the important events and turning points in her life.

- An overview of Teresa’s personality and family life
- The impact of reading The Third Spiritual Alphabet by Francisco Osuna
- Entering the convent and various ongoing illnesses
- Her spiritual struggle and radical conversion (her prayer to the Suffering Christ)
- Her personal desire for holiness; founding of St Joseph monastery in Avila
- Meeting St John of the Cross
- Appointed prioress of the Incarnation; brings in St John of the Cross as confessor
- Index of forbidden books and Teresa’s response: “His Majesty had become the true book in which I saw the truths”
- Teresa’s death; honors given by the Church

Note to the Formator: Please mention to the candidates that the large ceremonial scapular is worn for Carmelite activities or when representing the Order or OCDS Community at a religious event. The small brown scapular (or the scapular medal) is worn for everyday use. The “OCDS” designation is not added to a member’s name until that person makes the First Promise at the end of Formation I. If there are related provincial or community policies in place, share these with the candidates at this time.

Assigned Meditative Reading:

Weekly topics: (once per week, choose one for each week)

Gospel of St John, chapter 15

- I am the vine, you are the branches.
- As the Father has loved me, so I love you – you are no longer servants but friends.
- You did not choose me; I have chosen you – bear fruit that will last.
- You do not belong to the world.

Session Two: Prayer for apostolic purpose – the reason for founding the monastery

*“I’ll go and tell the world, spreading the Word of your beauty
and sweetness and of your sovereignty.”*

— St John of the Cross

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection (WP) chapters 1, 2, and 3.

Additional Reading: The Way of Perfection – Introduction

Explanatory note: In chapters 1-3 Teresa is concerned about the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century: “How much this miserable sect was growing... The news distressed me greatly, and, as though I could do something...” (1:2). She calls them “false witnesses” (1:5). Teresa could have written a book about the evils of different sects in her time or encouraged King Phillip II to send an army of men to defend the Church. Instead, she proposes a different approach. Teresa intuitively understands that “human forces are not sufficient to stop the spread of this fire caused by these heretics...” (3:1). “Recognizing the need for a completely different approach than the use of human force and man-made arms, she urged the study of Scripture, preaching the Word, virtuous living, and prayer and fasting” (WP Study Edition *interpretive notes* pg. 61). “...this is most necessary, for I have said, it is the ecclesiastical, not the secular arm that will save us” (3:2).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- The Carmelite apostolate is based on a fervent interior life – friendship with God.
- “...we [are] occupied in prayer for those who are the defenders of the Church and for the preachers and for learned men... we shall be fighting for them even though we are very cloistered...” (3:5). “O my sisters in Christ, help me beg these things of the Lord. This is why He has gathered you together here. This is your vocation” (1:5).
- Let us not pray for worldly things; people should pray that God would enable them to trample such things beneath their feet... Are we to waste time asking for worldly things? (see 1:5).
- Poverty of spirit is a necessary part of apostolic life.
“We must desire to observe poverty in every way: in houses, clothing, words, and most of all in thought” (2:8). While Teresa wrote this for her nuns and not with Seculars in mind, Seculars practice poverty according to their state of life, observing moderation in everything in the spirit of holy detachment.

Assigned Meditative Reading (choose one per week):

- Matthew 9:35-10:1 – prayer for the Church
- Mark 10:25-29 – the needle’s eye

- Matthew 6:24-25 – no one can serve two masters
- Luke 12:13-21 – this night your life will be demanded of you

Meditation on the Song of Songs, by St Teresa of Avila, 7:3 (Appendix D)

- ... when the active works rise from this interior root, they become lovely and very fragrant flowers.
- The fragrance of these flowers spreads to the benefit of many.

Session Three: Foundation of Prayer and the Atmosphere Favorable to Meditation and Contemplation (Continued in session 4)

Fraternal Charity:

The limitless loving devotion to God, and the gift God makes of Himself to you, are the highest elevation of which the heart is capable; it is the highest degree of prayer.

*The souls that have reached this point are truly the heart of the Church.
—St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)*

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 4-9; 1Cor 13:4-7 St Paul's song of love.

Additional Reading: *Our First Duties as Carmelites*, by Fr. David Centner, OCD (Appendix E); 1Cor 13.

WP Study Edition Glossary: *Love – For one another; God's love for us; Our love for God*, (pgs. 509-510)

Explanatory Note: Session three and four deal with the foundation of prayer and the atmosphere favorable to meditation/contemplation - fraternal charity, detachment, and true humility. "... for it is very important that we understand how much the practice of these three things helps us to process inwardly and outwardly the peace our Lord recommended so highly to us" (4:4).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- God gives certain knowledge – "...this knowledge comes from seeing and feeling what is gained by the one love and lost by the other..." (6:3).
- True wisdom cannot esteem the love that lasts only here on earth (see 6:9).
- Love is not self-seeking. All that it desires or wants is to see the other soul rich with heavenly blessings (see 7:1).
- Suffer the faults of others; recommend them to God and practice the opposite virtue (see 7:7).
- Deeds against charity – factions, ambition, holding grudges – are very destructive to community life (see 7:10-11).

Assigned Meditative Reading:

Taken from Story of a Soul by St Therese of Lisieux, Study Edition. ICS Publications, 2005, Chapter X. Manuscript C, (Appendix F).

Introductory note: Chapter X deals with the spiritual support of Therese' Prioress (1-7, 11-15), the Little Way (8-9), Therese' expected death (10, 16-17, 30-32), her experience of the Dark Night of Faith (17-27), vocation to the missions (33-38), obedience (39-40), and the practice of charity and holy poverty (41-64). **Reading the whole chapter is optional.**

Points for meditation/reflection (choose one per week):

How did St Therese practice the virtue of charity in her Lisieux Carmel? There are three fundamental truths about charity that Therese addresses in chapter X. The following three points were taken from interpretive notes of Fr. Marc Foley, OCD.

- The first is that charity is not a feeling but a choice – an act of the will. “I told myself that charity must not consist in feelings but in works” (paragraph 51).
- The second is that it is very difficult to be charitable to people whom we don’t like, people toward whom we have a “natural antipathy,” to use Therese’s phrase (paragraphs 51-52).
- Third, it is precisely in loving those to whom we have a natural aversion that our love becomes divine because such love requires that we love with the charity of Jesus himself (paragraphs 45-46).

Scripture passages:

- 1 John 4:7-21 – Love one another.
- Lk 6:32-36 – “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?” (Love your enemies...)
- Lk 1:39 – Mary visits Elizabeth “in haste”
- Lk 10:25-37 – the Parable of the Good Samaritan

Session Four: Foundation of Prayer (continued from session three)

Detachment and Humility:

“Prayer ought to be humble, fervent, resigned, persevering, and accompanied with great reverence. One should consider that he stands in the presence of a God and speaks with a Lord before whom the angels tremble from awe and fear.”
— St Mary Magdalen de Pazzi

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection, chapters 10-15.

Additional Reading: WP Study Edition Glossary: *Detachment*, pg. 503; *Humility*, pg. 507.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “...do not feel secure or let yourselves go to sleep! By feeling secure you would resemble someone who very tranquilly lies down after having locked his doors for fear of thieves while allowing the thieves to remain inside the house. And you already know that there is no worse thief than we ourselves!” (10:1).
- “A great aid to going against your will is to bear in mind continually how all is vanity and how quickly everything comes to an end” (10:2).
- “When we begin to become attached to something, we should strive to turn our thoughts from it and bring them back to God – and His Majesty helps” (10:2).
- “...true humility ... and the virtue of detachment it seems to me always go together. They are two inseparable sisters” (10:3).
- “...if there is any vain esteem of honor or wealth... you will never grow very much or come to enjoy the true fruit of prayer” (12:5).
- Let us imitate the humility of the Blessed Virgin. (see 13:3).
- “Indeed, it calls for great humility to be silent at seeing oneself condemned without fault” (15:1).
- “We must all try to be preachers through our deeds...” (15:6).

Note: Teresa’s discussion of the foundation of prayer ends in chapter 15. Chapter 16 serves as a transitional chapter. Here Teresa is setting a stage to explain the growth in prayer in subsequent chapters. The following explanatory note is essential to understand Teresa’s shift in her thoughts in chapter 16.

Progression in Prayer

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapter 16 (not required for discussion in the formation session, but the formator might refer to it briefly if time permits.)

Explanatory note: Teresa employs the game of chess to explain the growth in prayer. What she said so far (foundation of prayer) is like setting up the game of chess. Now is the time to move

the pieces. “Now realize that anyone who doesn’t know how to set up the pieces for a game of chess won’t know how to play well. And without knowing how to check the king, one won’t know how to checkmate it either” (16:1). “Therefore, daughters, if you desire that I tell you about the way that leads to contemplation, you will have to bear with me... And if you don’t want to hear about them or put them into practice, stay with your mental prayer for your whole life...” (16:5). “I say that the King of Glory will not come to our soul – I mean to be united with it – if we do not make the effort to gain the great virtues” (16:6).

Teresa’s explanation up to this point has been merely a placing of the “chess pieces,” but now it is time to move them; that is, it is not enough to simply desire virtue, we must apply ourselves.

Assigned Meditative Reading (choose one per week):

- Luke 18:9-14 – the publican and the Pharisee
- Luke 18:15-17 – the little children
- Luke 18:18-29 – the rich young man
- Matthew 5:44-48 – be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect
- Philippians 2:1-11 – Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be grasped

Session Five: Fundamental Attitudes and Convictions that are necessary for growth in Prayer

“Look not at the imperfections of others, keep silence, and have continual converse with God. These three things will uproot great imperfections from the soul and make it the mistress of great virtues.”

— St John of the Cross

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23.

Additional Reading: WP Study Edition Glossary – *Determination*, pg. 504

Explanatory note: In sessions three and four, the foundation of prayer (charity, detachment, and humility) was discussed within the context of creating an atmosphere that is favorable to the life of prayer. In this session, humility, perseverance and other virtues are discussed within the context of our attitude and convictions that are necessary for growth in prayer.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- One should always take the lowest place, for this is what the Lord told us to do (17:1).
- Contemplation is a gift from God. “What I am saying is that this is not a matter of your choosing but of the Lord’s” (17:7). Don’t concern yourself in receiving favors in prayer.
- Contemplation and suffering: “...contemplatives do not bear a lighter cross... I know both paths and I know clearly ... if He didn’t give that food with its delights, these persons wouldn’t be able to endure the trials” (18:1).
- Continue practicing the virtues of humility and perseverance. “...they must keep the flag of humility raised and suffer all the blows they receive without returning any... Contemplatives must be careful about what they are doing for if one lets go of the flag the battle will be lost” (18:5).
- Begin the practice of prayer with great determination. “They must have a great and very determined determination to persevere until reaching the end...” (21:2).

Assigned Meditative Reading (choose one per week):

- Luke 14:7-14 – the lowest place
- 1Cor 1:25-31 – weakness and strength
- 1Cor 2:6-16 – understanding
- Matthew 15:21-28 – humility and perseverance in prayer
- Matthew 20:20-28 – can you drink of the cup?
- Philippians. 2:5-11 – imitating Christ’s humility
- Luke: 1:26-38 – “Let it be done to me as You say.”
- Philippians 3:12-16 – perseverance

Session Six: Vocal and Mental Prayer

“Sometimes when I am in such a state of spiritual dryness that not a single good thought occurs to me, I say very slowly the Our Father or the Hail Mary and these prayers suffice to take me out of myself and wonderfully refresh me.”

— St Therese of the Child Jesus

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 22, 24, 25

Additional Reading: Catechism of the Catholic Church 2697-2708: Expressions of Prayer. (Appendix G)

WP Study Edition Glossary: *Vocal Prayer* pg 515; *Meditation* pg. 510; *Mental Prayer* pg. 511

Essential Points to Discuss:

- When we pray vocally (e.g. Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed), it’s not as necessary to think of the words we say as it is to adopt a suitable attitude of mind, realizing to whom we turn in these prayers (see 22.1).
- Vocal and mental prayer may open the heart to contemplation. “I tell you that it is very possible that while you are reciting the Our Father or some other vocal prayer, the Lord may raise you to perfect contemplation” (25:1).
- Vocal prayer, mental prayer and contemplation all must have the essential ingredient of prayer – **communion with God**. The difference lies in the fact that contemplation (supernatural prayer) cannot be acquired through human effort; it is a gift from God (see 25:2-3).

Assigned Meditative Reading (choose one per week):

- Matt 6:1-4 – avoiding vainglory
- Matt 6:5-6 – solitude
- Matt 6:7-8 – sincerity and trust
- 1 Cor 13:1 – “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I am only a ringing gong or a clanging cymbal.”
- I Kings 19:11-12 – and after the fire a still small voice
- Life of St Teresa 8:5 – “For mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends.”

Session Seven: Prayer of Recollection

"Active recollection, by which we put ourselves and keep ourselves in the presence of God, has always been regarded as the essential preparation for communion with God in the mystic life. Just as the Prophet did not hear the voice of God in the storm, but in the gentle breeze, so the heart of the spiritual man must not be shaken by the storm but must listen for God's voice in the silence of its own interior."
— Blessed Titus Brandsma (Lecture on the Hermits of Carmel)

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection, chapters 26, 27, 28, 29, 30.

Additional Reading: Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, The Practice of the Presence of God *Spiritual Maxims*, ch. 2, 3, 5, 6, 7. ICS Publications. (Appendix H)
WP Study Edition Glossary: *Recollection (Prayer of)*, pg. 512

Explanatory note: At this point, St Teresa begins a lengthy explanation of the development of the life of prayer (Prayer of Recollection, Prayer of Quiet, and Contemplation) using the Our Father as a guide.

Essential Points to Discuss:

"Our Father, Who art in heaven" – Prayer of Recollection

- "I am not asking you now that you think about Him or that you draw out a lot of concepts or make long, subtle reflections with your intellect. I am not asking you to do anything more than look at Him (inwardly in faith)" (26:3).
- Acquire the habit of keeping Christ present (Humanity of Christ). This presence to Christ is, indeed, what Christians must always bring to prayer, no matter what state they may be in (It's coming to know ourselves through Christ) (Summary of 29:5 and 26).
- One must at least make the little effort necessary to recollect the sense of sight to look in faith at the Lord within. "In the measure you desire Him, you will find Him" (26:3).
- "It is also a great help to take a good book written in the vernacular in order to recollect one's thoughts and pray well..." (26:10). This does not mean to spend the whole time reading; when one's mind wanders read a few lines to refocus one's thoughts.
- "This prayer is called 'recollection,' because the soul collects its faculties together and enters within itself to be with its God" (28:4).
- Teresa's method has to do with relationship more than technique. "We must speak with Him as with a father, or a brother, or a lord" (28:3). And this easy familiarity is seen by Teresa as the best means to "recollection." To recognize one's intimacy with God in Christ is to know that heaven is not a distant place; heaven has been brought to us because God has come to us (the mystery of the Incarnation).

Assigned weekly meditation:

Use the Our Father to recollect the mind and senses in God's presence. Focus on parts of the Our Father or read slowly through the whole prayer, as the Holy Spirit leads.

“Consider that you are losing a great treasure and that you do much more by saying one word of the Our Father from time to time than by rushing through the entire prayer many times.”

(WP 31:13)

Session Eight: The Prayer of Quiet

“One way to call your mind easily back to God during your fixed prayer times and to hold it steadier is to not let it take much flight during the rest of the day.”

— Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 30 and 31 (These are especially important chapters)

Additional Reading: WP Study Edition Glossary: *Quiet (Prayer of)*, pg. 512

Explanatory note: St Teresa dedicated the next two chapters (30 and 31) to the prayer of quiet, a supernatural prayer, which one cannot acquire for oneself (see 31:2). “This is the only chapter (31) in the Way that deals with contemplation expressly and integrally. It plays an essential role in the entire thrust of the book” (Interpretive notes pg. 352 of the study edition).

Essential Points to Discuss:

“Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come.”

- “...in the kingdom of heaven, among many other blessings, is that one will no longer take any account of earthly things, but have a calmness and glory within...” (30:5).
- “In this prayer it seems the Lord begins to show that He hears our petition. He begins now to give us His kingdom here below so that we may truly praise and hallow His name...” “This prayer is something supernatural.” What did St Teresa mean by “supernatural”? In her thought, it means the initiative comes from God, not from us (31:1, 2, 6).
- The Prayer of Quiet is the first contemplative prayer in which the person perceives that it is not he/she alone who is working. In this prayer, one foretastes something of what one shall have in Paradise (see 31:2-3).
- The more deeply one knows God with some experiential knowledge, the more one will be drawn to praise and love Him perfectly, for contemplative knowledge has a certain affinity to the knowledge of the Blessed.
- God wills that souls spend their whole life in praise, sustained best by some experiential knowledge of God. One does not employ images and ideas, but proceeds by means of love with a taste of God.
- The intellect receives knowledge from love, just as God revealed Christ to Simeon (Lk: 2:25-35) (31:2).
- In this prayer, the will is the powerful ruling faculty. It will draw the intellect after itself without disturbance (31:10).
- This prayer continues amid daily occupations. While one attends to the external service of God in discharging customary business, one’s will can remain united to Him. “This is a great favor for those to whom the Lord grants it; the active and the contemplative lives

are joined. The faculties all serve the Lord together: the will is occupied in its work and contemplation without knowing how; the other two faculties serve in the work of Martha. Thus Martha and Mary walk together” (31:5). This should serve as a great encouragement to Carmelite Seculars.

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Luke 2:25-35 – Simeon – the intellect receives knowledge from love
- Luke 10:38-42 – Martha and Mary – contemplative prayer and active apostolate
- Mt. 17:1-8 – Peter on Tabor – joy and awe in God’s presence
- Luke: 19:19:2-9 – the publican – humility and self-knowledge

Session Nine: Unitive Life – Contemplation

*“O Lord, how different are Your paths from our clumsy imaginings!
And how from a soul that is already determined to love You and is abandoned
into Your hands, You do not want anything but that it obey, that it inquire well
into what is for Your greater service, and that it desire this! There’s no need for it
to be seeking out paths or choosing them, for its will is Yours. ...[You] go about
disposing the soul and the things with which it is dealing in such a way that,
without understanding how, we find in ourselves spiritual improvement,
so great that we are afterward left amazed.”*

— St Teresa of Avila

“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection ch. 32.

Additional Reading: WP Study Edition Glossary: *Contemplation – Contemplatives*, pgs. 502-503; *Fount (of Living Water)*, pg. 506; *Union (Prayer of)*, pg. 515; *Water (Living)*, pg. 516.

Explanatory note: “Chapter 32 is one of the most important chapters in the Way of Perfection. Commenting on the Our Father, St Teresa speaks of various degrees of prayer; here she begins to discuss the perfect life in relation to the highest states of prayer. This chapter completes Teresa’s commentary on the first part of the Our Father and the exposition of degrees of prayer.” (taken from The Way of Prayer: A Commentary on St Teresa’s Way of Perfection)

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “Don’t fear that it means He will give you riches, or delights, or honors, or all these earthly things. His love for you is not small...He wants to repay you well, for He gives you His kingdom (unitive life) while you are still alive” (32:6).
- “And He gives according to the courage He sees in each and the love each has for His Majesty” (32:7).
- “...everything I have advised you about in this book is directed toward the complete gift of ourselves to the Creator, the surrender of our wills to His...” (32:9).
- “Your will, Lord, be done in me in every way and manner that You, my Lord, want. If You want it to be done with trials, strengthen me and let them come; if with persecutions, illness, dishonors, and lack of life’s necessities, here I am; I will not turn away, my Father ... grant me the favor of Your Kingdom that I may do Your will ... and use me as You would Your own possession, in conformity with Your will” (32:10).

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Philippians 4:11-13 – detachment: “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ... I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.”
- Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love – John of the Cross, Sayings of Light and Love, 26-28 (Appendix I)

OCDS Formation I, Year A

- John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle, stanza 28 – “Now I occupy my soul and all my energy in His service; I no longer tend the herd, nor have I any other work now that my every act is love.”
- Song of Songs 2:10-17 – “Arise my darling ... I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine.”

Session Ten: Eucharist – Sacramental and Spiritual Communion. The recollection which should be practiced after Communion

“To forget oneself, to be delivered from all one’s own desires and pretensions, to open one’s own heart to all the pressing needs of others, this is possible only through daily intimacy with Our Lord in the tabernacle.”
— St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 33, 34, 35.

Additional Reading: WP Study Edition Glossary: *Sacrament (Blessed)*, pg. 513.

Explanatory note: Teresa devoted three entire chapters (33, 34, 35) to this petition. For her, our daily bread is the Eucharist. The first of these three chapters treats of the gift of Jesus’ real presence. The two following chapters treat of sacramental communion and spiritual communion.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- The Eucharist is a manifestation, not only of Jesus’ love, but also of the heavenly Father’s love (see 33:2, 5).
- “As for ourselves, let us ask the Eternal Father that we might merit to receive our heavenly bread in such a way that the Lord may reveal Himself to the eyes of our soul and make Himself thereby known since our bodily eyes cannot delight in beholding Him, because He is so hidden. Such knowledge is another kind of satisfying and delightful sustenance that maintains life” (34:5).
- “... after having received the Lord, since you have the Person Himself present, strive to close the eyes of the body and open those of the soul and look into your own heart” (34:12). This is the beginning of interior recollection.
- Those who are not his true friends will hurry on as soon as possible to other business affairs and occupations (see 34:13).
- It is called “spiritual communion” to distinguish it from sacramental communion, for the Eucharist is not physically received. It is a great act of desire by which one invites Jesus into one’s heart through recollection (see 35:1).

Assigned Meditative Reading: (choose one per week):

- Matthew 26:26-29 – the Last Supper
- Mark 14:22-31 – the Last Supper
- Luke 22:14-23 – the Last Supper
- The Gospel of St John chapter 6 – Bread of Life discourse
- 1 Cor. 11:23-32 – the institution of the Eucharist and proper dispositions

- The Imitation of Christ part 4 (choose any chapter)
- “O Sisters, if we would only comprehend the fact that while the Eucharistic Species remain within us, Jesus is there and working in us inseparably with the Father and the Holy Spirit and therefore the whole Holy Trinity is there.” St Mary Magdalene de Pazzi

Session Eleven: God's merciful love – Effects of prayer

“Silence is precious; by keeping silence and knowing how to listen to God, the soul grows in wisdom and God teaches it what it cannot learn from men.”

— Blessed Anne of St Bartholomew

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive...”

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 36, 37

Explanatory note: St Teresa recalled that the first petitions of the Our Father afforded her an opportunity to discuss all the degrees of prayer from meditation to the prayer of union, the fountain of living water: “Up to now the Lord has taught us the whole way of prayer and of high contemplation, from the beginning stages to mental prayer, to the prayer of quiet, and to that of union... From here on, the Lord begins to teach us about the effects of His favors...” (37:1).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- The quality of forgiveness is a guarantee that one is living a life of prayer and is on the right road. St Teresa speaks of the pardoning of offenses as a great act of love (see 36:1-2).
- She gives this as the reason: one growing in union with God becomes more and more aware of both God's mercy and one's own littleness. This helps one acquire a merciful attitude toward others. “Help us understand, my God, that we do not know ourselves and that we come to You with empty hands; and pardon us through Your mercy” (36:6).
- The soul that God brings to perfect contemplation is not touched by any injury however grave. Such a soul will pardon an offense when the occasion arises. “...for when among the favors God grants in the prayer of perfect contemplation that I mentioned, [if] there doesn't arise in the soul a very resolute desire to pardon any injury however grave it may be ... do not trust much in that soul's prayer” (36:8).
- “Self-esteem is far removed from these persons. They like others to know about their sins and like to tell about them when they see themselves esteemed” (36:10).

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Mt 18:21-35 – the unmerciful servant
- 1 Cor 13:1-8 – “If I speak in the tongues of angels but do not have love...”
- Lk 6:32-36 – “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?”
- St Therese' Act of Oblation to Merciful Love (Appendix J)

Session Twelve: Continual search for divine union – Avoiding temptation and distraction

“... if we unite the spirit of prayer to these external remedies and the interior means we have prescribed, we shall infallibly succeed. It is, indeed, evident that the practice of prayer is a most efficacious remedy against the passions.”

– Ven. Fr John of Jesus and Mary (Instruction of Novices, part one, ch. 6.9)

“And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.”

Required Reading: The Way of Perfection chapters 38, 39, 40, 41, 42; Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 1810 -1813.

Explanatory note: Carmelite life is a continual search for divine union. But, while on this earth, the soul is surrounded by difficulties, temptations, and distractions. Fragile as the human person is, one truly needs protection from evil. Under this petition, Teresa wrote not only of temptation, but of trials in general. After outlining the meaning of this petition, Teresa explains some temptations into which one may fall if one is not alert. She was speaking here mainly to those who are striving to live a life of prayer.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- One does not ask to not have any temptations, but only not to be deceived by them (see 38:1).
- The devil can cause delights and consolations in our senses and emotions. He tries to deceive us into believing they come from God, when it is the devil himself who is producing them. God can bring good out of this, “For, in being fed on that delight, such persons will spend more hours in prayer” (38:3).
- As a safeguard, Teresa recommends humility. One should not think there is any right to special consolations in prayer. To believe otherwise opens one to being deceived. It is important to know that one should not desire spiritual consolations (see 38:4).
- One temptation stemming from consolation is the belief that the virtues are already possessed when in reality they are not (see 38:5, 8). It would be a mistake to lean on presumed virtues as if they were a solid foundation. Virtues are a gift of God. “Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God's help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of the good” (CCC 1810). The Theological Virtues of faith, hope and charity “are infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life” (CCC 1813).
- Another hidden temptation is false humility. This causes disquiet over the gravity of one’s sins and can even make one give up Holy Communion. Whereas true humility does not disturb or disquiet or agitate, however great it may be, it comes with peace, delight and calm (see 39:1-2).

- Likewise, some are tempted to excessive penances, and then tempted to believe they are more penitential than others and are doing something extraordinary. “Strive to obey ... since the greatest perfection lies in obedience” (39:3).
- Another dangerous temptation is self-assurance in the thought that one will in no way return to past faults and worldly pleasures (exaggerated confidence). Never proceed with such self-assurance and be on guard against the occasions of sin (see: 39:4). Self-assurance in beginners is very common and very dangerous. As souls gain self-knowledge they learn to rely more and more on God, and less and less on self. Even so, this temptation can creep into one’s mind at any level of spiritual maturity. “...however sublime the contemplation, let your prayer always begin and end with self-knowledge” (39:5).
- Love will quicken one’s steps; fear (a cautious attitude) will make one careful to avoid falling along the way (see: 40:1).
- “So, Sisters, strive as much as you can, without offense to God, to be affable and understanding in such a way that everyone you talk to will love your conversation and desire your manner of living and acting, and not be frightened and intimidated by virtue” (41:7).
- “Certainly, it never entered my mind that this prayer (*the Our Father*) contained so many deep secrets; for now you have seen the entire spiritual way contained in it, from the beginning stages until God engulfs the soul abundantly from the fount of living water (*contemplation*), which He said was to be found at the end of the way. [And having come out of it – I mean of this prayer – I don’t know how to go any further]” (42:5).

*May the Lord be blessed and praised;
From Him comes every good
we speak of, think about, and do. Amen.*
— Teresa of Avila (WP 42:7)

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Matthew 18:1-4 – “Unless you become as a little child...”
- 1 Peter 5:5-9 – humility towards one another
- Psalms 111:10 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”
- Romans 12 – harmony in community life

At the end of this study of The Way of Perfection, the candidate should have:

1. An appreciation of prayer consistent with the Carmelite understanding that prayer consists not in “method” but in deepening one’s relationship in love with God. “Mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us. The important thing is not to think much but to love much and so do that which best stirs you to love. Love is not great delight but desire to please God in everything” (St Teresa of Avila, Life 8.5).
2. An understanding of the ecclesial value of prayer – that prayer has a value in itself to the life of the Church and the world, as well as being essential to personal sanctification.

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(includes required and additional/optional reading)

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Provincial Statutes

The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila, Vol. 1 Book of Her Life ICS Publications, Washington D.C. 2000. Although an excerpt is included in the appendices, because St Teresa's autobiography is one of the essential works used for Carmelite formation, candidates are strongly urged to obtain their own copy of this volume.

The Way of Perfection, St Teresa of Avila Study Edition. Prepared by Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD, ICS Publications, Washington D.C. 2000.

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In the Appendices

"Biographical Timeline – St Teresa of Avila"

"Our First Duties as Carmelites" (article) by Fr. David Centner, OCD

Meditations on the Song of Songs, by St Teresa of Avila

Chapter X of *Story of a Soul*, by St Therese of Lisieux

Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love from *Sayings of Light and Love* – St John of the Cross

“Act of Oblation to Merciful Love”, by St Therese of Lisieux

St Teresa, *Book of Her Life* Introduction

Glossary from *The Way of Perfection Study Edition*, ICS Publications

Selected spiritual maxims from *The Practice of the Presence of God*

CCC 2697-2708, on vocal and mental prayer

Chapter 6 of *In Context*

Note to the formator:

1. Encourage the candidates to read a biography of St. Teresa throughout the year. Recommendations are listed above under “Additional Reading” but others may be used.
2. It is recommended to take 10 minutes at the beginning of each session to read and discuss a section of the OCDS Constitutions or Provincial Statutes throughout the year. Suggested readings are as follows:

Constitutions:

- a. Following Jesus in the Teresian Secular Carmel (Constitutions 10-12)
- b. Witness to the experience of God (17-24)
- c. Formation in the school of Carmel (32-36)

Provincial Statutes:

- d. Community life
- e. Carmelite Calendar – Feast days and fasting.

Additional reading from the Constitutions and Statutes may be selected by the local Council, according to the needs of the community or the candidates.

Appendices

Appendix A: Essential Themes, Way of Perfection Study Edition Glossary

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The purpose of this glossary is to provide readers with help toward grasping some of the terms used in this work. Untrained in philosophy and theology, Teresa did not try to define her terms. This can prove frustrating to readers who want clear definitions. She reveals her understanding of the realities behind her words through her descriptions. When brought together under their respective entries, these descriptions help to clarify the meaning of the terms. Further nuances and developments important to the understanding of Teresa's lexicon are present in her other writings. This glossary is limited to The Way of Perfection. No attempt was made to be exhaustive, neither in the import of the words, nor in the references provided as mere examples. Further information may be gathered by consulting the index.

ABANDONMENT (TO GOD'S WILL). A free surrender of one's will to God (32.4). Christ is the model of abandonment; in the garden he manifested his own desire and fear, but then abandoned them to God (30.2). Great gain results from total abandonment to God's will, especially in fear of death and sickness (11.4; 32.4).

BODY. The external part of the human composite (body and soul) (31.2-3). Its senses or powers are mainly those of sight and hearing (28.5-6; 31.2; 34.12), which cannot on their own perceive the Lord, truly present in the Blessed Sacrament (34.5), or when he speaks to the heart (24.5). The more comforts the body receives, the more needs it discovers (11.2); its senses can be a source of distraction (28.5); thus it can become an enemy in the spiritual battle of this life (11.5). The body should be put to work for one's daily sustenance (34.4). In sickness it should be cared for, and compassion should be shown toward the sick (11.1). The devil tempts people toward bodily penances that can ruin their health (19.9-10). In the prayer of quiet the body experiences rest and delight (31.2-3). In rapture, awareness through the exterior senses is lost (32.12).

CHURCH. In the church, Christ walks and communes with us (1.3). Christians who do what is destructive to the church afflict Christ (1.3); it is like crucifying Christ again (1.2). The church needs preachers and the learned to defend and protect her (1.2); and those who will pray for her (1.3). The church is our Holy Mother (21.10). By believing what she holds we walk along a good path (21.10; 30.4).

CONTEMPLATION. A prayer that cannot be acquired (and is thus "supernatural") in which the Lord puts the soul at peace by his presence (31.2). It is a gift from the Lord (25.2). In it love is experienced without one's understanding how (25.2). The soul understands that without the noise of words the divine Master is teaching it by causing the faculties to stop their activity (25.2). An effort to gain the great virtues is a necessary preparation, although God may sometimes give the gift to sinners to draw them away from their sins (16.6). God will give the gift to those who prepare themselves although they should remain humble and detached regarding his gifts (17.7). Contemplation is perfect (pure) when all the faculties come to rest

entirely in union with the Lord (28.7). Vocal prayer is no obstacle to contemplation or even to perfect contemplation (30.7). Receiving the gift of perfect contemplation is like drinking directly from the fount of living water (32.9). To drink from this fount, we must give our wills to the Lord in everything (32.9-10). The effects of this perfect contemplation are humility, great love of God, detachment from being esteemed, and fortitude in the virtue of forgiving (36.8,11-13). Another effect is the acceptance of trials, temptations, persecutions, and struggles (38.1). Both the love and fear of God become very manifest (41.1). God is not content solely with bringing a soul to union; he begins to delight in it and reveal his secrets to it (32.12).

CONTEMPLATIVES. Used to designate only those whom God has brought to perfect contemplation, in whom he delights and to whom he reveals his secrets (32.12). God gives contemplatives trials that would be unendurable without the favors he gives them (18.1-2). They are courageous and determined to suffer (18.2). They must suffer as Christ did (18.5). Others should not give up trying to prepare themselves to be contemplatives, but leave the rest to the Lord (18.3,6). The deceptions and illusions the devil brings on contemplatives are not few (40.4). Being a contemplative is not necessary for salvation (17.2). Only in the next world will we know the value of delights and raptures and visions and other favors from the Lord; having them is an uncertain matter (18.7-8). What is more certain is the contemplative's readiness to drink from the chalice (18.6; 38.1).

DETACHMENT. Relinquishing what stands in the way of giving oneself to the All without reserve (8.1; 32.9); in it one embraces the Creator rather than the creature, cares not for what comes to an end but for eternal things (8.1; 32.9; 3.4). Outward detachment is necessary until one gains from the Lord a freedom in regard to the attachment (8.4; 10.1). The freedom from attachment gives one dominion over all creation (10.3). An aid to detachment is the thought of how quickly everything comes to an end (10.2). Along with humility, it is a virtue loved by Christ, who was never seen without it (10.3). Through the two virtues, one escapes from Egypt and finds the true manna (10.4). These two virtues cannot be present without love for others (16.2). The objects of detachment include ourselves, our bodies, and our honor (10.5; 12.5).

DETERMINATION. A firmness of resolve associated with perseverance (21.2). The object of it is to continue until reaching the end (21.2). The determination includes a resolve to die rather than give up the journey (20.2). The Lord highly favors those who have real determination (14.1). We must give ourselves to the Lord with the kind of determination with which he gives himself to us (16.9). It is important to begin with determination; the person who does so struggles more courageously (23.1; 23.5). The devil is afraid of determined souls, but will cause fears and never-ending obstacles to those who are changeable, unstable, and not strongly determined to persevere (23.4). The more determination we have not to commit an offense against God for any creature, the less confidence we have in ourselves and the more in God (41.4).

FAITH. Believing what the Lord says, the words coming from the mouth of Truth itself, and the truths he tells us (23.6; 28.1; 19.2). The Lord calls us to drink from the fount of living water; by faith we know of his goodness; in this respect he will not let us die of thirst (23.5). When we know this through experience, faith is awakened (30.3; 34.6; 28.1). It is a pity when faith is so unawakened that one does not understand fully the certainty of punishment and

reward (30.3). Faith is strengthened by considering that in Communion the Lord enters our house as truly as he did the house of the Pharisee, even though we don't see him with our bodily eyes and even when we don't feel devotion (34.6-7). Teresa had no doubt that miracles could be worked while the Lord was within her and that, as her guest, he would give her what she asked of him (34.8). The Lord found more faith in women than in men (3.7). You will be walking along a good path if we believe firmly what Holy Mother church holds (21.10).

FATHER (ETERNAL). A divine Person in the one God revealed by Jesus out of love for us and given to us by him as our Father also (27.1-2). Like the father of the prodigal son, the Eternal Father loves, pardons, sustains, and consoles us in our trials (27.1). He makes us his heirs with Jesus (27.2). He dwells in heaven (27.1; 28.1) and also as mighty King within the palace of our soul, where he is present in his majesty, power, and glory (27.5; 28.1). He takes his delight in Jesus (33.2). He consents to allow Jesus to remain every day with us in the Blessed Sacrament (33.2).

FIRE. A symbol for the love of God enkindled in the soul by the living water of contemplation (19.2-3). This water of contemplation makes the fire of God's love increase in the soul (19.3). This fire has its source in God, not in anything on earth, and cannot be extinguished by the water of earthly things when the fire is powerful (19.4; 40.41). Earthly things can extinguish the fire when it is weak (19.4). There is another heavenly water given by God in prayer — the water of tears — that does not quench the heavenly fire of God's love but makes it grow (19.5). The fire of God's love cools and freezes all worldly attachments (19.5). It communicates itself to others, and wants to burn up the whole world (19.5). With contemplatives the fire shines brightly and so their love is clearly recognized (40.4).

In the prayer of recollection, the soul is well prepared for the enkindling of fire; blowing a little with the intellect can hasten the enkindling (28.8).

Fire is also a symbol for God; the soul will be warmed by approaching the fire; when one receives Communion, or makes a spiritual communion, and wants to get warm, it will stay warm for many hours afterward (35.1).

FOUNT (OF LIVING WATER). A symbol for Christ who gives living water, his own life. Drinking directly from the fount of living water is the equivalent of perfect contemplation (the prayer of union) (32.9). To drink of this fount, we must give ourselves entirely to the Lord so that in everything he may do his will in us (32.9). The road or way leading to this fount is prayer, especially the prayer of recollection (21.4; 28.5). The fount lies at the end of the way (42.4). The fount is an overflowing one; rivers stream from it, large and small, and little pools for children (beginners) (20.2). The Lord invited all to strive to come to this fount, and promised all that he would give them to drink if they do not falter on the way (19.15; 20.1).

GOD. The supreme Ruler of heaven and earth, the supreme Power, Goodness, and Wisdom, without beginning or end (22.6). As Creator of heaven and earth (6.3; 28.5), God sets forth a fathomless sea of marvels (22.6). The angels tremble before him (22.7). But God is not touchy, nor does he bother about trifles (23.3). God is everywhere, and where he is, there is heaven (28.2). In his grandeur he would fill a thousand worlds and many more, yet encloses himself in the soul; since God is love he adapts himself to our size and gradually enlarges our capacity so that we can receive what he wants to give (28.11-12). God never tires of giving

(32.12). In his love for us he is faithful (15.5). We may commune with him as with a father, brother, lord, or spouse; he will teach us what to say (28.3). In the one God is a plurality of persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (27.7).

HOLY SPIRIT. He must be present between such a Son and such a Father (27.7). He enkindles the will and holds it bound with a very great love (27.7).

HOPE. Arises from a living faith concerning what God has kept in store for us in the kingdom of heaven (42.2). Those to whom God gives the kingdom here below have great hope of enjoying perpetually what is here given in sips (30.6). In the effects of the favors granted them by the Lord, they have the greatest hope that the Lord is pleased with them (37.4). The hope of being freed from the sufferings of purgatory by suffering on earth helps one to bear suffering willingly (40.10). God gives much to those who sincerely want to trust in him (29.3).

HUMILITY. It is not acquired by the intellect but by a clear perception that comprehends in a moment the truth about what a trifle we are and how very great God is (32.13; 39.15). The Lord lowered himself to give us an example of humility (12.6). One should always take the lowest place in conformity with the teaching and example of Christ (17.1). We only imitate his humility in some way, however much we may lower ourselves; on account of one's sins one always deserves less (13.3). Humility attracts the King from heaven as did that of the Blessed Virgin Mary (16.2). The more humility, the more one possesses God; there is no love without humility nor detachment without these two (16.2); the three bring inward and outward peace (4.4). Humility comprises a great readiness to be content with whatever the Lord may want to do with us and finding ourselves unworthy to be called his servants (17.6); is content with what is received (18.6); but doesn't refuse the King's favors (28.3). It is a measure of spiritual progress (12.6). A wonderful way to imitate the Lord's humility is to be silent at seeing oneself condemned without fault (15.1,2). There is more security in humility than in receiving spiritual delights (17.4). Humility does not disturb or disquiet or agitate; it comes with peace, delight, and calm (39.2).

JESUS CHRIST. The Son of God our Father, the Lord of the world, His Majesty, our Redeemer, Master, Friend, and Spouse (1.3; 27.1; 26.6). He is the Father's gift to us, has become one with us by sharing in our nature (34.2; 33.5). As risen, he wills to give to each of us his beauty, splendor, majesty, victory over evil, joy, and kingdom, but above all himself (26.4). He endured all the sufferings in his passion and death for love of us (26.5); he never fails anyone, he helps us in all trials, he may be found everywhere, he is always at our side (26.2); he dwells in the soul as in his palace, as our companion or friend, teaching us humbly and lovingly, always looking at us with love, submitting to us, providing for us (29.5,7; 26.1,3,4,10; 34.5). He has many methods of showing himself to the soul, through interior feelings and through other different ways (34.10). His words in the Gospels recollect the soul (21.3). He is present in the church (1.2,3,5). In the Blessed Sacrament he is just as truly present with us as when he walked in the world, and he may reveal himself to the eyes of the soul since our bodily eyes cannot delight in beholding him (34.2, 5, 6). No one is capable of seeing him in his glorified state; in the Blessed Sacrament he comes disguised (34.12) and gives us the manna and nourishment of his humanity (34.2). His will and the Father's were one (27.4; 33.2). The Father's will was done fully in him through trials, sorrows, injuries, persecutions, and death on a cross (32.6). He gives

us light to follow his will in everything (18.10). He is the commander-in-chief of love whom we imitate through love (6.9). He is the fount of living waters (contemplation) (19.7,15). He calls all to drink from this fount (19.14-15).

LOVE:

FOR ONE ANOTHER. Three kinds are mentioned: excessive (4.6); mixed (4.12); and spiritual (4.12). The latter two are virtuous involving a friendship based on likeness (4.15). In excessive love, one is dominated by an affection based on natural graces (4.7). Virtuous love is directed toward helping one another love God more (4.6). Spiritual love is a virtuous love that does not stir our feelings of affection; mixed love is a virtuous love accompanied by feelings of affection (4.12). She decides not to discuss mixed love (7.7). Few have the purely spiritual love; it is characteristic of the highest perfection (6.1). It arises not from thinking or believing but from a clear experiential knowledge of Creator and creature (6.3). It understands that God is its origin (6.8). It entrusts to God the care of those from whom love is received (6.5). It has no self-interest, will strive to relieve others of work, rejoices and praises God for any increase of virtue it sees in the other (7.9), sets aside its own advantage for the other's sake (7.8); all it wants is to see the other rich with heavenly blessings (7.1-2). It would rather suffer a trial itself than see the other suffer it, but if it sees that the other grows spiritually through its trial it rejoices (7.3). It cannot be insincere with those who are loved (7.4). It knows how to suffer the fault of another and not be surprised and strives to practice better the opposite virtue (7.7). It helps very much to further peace in a community (7.9). It knows how to take recreation with others when needed (7.7). It becomes impassioned in its care to see the other make progress toward God and not turn back (7.1). It imitates the love that Jesus has for us (7.4). It is impossible to hide this love (40.7). We must strive to be affable, agreeable, and pleasing to those with whom we deal (41.7).

GOD'S LOVE FOR US. Since God loves us, he adapts himself to our size (28.11). In the first words of the Our Father, the Lord shows us the magnificent love he bears us (26.10; 27; 27.4). He teaches us how the love of his Father can be obtained (32.11). The Blessed Sacrament is a wonderful means given by Jesus to show the extreme of his love for us (33.1). He, seemingly, tells the Father that he is now ours and not to take him from us until the end of the world (33.4). He showed his love for us openly through many sufferings and, finally, by the shedding of his blood unto death for us (26.5; 40.7). In the love we have for God, we are certain that he loves us (40.5).

OUR LOVE FOR GOD. Out of love for God the nuns give up freedom and undergo trials, fasts, silence, enclosure, and service in choir (12.1). True love of God is completely free of earthly things and is the lord of all the elements of the world (19.4).

When the soul is enkindled in love it doesn't know how it loves (25.2). In the kingdom of heaven, everyone loves God, and the soul thinks of nothing else than loving him; it cannot cease loving him because it knows him (30.5). Whoever loves him much will be able to suffer much for him (32.7). An image of the One loved brings wonderful comfort (34.11). Those who truly love God, desire, favor, praise, and love every good; they join, favor, and defend good people (40.3). Those who love God dedicate their lives to learning how they might please him

more (40.3). The genuine love of God cannot hide itself (40.3). With contemplatives, there is much love of God, or they wouldn't be contemplatives (40.4).

MEDITATION. Consists of reasoning with the intellect about the mysteries of the Lord's life and Passion, judgment, hell, our nothingness, and the many things we owe God (19.1). For those who can follow this method, it is a good path by means of which the Lord will draw them to the haven of light; when the intellect is thus bound one proceeds securely and peacefully (19.1). As with Teresa herself, many are unable to meditate without the use of a book (17.3). Others are unable to meditate, even with a book, and can only pray vocally (17.3). In contrast to contemplation, meditation may be undertaken without the virtues, as a basis for acquiring them (16.3).

MENTAL PRAYER. In mental prayer we speak to God, know and are aware that we are with him and speaking with him and understand who we are who dare speak with so great a Lord (25.3; 22.8). The time of prayer does not belong to me but is God's time (23.3). The Lord teaches many things to anyone who wants to be taught by him in prayer (6.3). It is a path, along which we journey, having a beginning, middle, and an end (19.2; 20.2-3). One must have a great determination to persevere (21.2). A great treasure is gained by traveling this road; consolation, in different ways, is never lacking along this path (20).

PERFECTION. The path to perfection is prayer (19.2; 20.2-3). Perfection has its roots in a clear experiential knowledge given by God of the nature of the Creator and of the creature, of the world that is eternal and that which is a dream (6.3). It requires the strength to be totally occupied in loving God (4.5). With this perfect love, one does not stop in the creature but praises the Creator for the creature (6.4). Persons who are perfect have trampled the good things and comforts offered by the world underfoot; they cannot tolerate having them apart from God (6.6); they are drawn by God to give up everything for him (12.5). Detachment is perfect when one embraces the Creator and cares not at all for the whole of creation; it includes all else required for perfection because the Lord then infuses the virtues (8.1). The perfect soul doesn't think of anything else but the Lord; nor, because it knows him, can it cease loving him (30.5). In what is for God's greater service, the perfect are so forgetful of self, they can't even believe that things usually felt as an affront are so in fact (36.10). Giving our wills to God and forgiving others are elements of perfection that everyone, in whatever state of life, can practice; there is a more and a less in the degree to which this is done, and so greater and less perfection; we must do what we can, the Lord receives everything (37.3). Those who have reached perfection do not ask the Lord to free them from trials or temptations or persecutions or struggles; this is a certain effect of the contemplation and favors given by the Lord (38.1).

QUIET (PRAYER OF). A form of prayer that we cannot procure through our own efforts (and thus "supernatural"); it is the beginning stage of contemplation (31.2,6; 30.7). In it the Lord puts the soul at peace by his presence (31.2). The soul understands, but not through the exterior senses, that it is now close to its God (31.2). It doesn't understand how it understands (31.2). The faculties are in stillness, and wouldn't want to be busy with anything but this loving, but two of them are free to come and go, or even to think of who it is they are loving, while the will is held captive (31.3). Sometimes it seems that the quiet is not present in the intellect; the will should pay no more attention to it than to a madman (31.8-10). One gentle word from

time to time will be enough work on the soul's part (31.8,10,13). Sometimes the will is held in that peace while the other faculties are free for acts in God's service; the active and contemplative lives are joined (31.4-5). In this prayer one is beginning to receive the kingdom (30.6; 31.3); in this rest one's strength for the journey is doubled (30.6; 31.2); in it the soul does not remember there is still more to desire (31.3).

RECOLLECTION (PRAYER OF). A method of prayer in which the soul collects its faculties and enters within to be with its God (28.4; 29.7). St. Augustine sought him in many places, but ultimately found him within himself (28.1). This recollection is not something supernatural, but something we can achieve ourselves with the help of God (29.4). All you need do is go into solitude and look at him within yourself; or be present to the one with whom you speak in prayer (28.2; 29.5); or it can be practiced briefly in the midst of occupations (29.5,7). We must get used to saying vocal prayer with this recollection (29.6), being aware that we are with him, of what we are asking him, of his willingness to give to us, and how eagerly he remains with us (29.6). Meditation may also be carried out in this recollection (20.4). There are greater and lesser degrees of this recollection; the divine Master will come more quickly to teach the soul in this recollection and give it the prayer of quiet than he would through any other method it might use (28.4,7).

SACRAMENT (BLESSED). It is the food or manna of the Lord's humanity given for our nourishment that we might not die of hunger and might find consolation in him; we have the Person himself present (3.8; 34.2,12). Through this means we may offer the Father's Son many times in sacrifice that God may provide a remedy for us in our need, that no advance will be made in the disrespect shown in places where the Blessed Sacrament is present, that neither the sacraments be taken away nor churches destroyed (35.3-4; 3.8; 33.3). This heavenly food is a medicine even for bodily ills (34.6). In this sacrament, the Lord remains with us here in the world (just as truly as when he walked in the world) to help, encourage, and sustain us in doing the Father's will (34.1); but his presence is disguised in the accidents (appearances) of bread and wine, and one needs a strong, living faith (34.3,6-7).

SOUL. The interior part of the human composite (body and soul). It is like a rich palace of gold and precious stones in which dwells a King gracious enough to become its Father (28.9). The palace can be made beautiful through the virtues: the greater the virtues, the more resplendent the jewels (28.9). The Lord can enlarge this palace (28.12). We should empty the soul so that he may store or remove things as with his own property (28.12). In recollection the soul receives a supply of provisions to strengthen it against the body (28.6). In the prayer of quiet, satisfaction is felt in the soul (31.3). The soul is subject to many difficulties resulting from dwelling in the prison of the body (32.13). The soul has three faculties (or powers): intellect, memory, and will; it is wonderful when they are in accord (31.8).

INTELLECT (MIND; INTELLIGENCE). The power of understanding and reasoning. Many speak well but understand poorly (14.2). Many are unable to reason with the intellect in prayer (19.1). Some minds can concentrate and work methodically; others are scattered (19.1-2; 30.7). The prayer of recollection helps the intellect to be recollected (28.4). In contemplation, in a way very different from the way it understands through the exterior senses, the soul understands that it is close to its God (31.2).

MEMORY. The power of representing to the intellect what will occupy it; in the prayer of quiet our memories would not want to be occupied with anything else than who it is they are near (31.3).

WILL. The power of loving. The Holy Spirit enkindles the will and binds it with a very great love (27.7). In the prayer of quiet the will is held captive in this loving (31.3,9). Everything in this book is directed toward the surrender of our wills to God (32.9). Sometimes, the will may go about in the peace of the prayer of quiet for a day or two while the other two faculties are free (31.4). “Excessive” love gradually takes away the strength of will to be totally occupied in loving God (4.5). Our wills should be slaves to no one, save the One who bought us with his blood (4.8). The Lord begins to commune with the soul in so intimate a friendship that he gives it back its own will and his own besides (32.12). When the will is in the prayer of quiet it should pay no more attention to the intellect than to a madman (31.8).

EYES OF THE SOUL. The power of attending to, being aware of, or present to. Your eyes on your Spouse! (2.1). All harm comes from not keeping our eyes fixed on the Lord (16.11). The soul understands that it is close to God but not because it sees him with the eyes either of the body or soul (31.2). Let us ask the Eternal Father that we might so receive our heavenly bread that the Lord may reveal himself to the eyes of our soul and make himself thereby known since our bodily eyes cannot delight in beholding him (34.5).

IMAGINATION. The power of making a visible representation within ourselves, as when we picture to ourselves scenes from the Lord’s Passion (34.8).

UNION (PRAYER OF). A “very supernatural” prayer in which the entire soul is engulfed in God; all the faculties are suspended (held bound) by God (31.10; 42.5). As one who never tires of giving, God begins to take delight in such a soul, reveal his secrets, and rejoice that it knows something of what he will give it; God even makes it lose the exterior senses in rapture so that nothing will occupy it (32.12). God takes joy in putting the soul in command and does what the soul asks since it does his will (32.12). The king of glory will not come to our soul if we do not make the effort to gain the great virtues (16.6). A refusal to forgive is a sure sign of the absence of this prayer of union; an effect of the prayer is a readiness to forgive offenders immediately and to remain on very good terms with them (36.12).

VOCAL PRAYER. Recitation of a prayer formula such as the Our Father or the Hail Mary (25.3); but we must refuse to be satisfied with merely pronouncing the words (24.2; 22.2). The mind and heart should be aware of what we are saying and to whom we are speaking (21.10; 24.5-6), centered on the one to whom the words are addressed (24.6). Vocal prayer, then, must not be separated from mental prayer (22.3). Many persons while praying vocally are raised by God to sublime contemplation (30.7; 25.1). In the liturgy, when in the Creed the words “and his kingdom will have no end,” were said, it was almost always a special delight for Teresa (22.1); when we begin to recite the Hours consider whom we are going to speak with and who we are (22.3).

WATER (LIVING). Living water is a symbol for contemplation. By this living water the Lord brings us to the end of the journey without our understanding how (19.7). At the end of the journey the soul is engulfed in God and drinks abundantly from the fount (42.5). Water has

three properties: it refreshes, cleanses, and satisfies (19.3.6.8). It does not let the heat from worldly things detain the soul (19.5). It leaves the soul bright and cleansed of all faults (19.6), but when the soul in meditation reasons with the intellect something from the road will stick to the soul (19.6). By means of this living water the Lord shows it in an instant more truths and gives clearer understanding of what everything is than we could have here below in many years (19.7). It takes away thirst, but there can never be too much; in giving much God increases the capacity of the soul to drink much (19.9).

Appendix B: Session 1, Life Introduction

The Book of Her Life (The collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila, Vol.1)

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THE BOOK OF HER LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Early Years

Spain, separated from the continent of Europe by the Pyrenees, has a high central tableland both dividing the country within itself and stretching from the northern mountains to the southern coast. Without a natural center and without easy routes, this land was in the Middle Ages a disparate region, a complex of different races, languages, and civilizations. But at the end of the fifteenth century and the opening of the sixteenth, all the natural disadvantages were somehow overcome. Spain, with ten percent of its soil bare rock and only ten percent of it rich, became in the sixteenth century the greatest power on earth; this previously remote peninsula was ruler of the largest empire the world had yet seen, and all but master of Europe. During those exhilarating years of outward glory, Teresa of Avila lived and witnessed ironically to another, inward glory, to the sacred truth that becomes the rich possession of every genuine mystic, that a person's greatest good is within and "won by giving up everything" (ch. 20, 27).

Born during the reign of the Catholic monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, Teresa saw, under Charles V, Castile's high moment of prosperity. Under Philip II, she saw her king's struggles against Protestant and Morisco rebels, against the Netherlanders in the north and the Turks in the Mediterranean – not to mention Philip's many activities in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the New World.

Teresa's grandfather, a Toledan merchant, a Jewish *converso* (Christianized Jew), victim of the use of religion for the sake of political unity, had to accuse himself before the Inquisition for judaizing and as a penance was compelled to wear in procession for seven Fridays the humiliating *san benito*. After his reconciliation, out of necessity, he moved with his family to Avila where he was able to continue in his profession as a cloth merchant. One of his sons, Teresa's father Alonso, was about fourteen when the family arrived in Avila. In 1505 Alonso married; but two years later his wife died, leaving him two children. Alonso, after four years, married again, this time Doña Beatriz de Ahumada, who on March 28, 1515, gave birth to a daughter and future saint who received her grandmother's name – Teresa de Ahumada. Doña Beatriz died at the age of thirty-three, leaving behind from her marriage ten children.

Biographers have given posterity a detailed description of Teresa de Ahumada. She was medium in height and tended to be more plump than thin. Her unusual face could not be described as either round or aquiline; the skin was white and the cheeks flesh-colored. The forehead was broad, her eyebrows somewhat thick, their dark brown color having a reddish tinge. Her eyes were black, lively, and round, not very large but well placed and protruding a little. The nose was small; the mouth medium in size and delicately shaped, and her chin was well proportioned. The white teeth sparkled and were equal in size. Three tiny moles,

considered highly ornamental in those days, added further grace to her appearance; one below the center of the nose, the second over the left side of her mouth, the third beneath the mouth on the same side. Her hair was a shining black and gently curled.

In many ways an extrovert, she was cheerful and friendly, a happy conversationalist, whom people found pleasing to hear as well as look at. Besides her talent as a writer, she was also gifted in the use of the needle and household tasks.

Her undaunted spirit first began to show signs of itself when she was only seven and decided to set off with her brother Rodrigo to the land of the Moors to have her head cut off for Christ. With much the same ardor she enjoyed playing hermit life with other children – praying, giving alms, and doing penances. While she was growing up in this quiet atmosphere of piety, the revolt of the *Comuneros* took place, shaking all Castile. This was a movement of angry reaction to a long period in which royal government had eroded many of the traditional powers and prerogatives of the Castilian towns. During this period, too – in 1525 to be precise – the Imperialist army, largely through Spanish troops, won the greatest victory of the age at Pavia. Two years later Charles V's armies broke from control and put Rome to the most terrible sack it had ever endured.

It was about at the time of this latter incident that the piety of the now adolescent Teresa began to grow cold. She became over eager to read romantic tales of chivalry, began to cultivate her feminine charms, and to plan a possible marriage. The absorption of her fantasy with chivalrous themes along with her faculty for writing stirred her at this time to try, together with her brother, writing a book of the kind she liked to read. In the judgment of her early Jesuit biographer, Ribera, it contained “much that could be said for it.”

As time went on, after the death of her mother in November 1528, Teresa began to meet with opposition at home because of her affection for her cousins, sons of her aunt Doña Elvira de Cepeda, and her friendship with a frivolous, unidentified relative whose influence was not of the kind that strengthened Teresa's piety. Teresa was later to look back with much distaste upon this whole period in which she lost the fervor of her early years. On the watch for an excuse to free his daughter from the vain company and enticements she was experiencing, Don Alonso found one, in 1531, when his oldest daughter married. At the age of sixteen Teresa was entrusted to the care of the Augustinian nuns of Our Lady of Grace in Avila.

Since there was no public education system in Spain at the time, Don Alonso's daughter probably learned to read and write at home. Nor could one compare what was offered to her in the way of education at Our Lady of Grace to any modern boarding school. The nuns did little more, we now conjecture, than prepare the young girls for their future life in marriage, teaching them the usual household tasks: cooking, sewing, embroidery, and other things of the sort. Undoubtedly the girls also received some basic religious instructions. The gentle, friendly nun, Doña Maria Briceño, who had charge of the girls and carefully watched over them, was a woman of deep prayer. As things turned out she began to mean more to Teresa than all former friends. Doña Maria loved to talk about prayer, and her high spiritual ideals made Don Alonso's daughter begin to think about a vocation to the religious life and feel more favorable to the idea. But it seems the strain caused by the inner struggle over the pros and cons of the life of a nun harmed Teresa's health so that she had to leave the school

When her health improved, she was brought to her sister's house in Castellanos de la Cañada, but with a stop along the way for a visit with her uncle Don Pedro de Cepeda, who lived as a hermit in Hortigosa. He introduced her to spiritual books, which helped her in the struggle she was experiencing over her vocation. The *Letters* of St Jerome, finally, became the occasion of her courage to make a definite decision. But then unable to bear the thought of separation, her father refused to give his consent to her becoming a nun. On November 2, 1535, at the age of twenty, she once again stole away from her father's house, this time not to go off to the land of the Moors but to give her life to God as a nun in the Carmelite monastery of the Incarnation. Yet the action was not the result of so cold or indifferent an attitude to her father's feelings as it may seem to have been. She later was to write: "When I left my father's house I felt the separation so keenly that the feeling will not be greater, I think, when I die. For it seemed that every bone in my body was being sundered" (ch. 4,1). Don Alonso, in fact, accepted it all with resignation, gave her a dowry that was more than substantial, and acquired for his daughter a private room of her own in the monastery.

Life at the Incarnation

Recent studies have shown that at the time of Teresa's entry the Incarnation numbered among eleven Carmelite monasteries for nuns in Spain. Its canonical status lay midway between that of the *sanctimoniales*, those with obligation to choir office and enclosure, and that of the *beaterios*, where the life resembled tertiary life. The nuns were required to recite the Divine Office but not to observe enclosure. They were engaged in no outside forms of service. Some two hundred persons, including servants and nun's relatives, were living together at the Incarnation in Teresa's days there.

Contrary to common belief, religious life at the Incarnation was austere. Days each week were set aside for fasting and abstinence; silence was carefully maintained so as to encourage the spirit of continual prayer. With many kinds of detailed, minute rubrics, the Divine Office was celebrated in solemnity and splendor. No time, however, was designated in the legislation for mental prayer – a deficiency not without its drawbacks in what must have been a crowded monastery. Novices received instructions about the Carmelite order, its eremitical origins, its devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to the prophets Elijah and Elisha. They were also trained in the practice of the intricate ceremonies used in chanting the Divine Office.

Oddly enough and irrespective of the Carmelite rule's exhortation to continual prayer, Teresa states that until reading Osuna's *Third Spiritual Alphabet*, given to her later by her uncle, she didn't know how to go about praying or being recollected. The spiritual books she mentions were by Franciscan not Carmelite authors, and she offers no clear indication of receiving instruction about mental prayer during her novitiate training.

Although Teresa's decision about her vocation had been costly, once she was inside the monastery she threw herself into the life with zest and found that it, in fact, delighted her. But shortly after her profession, which took place two years later, her health gave way once more. Authors can only speculate about the nature of this illness. Teresa herself attributes it to the food and lifestyle at the Incarnation. After the doctors admitted they could find no cure for her sickness, her worried father decided to bring her to Becedas for treatment by a quack, famous there for many cures. The harsh, painful methods of cure, lasting three months, only

aggravated Teresa's poor condition; in fact they almost killed her. She was brought back, a pitiful sight, to Avila, where she remained an invalid and paralytic for three years – until, as she devoutly testifies, through the intercession of her glorious father St. Joseph, she was able to walk again. But, probably as a consequence, she suffered the rest of her life from miserable health, as wide variety of illnesses. Antonio Aguiar, after his medical examination of Teresa when she was sixty-seven and nearing the end of her life, claimed that it was impossible to find the focal cause of her illnesses because her body had become a whole arsenal of ailments.

Able to get about again, Teresa next experienced a protracted period of great difficulty with prayer. She writes: "And very often, for some years, I was more anxious that the hour I had determined to spend in prayer be over than I was to remain there ... and so unbearable was the sadness I felt on entering the oratory, that I had to muster up all my courage" (ch. 8,7). According to Fr. Efrén, her most recent biographer, her difficulties amounted chiefly to a problem of technique. She didn't realize that the mind, or imagination, and feelings can wander, as St. John of the Cross points out, while the soul on a deeper level may remain quiet in a hardly perceptible contemplation. These difficulties with prayer went on for about eighteen years until she experienced before a very devotional image of the wounded Christ and again while reading from the *Confessions of St. Augustine* some unusually strong and efficacious feelings of compunction. On these two occasions of peak experience she learned to lose completely any trust she had in herself and place it all in His Majesty.

Compunction is a basic sentiment running through the entire *Life*. To the undiscerning or inexperienced, Teresa's outpourings of compunction might seem like exaggerated guilt feelings. But for Teresa, true sorrow does not disquiet, does not agitate. Her compunction consoled her; permeated with humility, it was a gift – quiet, gentle, and in the light (ch. 30,9). The Desert Fathers, in fact, constantly exhorted their disciples to pray for the gift of compunction, the gift of tears. These Fathers felt that when the soul was softened by this interior weeping, God would give the experience of his light; in the shadow of sorrow was to be found the spiritual joy of enlightenment. And so it was with Teresa. In addition, her feelings of compunction later became more intense through the mystical experience she had of God's transcendent majesty, and of the shabbiness of sin beside His boundless outpouring of love. Spiritual humiliations preceded her spiritual exaltations. "I don't recall His ever having granted me one of the very notable favors of which I shall speak if not at a time when I was brought to nothing at the sight of my wretchedness" (ch. 22,12).

Teresa began, then, at the time of this conversion, to experience passively and in a living way the presence of God in the center of her soul. To qualify experiences in prayer that she couldn't acquire through her own efforts but that were experienced passively Teresa often used the term "supernatural." With the onset of the supernatural another, new life began for her. "This is another, new book from here on" (ch. 23,1).

Unfamiliar, unusual experiences started to occur, and Teresa, not yet enlightened about the stages of prayer, felt the surge of a new fear. "His Majesty began to give me the prayer of quiet very habitually – and often, of union – which lasted a long while. Since at that time other women had fallen into serious illusions and deceptions caused by the devil, I began to be afraid" (ch. 23,2). The fear so increased that, she says, it made her diligently seek spiritual

persons for consultations, marking the beginning of her struggles to explain her supernatural experiences. This recourse to spiritual men, and learned ones as well, led ultimately to the writing of her *Life*.

Appendix C: Session 1, Biographical Timeline – St. Teresa of Avila

- 1515 – March 28 – Teresa de Ahumada born in Avila, Spain
April 4 – Baptism
- 1522 – Teresa and her brother Rodrigo set out for the land of the Moors to gain martyrdom.
- 1528 – Death of Beatriz de Ahumada, Teresa’s mother.
- 1531 – Teresa becomes a boarder at Augustinian convent, Santa Maria de Gracia
- 1532 – Teresa falls ill – returns home to recover
- 1533 – Teresa visits her uncle and discovers her religious vocation.
- 1535 – November 2 – Teresa leaves home (against father’s wishes) to become a novice at the convent of the Incarnation (Encarnacion) in Avila
- 1536 – November 2 – Teresa receives the religious habit of Carmel
- 1537 – November 3 – Teresa makes her profession as a Carmelite nun at the convent of the Incarnation
- 1538 – Falls ill – leaves the convent
- 1538 – Autumn – Teresa reads Osuna’s The Third Spiritual Alphabet given to her by her uncle.
- 1539 – Returns to her father’s house in Avila – is in a coma for four days (preparations for burial are undertaken)
– Awakes dramatically, and although in much pain and paralyzed she returns to the convent
- 1542 – Regains full use of her limbs and attributes her healing to St. Joseph
- 1543 – Death of Don Alonso, Teresa’s father
- 1542-1554 – Time of spiritual struggle and growth for Teresa. She describes it as a time of “wasting”
- 1554 – During Lent Teresa experiences a ‘radical’ conversion before a statue of the suffering Christ
- 1556 – She receives the grace of spiritual betrothal
- 1560 – She receives the grace of transverberation (spiritual piercing of the heart)
– Begins to write the story of her life – Life
– Begins to discuss with friends and colleagues her vision for reforming the monastic life
- 1562 – Pope Pius IV grants Teresa permission to found St. Joseph (San José) in Avila
– August 24 – The convent is dedicated
- 1562-1566 – Teresa writes the constitutions for St Joseph’s in Avila and begins to write The Way of Perfection
– Teresa writes her Meditations on the Song of Songs
- 1567 – August 15 – After receiving permission to found other convents, Teresa founds one in Medina del Campo
- 1568 – April – Founds convent in Malagon
– August 15 – Founds convent in Valladolid
– November 28 – John of the Cross (Juan de la Cruz) founds a reformed monastery for friars in Duruelo
- 1569 – May 14 – Teresa founds convent in Toledo

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- June 28 – Founds convent in Pastrana
- July 13 – Founds reformed monastery for friars in Pastrana
- 1570 – November 1 – Founds convent in Salamanca
- 1571 – January 25 – Founds reformed monastery in Alba de Tormes with John of the Cross
 - July 13 Teresa renounces the Calced rule
 - Takes office (against her wishes) of prioress of the convent of the Incarnation in Avila and is put in charge of the Salamanca convent
 - Teresa invites John of the Cross to become chaplain at the Incarnation
- 1572 – Teresa receives the grace of spiritual marriage
- 1573 – Teresa begins writing Foundations
- 1574 – March – Along with John of the Cross, Teresa founds a reformed monastery in Segovia
- 1575 – February – Founds the convent in Beas
 - Meets Jeronimo Gracian who becomes her confidant and best friend
 - May – Gracian sends Teresa to found the monastery in Seville
 - December – Teresa is denounced to the Inquisition
- 1576-1579 – Persecution of Teresa’s reform movement continues
 - Teresa continues writing Foundations
 - Teresa writes her magnificent The Interior Castle
- 1580 – Teresa falls ill to influenza – almost dies
 - Founds convents in Villanueva de la Jara and Palencia
 - June 22 – The papal brief *Pia consideratione* orders the erection of a distinct province for the Discalced Carmelites
- 1581 – March – First chapter meeting of the new order, Gracian is elected the first Provincial, new constitutions formed
 - Teresa founds convent in Soria
 - Teresa begins founding of convent in Burgos
 - John of the Cross makes the foundations in Granada
- 1582 – September 20 – Reaches Alba de Tormes
 - September 29 – Announces her imminent death
 - October 3 – Receives the Sacrament of Extreme Unction & last confession
 - October 4 – Teresa dies in the arms of Bl. Anne of St Bartholomew (Ana de San Bartholome)
- 1614 – April 24 – Teresa beatified by Pope Paul V
- 1622 – March 12 – Teresa canonized by Pope Gregory XV
- 1626 – April 24 – St. Teresa of Jesus becomes the second patron saint of Spain
- 1970 – September 27 – Declared a Doctor of the Church by Paul VI

Appendix D: Session 2, Meditation on the Song of Songs 7:3, St Teresa of Avila

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In this suspension the soul would not want to come out of this sleep, nor would death be painful to it but great happiness, for this is what it desires. And how happy a death it would be, at the hands of this love! But sometimes His Majesty gives it light to see that living is good for it. However, the soul sees that its natural weakness will not be able to suffer that good for long if that delight lasts, and begs Him for another good so as to escape from that one that is so extraordinary, and thus it says: *sustain me with flowers*.

The fragrance of these flowers is different from the fragrance of flowers we smell here below. I understand by these words that the soul is asking to perform great works in the service of our Lord and of its neighbor. For this purpose it is happy to lose that delight and satisfaction. Although a person's life will become more active than contemplative, and one will seemingly lose if the petition is granted, Martha and Mary never fail to work almost always together when the soul is in this state. For in the active – and seemingly exterior – work the soul is working interiorly. And when the active works rise from this interior root, they become lovely and very fragrant flowers. For they proceed from this tree of God's love and are done for Him alone, without any self-interest. The fragrance from these flowers spreads to the benefit of many. It is a fragrance that lasts, not passing quickly, but having great effect.

Appendix E: Session 3, Our First Duties as Carmelites

Fr. David Centner, OCD

7/21/2006

What is the *pars potior* (the most important part) of the Carmelite vocation?

The answer usually given was prayer; by that meaning quiet or contemplative prayer.

Is this a sufficient answer?

The Rule itself makes it clear that our first duty is to serve Christ with pure hearts and upright consciences. In scriptural terms, that means that we believe in him and put his word into practice.

To serve Christ rightly, we must turn to the gospels and learn what it is that he commands us to do. In the pages of John's Gospel we learn that his commandment is: "Love one another as I have loved you." It would follow that the *pars potior* of our vocation is to love and cherish one another.

That statement surprises many Carmelites who think that their chief responsibility is prayer and sacrifice. Yet, as St Paul tells us, if we do not have charity, everything else; including our prayer and sacrifices is of no avail. He even tells us, "Bear one another's burdens and you will fulfill the Law of Christ."

When Mother Isabel of the Angels, the only one of the Spanish Mothers to remain in France when Carmel was established there, was asked by the Carmel of Amiens to write some words of encouragement, she wrote (in deliciously mixed French and Spanish) about charity, not about observance. Her words were something like this: "As we have so little opportunity to converse with one another, we must anticipate one another's needs. This is what our Mother Teresa wanted, for this is the principal part of our religious observance."

Secular Carmelites have even less opportunity to converse with each other than do friars or nuns who live in communities. Yet the obligation of cherishing one another is as important for seculars as for religious. When we see communities that fail to love one another unconditionally as Christ does, we can doubt if all their knowledge of our spirituality and their practice of prayer has any value at all.

But how do we learn to cherish one another, especially when we know that all of us (myself included) have moments when we are disagreeable and all of us have natural antipathies? I think these things are extremely important:

"Do not judge and you will not be judged...for the measure you measure will be measured back to you." Holy Mother Teresa put this into practice by refusing to say anything negative about anyone, especially in their absence. As a consequence, she drew many to herself. 7/21/06 76

Always consider others better than yourself. By this we do not mean false humility. We mean the recognition that God gives different talents to everyone. There is no one alive who is not naturally better than I am in some respect. And as for supernaturally better, only God knows.

But we do know this, the moment we exalt ourselves for some virtue, we lose it, for then charity has gone out of it.

As a consequence we listen readily to one another, and we reach out to help one another. We grow in patience and compassion, for we know that God has been very compassionate with us. In this way, we open the door to letting Christ bring to perfection His charity within us.

Conclusion: If we are to be true friends of Christ, as Holy Mother so ardently desires, because Jesus himself desires that, we must determine to be true friends of one another.

Appendix F: Session 3, Meditative reading Chapter 10 of Story of a Soul

By Saint Thérèse of Lisieux

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Chapter X: The Trial of Faith

Thérèse and Her Prioress
The Divine Elevator
The First Hemoptysis
The Table of Sinners
The Call to the Foreign Missions
What is Charity?

J.M.J.T.

1. You have told me, my dear Mother¹, of your desire that I finish *singing* with you the *Mercies of the Lord*.² I began this sweet song with your dear daughter, Agnes of Jesus, who was the mother entrusted by God with guiding me in the days of my childhood. It was with her that I had to sing of the graces granted to the Blessed Virgin's *little flower* when she was in the springtime of her life. And it is with you that I am to sing of the happiness of this little flower now that the timid glimmerings of the dawn have given way to the burning heat of noon. Yes, dear Mother, I shall try to express, in answer to your wishes,³ the sentiments of my soul, my gratitude to God and to you, who represent Him visibly to me, for was it not into your maternal hands that I delivered myself entirely to Him? Oh Mother, do you remember that day?⁴ Yes, I know your heart could not forget it. As for me, I must await heaven because I cannot find here on earth words capable of expressing what took place in my heart on that beautiful day.
2. There is another day, my beloved Mother, when my soul was united to you even more, if that were possible, and that was the day you were entrusted once again with the burden of Superior. On that day, dear Mother, you sowed in tears, but you will be filled with joy in heaven when you see yourself entrusted with precious sheaves.⁵ Oh Mother, pardon my childish simplicity. I feel you will allow me to speak to you without considering what is allowed a young religious to say to her Prioress. Perhaps, at times, I will not keep within the limits prescribed for subjects, but, dear Mother, I make bold to say this, it is your own fault. I am acting with you as a child because you do not act with me as a Prioress but a Mother.

¹ Mother Marie de Gonzague, elected Prioress March 21, 1896, succeeding Mother Agnes of Jesus.

² Psalm 88:2.

³ June 3, 1897, at the suggestion of Mother Agnes of Jesus, Mother Marie de Gonzague ordered Thérèse to continue writing her memories.

⁴ The day of her Profession, September 8, 1890.

⁵ Psalm 125:5-6

3. Ah! Dear Mother, I know very well that it is really God who is speaking to me through you. Many of the Sisters think that you spoiled me, that since my entrance into the holy ark, I have received from you nothing but caresses and compliments. Nevertheless it was not so. You will see, dear Mother, in the copybook containing my childhood memories, what I think of the *strong* and maternal education I received from you. From the bottom of my heart I want to thank you for not sparing me. Jesus knew very well that His little flower stood in need of the living waters of humiliation, for she was too weak to take root without this kind of help, and it was through you, dear Mother, that this blessing was given to me.
4. For a year and a half now, Jesus has willed to change the manner of making His little flower grow. He has no doubt found her sufficiently *watered*, for now it is the *sun* that aids her growth. Jesus wants to give her nothing but her smile and this he does through you, dear Mother. This gentle sun, far from causing the little flower to wilt, makes her progress in a marvelous manner. She preserves, in the bottom of her calyx, the precious drops of dew she had received, and these serve to remind her always how little and weak she is. All creatures can bow toward her, admire her, and shower their praises upon her. I don't know why this is, but none of this could add one single drop of false joy to the joy she experiences in her heart. Here she sees herself as she really is in God's eyes: a poor little thing, nothing at all.
5. I say I do not know why, but isn't it because she was preserved from the water of praise all the time her little calyx was not sufficiently filled with the dew of humiliation? Now there is no longer any danger; on the contrary, the little flower finds the dew with which she was filled so delightful that she would be careful not to exchange it for the insipid water of praise.
6. I don't want to speak, dear Mother, about the love and confidence you are giving me; but do not believe the heart of your child is insensible to these. It is only that I feel I have nothing to fear now. In fact, I can rejoice in them, referring to God whatever good there is in me since He has willed to place it there. If He pleases to make me appear better than I am, this is none of my affair since He is free to act as He likes.
7. Oh Mother, how different are the ways through which the Lord leads souls! In the life of the saints, we find many of them who didn't want to leave anything of themselves behind after their death, not the smallest souvenir, not the least bit of writing. On the contrary, there are others, like our holy Mother St Teresa, who have enriched the Church with their lofty revelations, having no fears of revealing the secrets of the King⁶ in order that they may make Him more loved and known by souls. Which of these two types of saints is more pleasing to God? It seems to me, Mother, they are equally pleasing to Him, since all of them followed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and since the Lord has said: "*Tell the just man ALL is well.*"⁷ Yes, all is well when one seeks only the will of Jesus, and it is because of this that I, a poor little flower, obey Jesus when trying to please my beloved Mother. You know, Mother, that I have always wanted to be a saint. Alas! I have always noticed that

⁶ Tobit 12:7.

⁷ Isaiah 3:10.

when I compared myself to the saints, there is between them and me the same difference that exists between a mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds and the obscure grain of sand trampled underfoot by passers-by. Instead of becoming discouraged, I said to myself: God cannot inspire unrealizable desires. I can, then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to holiness. It is impossible for me to grow up, and so I must bear with myself such as I am with all my imperfections. But I want to seek a means of going to heaven by a little way, a way that is very straight, very short, and totally new.

8. We are living now in an age of inventions. And we no longer have to take the trouble of climbing stairs, for, in the homes of the rich, an elevator has replaced these very successfully. I wanted to find an elevator which would raise me to Jesus, for I am too small to climb the rough stairway to perfection. I searched, then, in the Scriptures for some sign of this elevator, the object of my desires and I read these words coming from the mouth of Eternal Wisdom: "*Whoever is a LITTLE ONE, let him come to me.*"⁸ And so I succeeded. I felt I had found what I was looking for. But wanting to know, O my God, what You would do to *the very little one* who answered Your call, I continued my search and this is what I discovered: "*As one whom a mother caresses, so I will comfort you, you shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you.*"⁹ Ah! never did words more tender and more melodious come to give joy to my soul. The elevator which must raise me to heaven is Your arms, O Jesus! And for this I had no need to grow up, but rather I had to remain *little* and become this more and more.
9. O my God, You surpassed all my expectation. I want only to sing to Your mercies. "You have taught me from my youth, O God, and until now I will declare Your wonderful works. And until old age and gray hairs, O God, forsake me not."¹⁰ What will this old age be for me? It seems this could be right now, for 2000 years are not more in the Lord's eyes than 20 years, than even a single day.¹¹
10. Ah! don't think, dear Mother, that your child wants to leave you; don't think she feels it is a greater grace to die at the dawn of the day rather than at its close. What she esteems and what she desires is only *to please* Jesus. Now that He seems to be approaching her in order to draw her into the place of His glory, your child is filled with joy. For a long time she has understood that God needs no one (much less her) to do good on earth. Pardon me, Mother, if I make you sad because I really want only to give you joy. Do you believe that though your prayers are not really heard on earth, though Jesus separates the child from its mother for a *few days*, that these prayers will be answered in heaven?
11. Your desire, I know, is that I carry out at your side a very sweet and easy mission;¹² but shall I not be able to finish it from the height of heaven? You said to me, just as Jesus one day

⁸ Proverbs 9:4.

⁹ Isaiah 66:13,12.

¹⁰ Psalm 70:17-18.

¹¹ Psalm 89:4.

¹² Thérèse was helping Mother Marie with the training of the novices ever since the latter's election of March 21, 1896.

said to St. Peter: *"Feed my lambs."*¹³ I was astonished and told you that *I was too little*; I begged you *to feed your lambs yourself*, and to keep me and *have me feed* with them. And you, dear Mother, responded a *little* to my just request, retained the little lambs with the sheep,¹⁴ but you ordered me to go often and pasture with them in the shade, pointing out the best and most nourishing herbs, showing me the bright flowers they must not touch except to trample them under their feet.

12. You didn't fear, dear Mother, that I would lead your little lambs astray. My lack of experience and my youthfulness did not frighten you in the least. Perhaps you remembered that often the Lord is pleased to grant wisdom to the little ones, and that one day, in a transport of joy, He blessed His *Father* for having hidden His secrets from the wise and prudent and for revealing them to the *little ones*.¹⁵
13. Mother, you know those souls are rare who don't measure divine power according to their own narrow minds; people want exceptions everywhere on earth, but God alone hasn't the right to make any exceptions! For a very long time, I have known that this way of measuring experience according to years is practiced among human beings. For instance, the holy King David has sung to the Lord: *"I am YOUNG and despised."*¹⁶ And in the same Psalm 118, he does not hesitate to add: *"I have had understanding above old men, because I sought your will. Your word is a lamp to my feet, I am prepared to carry out your commandments and I am TROUBLED ABOUT NOTHING."*¹⁷
14. You did not hesitate, dear Mother, to tell me one day that God was enlightening my soul and that He was giving me the experience of *years*. O Mother! I am *too little* to have any vanity now, I am *too little* to compose beautiful sentences in order to have you believe that I have a lot of humility. I prefer to agree very simply that the Almighty has done great things in the soul of His divine Mother's child, and the greatest thing is to have shown her her *littleness*, her impotence.
15. Dear Mother, you know well that God has deigned to make me pass through many types of trials. I have suffered very much since I was on earth, but, if in my childhood I suffered with sadness, it is no longer in this way that I suffer. It is with joy and peace. I am truly happy to suffer. O Mother, you must know all the secrets of my soul in order not to smile when you read these lines, for is there a soul less tried than my own if one judges by appearances? Ah! if the trial I am suffering for a year now¹⁸ appeared to the eyes of anyone, what astonishment would be felt!
16. Dear Mother, you know about this trial; I am going to speak to you about it, however, for I consider it as a great grace I received during your office as Prioress.

¹³ John 21:15.

¹⁴ Mother Marie de Gonzague combined the office of Prioress Novice Mistress. The "little lambs" were the novices; the "sheep," the professed religious.

¹⁵ Matthew 11:25.

¹⁶ Psalm 118:141.

¹⁷ Psalm 118:100, 105, 60.

¹⁸ Her temptation against faith, which lasted from Easter 1896.

17. God granted me last year, the consolation of observing the fast during Lent in all its rigor. Never had I felt so strong, and this strength remained with me until Easter. On Good Friday, however, Jesus wished to give me the hope of going to see Him soon in heaven. Oh! how sweet this memory really is! After remaining at the Tomb¹⁹ until midnight, I returned to our cell, but I had scarcely laid my head on the pillow when I felt something like a bubbling stream mounting to my lips. I didn't know what it was, but I thought that perhaps I was going to die and my soul was flooded with joy. However, as our lamp was extinguished, I told myself I would have to wait until the morning to be certain of my good fortune, for it seemed to me that it was blood I had coughed up. The morning was not long in coming; upon awakening, I thought immediately of the joyful thing that I had to learn, and so I went over to the window. I was able to see that I was not mistaken. Ah! my soul was filled with a great consolation; I was interiorly persuaded that Jesus, on the anniversary of His own death, wanted to have me hear his first call. *It was like a sweet and distant murmur that announced the Bridegroom's arrival.*²⁰
18. It was with great fervor that I assisted at Prime and the Chapter of Pardons.²¹ I was in a rush to see my turn come in order to be able, when asking pardon from you, to confide my hope and my happiness to you, dear Mother; however I added that I was not suffering in the least (which was true) and I begged you, Mother, to give me nothing special. In fact, I had the consolation of spending Good Friday just as I desired. Never did Carmel's austerities appear so delightful to me; the hope of going to heaven soon transported me with joy. When the evening of that blessed day arrived, I had to go to my rest; but just as on the preceding night, good Jesus gave me the same sign that my entrance into eternal life was not far off.
19. At this time I was enjoying such a living faith, such a *clear* faith, that the thought of heaven made up all my happiness, and I was unable to believe there were really impious people who had no faith. I believed they were speaking against their own inner convictions when they denied the existence of heaven, that beautiful heaven where God Himself wanted to be their Eternal Reward. During those very joyful days of the Easter season, Jesus made me feel that there really were souls that have no faith, and who, through the abuse of grace, lost this precious treasure, the source of the only real and pure joys. He permitted my soul to be invaded by the thickest darkness, and that the thought of heaven, up until then so sweet to me, be no longer anything but the cause of struggle and torment. This trial was to last not a few days or a few weeks, it was not to be extinguished until the hour set by God Himself and this hour has not yet come. I would like to be able to express what I felt, but alas! I believe this is impossible. One would have to travel through this dark tunnel to understand its darkness. I will try to explain it by a comparison.
20. I imagine I was born in a country that is covered in thick fog. I never had the experience of contemplating the joyful appearance of nature flooded and transformed by the brilliance of

¹⁹ The Altar of Reposition. The Carmelite Nuns remain all night in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament.

²⁰ *The Imitation of Christ* III, 47.

²¹ On Good Friday the Prioress customarily gave the community an exhortation to greater charity; then each begged pardon from her Sisters.

the sun. It is true that from childhood I heard people speak of these marvels, and I know the country I am living in is not really my true fatherland, and there is another I must long for without ceasing. This is not simply a story invented by someone living in the sad country where I am, but it is a reality, for the King of the Fatherland of the bright sun actually came and lived for thirty-three years in this land of darkness. Alas! the darkness did not understand this Divine King was the Light of the world.²²

21. Your child, however, O Lord, has understood Your divine light, and she begs pardon for her brothers. She is resigned to eat the bread of sorrow as long as You desire it; she does not wish to rise up from this table filled with bitterness at which poor sinners are eating until the day set by You. Can she not say in her name and in the name of her brothers, *“Have pity on us, O Lord, for we are poor sinners!”*²³ Oh! Lord, send us away justified. May all those who were not enlightened by the bright flame of faith one day see it shine. O Jesus! if it is needful that the table soiled by them be purified by a soul who loves You, then I desire to eat this bread of trial at this table until it pleases You to bring me into Your bright Kingdom. The only grace I ask of You is that I never offend You!
22. What I am writing, dear Mother, has no continuity; my little story which resembled a fairy tale is all of a sudden changed into a prayer, and I don’t know what interest you could possibly have in reading all these confused and poorly expressed ideas. Well, dear Mother, I am not writing to produce a literary work, but only through obedience, and if I cause you any boredom, then at least you will see that your little child has given proof of her good will. I am going to continue my little comparison where I left off.
23. I was saying that certainty of going away one day far from the sad and dark country had been given me from the day of my childhood. I did not believe this only because I heard it from persons much more knowledgeable than I, but I felt in the bottom of my heart real longing for this most beautiful country. Just as the genius of Christopher Columbus gave him a presentiment of a new world when nobody had even thought of such a thing; so also I felt that another land would one day serve me as a permanent dwelling place. Then suddenly the fog that surrounds me becomes more dense; it penetrates my soul and envelops it in such a way that it is impossible to discover within it the sweet image of my Fatherland; everything has disappeared! When I want to rest my heart fatigued by the darkness that surrounds it by the memory of the luminous country after which I aspire, my torment redoubles; it seems to me that the darkness, borrowing the voice of sinners, says mockingly to me: “You are dreaming about the light, about a fatherland embalmed in the sweetest perfumes; you are dreaming about the *eternal* possession of the Creator of all these marvels; you believe that one day you will walk out of this fog that surrounds you! Advance, advance; rejoice in death which will give you not what you hope for but a night still more profound, the night of nothingness.”

²² John 1:5, 9

²³ Luke 18:13

24. Dear Mother, the image I wanted to give you of the darkness that obscures my soul is as imperfect as a sketch is to the model; however I don't want to write any longer about it; I fear I might blaspheme; I fear even that I have already said too much.
25. Ah! may Jesus pardon me if I have caused Him any pain, but He knows very well that while I do not have *the joy of faith*, I am trying to carry out its works at least. I believe I have made more acts of faith in this past year than all through my whole life. At each new occasion of combat, when my enemies provoke me, I conduct myself bravely. Knowing it is cowardly to enter into a duel, I turn my back on my adversaries without deigning to look them in the face; but I run toward my Jesus. I tell Him I am ready to shed my blood to the last drop to profess my faith in the existence of *heaven*. I tell Him, too, I am happy not to enjoy this beautiful heaven on this earth so that He will open it for all eternity to poor unbelievers. Also, in spite of this trial which has taken away *all my joy*, I can nevertheless cry out: "*You have given me DELIGHT, O Lord in ALL Your doings.*"²⁴ For is there a joy greater than that of suffering out of love for You? The more interior the suffering is and the less apparent to the eyes of creatures, the more it rejoices You, O my God! But if my suffering was really unknown to You, which is impossible, I would still be happy to have it, if through it I could prevent or make reparation for one single sin against *faith*.
26. My dear Mother, I may perhaps appear to you to be exaggerating my trial. In fact, if you are judging according to the sentiments I expressed in my little poems composed this year, I must appear to you as a soul filled with consolations and one for whom the veil of faith is almost torn aside; and yet it is no longer a veil for me, it is a wall which reaches right up to the heavens and covers the starry firmament. When I sing of the happiness of heaven and of the eternal possessions of God, I feel no joy in this, for I sing simply what I WANT TO BELIEVE. It is true that at times a very small ray comes to illumine my darkness, and then the trial ceases for *an instant*, but afterwards the memory of this ray, instead of causing joy makes my darkness even more dense.
27. Never have I felt before this, dear Mother, how sweet and merciful the Lord really is, for he did not send me this trial until the moment I was capable of bearing it. a little earlier I believe it would have plunged me into a state of discouragement. Now it is taking away everything that could be a natural satisfaction in my desire for heaven. Dear Mother, it seems to me now that nothing could prevent me from flying away, for I no longer have any great desires except that of loving to the point of dying of love. June 9.²⁵
28. I am totally surprised, dear Mother, when I see what I wrote yesterday. What scribbling! My hand was trembling so much that I found it impossible to continue and I even regret having tried to write. I hope that today I will write more legibly, for I am no longer in bed but in a pretty little white armchair.
29. I feel that everything I said has no continuity to it, but I feel, too, the necessity of telling you my present feelings before speaking to you about the past. Perhaps later on I will have

²⁴ Psalm 91:5

²⁵ The date, June 9, is written in pencil at the bottom of the page of her manuscript. It commemorates the second anniversary of her Act of Oblation to Merciful Love, June 9, 1895.

completely forgotten about them. I wish first of all to tell you how much I am touched by all your maternal attention. Ah! believe it, Mother, the heart of your child is filled with gratitude, and never will she forget what she owes you.

30. Mother, what touches me above all else is the novena you are making at Our Lady of Victories,²⁶ I mean the Masses you are having offered up to obtain my cure. I feel all these spiritual treasures do great good to my soul; at the commencement of the novena I told you the Blessed Virgin would have to cure me or carry me off to heaven because I find it very sad for you and the community to have to take care of a sick young religious. But now I would want to be sick all my life if this pleases God, and I even consent to my life being very long; the only favor I desire is that it be broken through love.
31. Oh! no, I do not have any fears of a long life and I do not refuse the fight, for the Lord is the Rock to which I am raised. *“He teaches my hands to fight, and my fingers to make war. He is my protector, and I have hoped in him!”*²⁷ I never did ask God for the favor of dying young, but I have always hoped this would be His will for me. Frequently God is satisfied with the desire of working for His glory, and you know my desires have been great, dear Mother. You are aware, too, that Jesus has offered me more than one bitter chalice which He removed from my lips before I drank it, but not before making me taste its bitterness. The holy King David was right, dear Mother, when he sang: *“How sweet and pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity.”*²⁸ It is true, I felt this very often, but on this earth this unity must take place in the midst of sacrifices. I didn’t come to Carmel to live with my sisters but to answer Jesus’ call. Ah! I really felt in advance that this living with one’s own sisters had to be the cause of continual suffering when one wishes to grant nothing to one’s natural inclinations. How can anyone say it is more perfect to separate oneself from one’s blood relatives? Has anyone ever found fault with brothers who were fighting on the same field of battle? Are brothers blamed when they fight together for the martyr’s palm? Undoubtedly, as some have rightly judged, they are a source of encouragement to one another, but still the martyrdom of each becomes the martyrdom of all. And it is the same in the religious life, which has been called a daily martyrdom by theologians. When the human heart gives itself to God, it loses nothing of its innate tenderness; in fact, this tenderness grows when it becomes more pure and more divine.
32. I love you, dear Mother, with this tenderness, and I love my sisters too. I am happy to fight *as a family* for the glory of heaven’s King. However, I am prepared to fight on another battlefield if the Divine General expresses His desire that I do so. A command would not be necessary, only a look, a simple sign.
33. Since my entrance into the blessed ark, I have always thought that if Jesus did not bring me swiftly to heaven, my lot would be the same as that of Noah’s little dove: the Lord would open the window of the ark one day, telling me to fly very far, toward infidel shores, carrying with me the little olive branch. Dear Mother, this thought has matured my soul, making me soar higher than all created things. I understood that even in Carmel there

²⁶ The novena began June 5, 1897.

²⁷ Psalm 143:1-2.

²⁸ Psalm 132:1

could still be separation, and that only in heaven will the union be complete and eternal; so I wanted my soul to dwell in the heavens, and that it look upon the things of earth only from a distance. I accepted not only exile for myself among an unknown people, but also, and this was *far more bitter* for me, I accepted exile for my sisters. Never shall I forget August 2, 1896; that day was precisely the day of the missionaries' departure,²⁹ and there was serious consideration of the departure of Mother Agnes of Jesus. Ah! I would not have desired to make any move to prevent her leaving; I felt, however, a great sadness in my heart, for I found that her very sensitive and delicate soul was not made to live in the midst of souls who could not understand her; a thousand other thoughts crowded into my mind, and Jesus was silent; He was giving no commands to the storm. I said to Him: My God, I accept everything out of love for You: if you will it I really want to suffer even to the point of dying of grief. Jesus was content with this acceptance. However, a few months after this, they spoke of the departure of Sister Geneviève and Sister Marie of the Trinity. Then this was another kind of suffering, very intimate, very deep; I imagined all the trials, the disappointments they would suffer, and my heaven was covered with clouds; calm and peace remained only in the depths of my heart.

34. Dear Mother, your own prudence was able to discover God's will and in His name you forbade your novices to think of leaving the cradle of their religious childhood; but you understood their aspirations since you had asked in your own youthful days to go to Saigon. It is thus that the desires of Mothers find an echo in the soul of their children. O dear Mother, your apostolic desire finds a faithful echo in my own soul, as you know; but let me confide why I desired and still desire, if the Blessed Virgin cures me, to leave the delightful oasis where I have lived so happily under your motherly care, and to go into a foreign land.
35. Dear Mother, as you told me, a very special vocation is necessary to live in foreign Carmels. Many believe they are called to this, but it isn't so. You told me, too, that I had this vocation and only my poor health stood in the way. I know very well this obstacle would disappear if God were calling me to the missions, and so I live without any unrest. If I have to leave my dear Carmel some day it would not be without pain, for Jesus has not given me an indifferent heart. And precisely because my heart is capable of suffering I want it to give Jesus everything possible. *Here*, I receive your motherly attention and do not feel the pinch of poverty since I never lack anything. But *here*, above all, I am loved by you and all the Sisters, and this affection is very sweet to me. This is why I dream of a monastery where I shall be unknown, where I would suffer from poverty, the lack of affection, and finally, the exile of the heart.
36. Ah! it is not with any intention of rendering services to the Carmel which would receive me that I would leave everything dear to me, but I know my incapacity, and I know that in doing my very best I would not succeed in doing well, having, as I just said, no knowledge of the things of earth. My one purpose, then, would be to accomplish the will of God, to sacrifice myself for Him in the way that would please Him.

²⁹ August 2, 1896, /Father Roulland, the Saint's spiritual brother, left from Marseilles for China, accompanied by two other missionaries.

37. I really feel that I would have no disappointment, for when one expects pure and unmixed suffering, the smallest joy becomes and unhopd-for surprise. And you know, Mother, that suffering itself becomes the greatest of joys when one seeks it as the most precious of treasures.
38. Oh, no! it is not with the intention of enjoying the fruit of my labors that I would want to leave; and if my purpose were that, I would not feel this sweet peace which floods me and would actually suffer at not being able to realize my vocation for the foreign missions. For a long time I have not belonged to myself since I delivered myself totally to Jesus, and He is therefore free to do with me as He pleases. He has given me the attraction for a complete exile and He has made me *understand all the sufferings* I would meet with, asking me if I would want to drink this chalice to the dregs; I wanted to seize this cup immediately when Jesus presented it, but He withdrew His hand and made me understand my that resignation alone was pleasing to Him.
39. Mother, what anxieties the Vow of Obedience frees us from! How happy are simple religious! Their only compass being their Superiors' will, they are always sure of being on the right road; they have nothing to fear from being mistaken even when it seems their Superiors are wrong. But when they cease to look upon the infallible compass, when they stray from the way it indicates under the pretext of doing God's will, unclear at times even to His representatives, then they wander into arid paths where the water of grace is soon lacking.
40. Dear Mother, you are the compass Jesus has given me as a sure guide to the eternal shore. How sweet it is to fix my eyes upon you and thus accomplish the will of the Lord! Since the time He permitted me to suffer temptations against the *faith*, He has greatly increased the *spirit of faith* in my heart, which helps me to see in you not only a loving Mother but also Jesus living in your soul and communicating His will through you. I know very well, dear Mother, you are treating me as a feeble soul, a spoiled child, and as a consequence I have no trouble in carrying the burden of obedience. But because of what I feel in my heart, I would not change my attitude toward you, nor would my love decrease if it pleased you to treat me severely. I would once more see that it is the will of Jesus that you were acting in this way for the greater good of my soul.
41. This year, dear Mother, God has given me the grace to understand what charity is; I understood it before, it is true, but in an imperfect way. I had never fathomed the meaning of these words of Jesus: "*The second commandment is like the first: you shall love you neighbor as yourself.*"³⁰ I applied myself especially to loving God, and it is in loving Him that I understood my love was not to be expressed only in words, for: "*It is not those who say: 'Lord, Lord!' who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of my Father in heaven.*"³¹ Jesus has revealed this will several times or I should say on almost every page of His Gospel. But at the Last Supper, when he knew the hearts of His disciples were burning with a more ardent love for Him who had just given Himself to them in the unspeakable

³⁰ Matthew 22:39.

³¹ Matthew 7:21.

mystery of His Eucharist, this sweet Savior wished to give them a *new commandment*. He said to them with inexpressible tenderness: *"A new commandment I give you that you love one another: THAT AS I HAVE LOVED YOU, YOU ALSO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*³²

42. How did Jesus love His disciples and why did He love them? Ah! it was not their natural qualities that could have attracted Him, since there was between Him and them an infinite distance. He was knowledge, Eternal Wisdom, while they were poor ignorant fisherman filled with earthly thoughts. And still Jesus called them *His friends, His brothers*.³³ He desires to see them reign with Him in the kingdom of His Father, and to open that kingdom to them He wills to die on the cross, for He said: *"Greater love than this no man has than he lay down his life for his friends."*³⁴
43. Dear Mother, when meditating upon these words of Jesus, I understood how imperfect was my love for my Sisters. I saw I didn't love them as God loves them. Ah! I understand now that charity consists in bearing with the faults of others, in not being surprised at their weakness, in being edified by the smallest acts of virtue we see them practice. But I understood above all that charity must not remain hidden in the bottom of the heart. Jesus has said: *"No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel basket, but upon the lampstand to give light to ALL in the house."*³⁵ It seems to me that this lamp represents charity which must enlighten and rejoice not only those who are dearest to us but *"ALL who are in the house"* without distinction.
44. When the Lord commanded His people to love their neighbor as themselves,³⁶ He had not as yet come upon the earth. Knowing the extent to which each one loved himself, He was not able to ask of His creatures a greater love than this for one's neighbor. But when Jesus gave His Apostles a new commandment, HIS OWN COMMANDMENT,³⁷ as He calls it later on, it is no longer a question of loving one's neighbor as oneself but of loving as *He, Jesus, has loved him*, and will love him to the consummation of the ages.
45. Ah! Lord, I know you don't command the impossible. You know better than I do my weakness and imperfection; You know very well that never could I love my Sisters as You love them, unless *You, O my Jesus, loved them in me*. It is because You wanted to give me this grace that You made Your new commandment. Oh! how I love this new commandment since it gives me the assurance that your will is *to love in me* all those You command me to love!
46. Yes, I feel it, when I am charitable, it is Jesus alone who is acting in me, and the more I am united to Him, the more also do I love my Sisters. When I wish to increase this love in me, and when especially the devil tries to place before the eyes of my soul the faults of such and such a Sister who is less attractive to me, I hasten to search out her virtues, her good

³² John 13:34-35.

³³ John 15:15.

³⁴ John 15:13.

³⁵ Matthew 5:15.

³⁶ Leviticus 19:18.

³⁷ John 15:12.

intentions; I tell myself that even if I did see her fall once, she could easily have won a great number of victories which she is hiding through humility, and even what appears to me as a fault can very easily be an act of virtue because of her intention. I have no trouble convincing myself of the truth because of a little experience I had which showed me we must never judge.

47. During recreation the portress rang twice; the large workman's gate had to be opened to bring in some trees for the crib. Recreation was not too gay because you were not there, dear Mother, and I thought that if they sent me to serve as third party³⁸ I would be happy; at exactly that moment Mother Subprioress told me to go and serve in this capacity, or else the Sister who was at my side. Immediately I began to untie our apron but slowly in order that my companion untie hers before me, for I thought of giving her the pleasure of serving as third party. The Sister who was replacing the Procuratrix was looking at us, and seeing me get up last, she said: "Ah! I thought as much, that you were not going to gain this pearl for your crown, you were going too slowly."
48. Certainly, the whole community believed I had acted through selfishness, and I cannot say how much good such a small thing did to my soul, making me indulgent toward the weaknesses of others. This incident prevents me from being vain when I am judged favorably because I say to myself: Since one can take my little acts of virtue for imperfections, one can also be mistaken in taking for virtue what is nothing but imperfection. Then I say with St. Paul: *"To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you, or by any human tribunal, but neither do I judge myself. He who judges me is THE LORD."*³⁹
49. In order that this judgment be favorable or rather that I be not judged at all, I want to be charitable in my thoughts toward others at all times, for Jesus has said: *"Judge not, and you shall not be judged."*⁴⁰
50. Mother, when reading what I have just written, you could believe that the practice of charity is not difficult for me. It is true; for several months now I no longer have to struggle to practice this beautiful virtue. I don't mean by this that I no longer have any faults; ah! I am too imperfect for that. but I mean that I don't have any trouble in rising when I have fallen because in a certain combat I won a great victory; and the heavenly militia now comes to my aid since it cannot bear seeing me defeated after having seen me victorious in the glorious battle I am going to try to describe.
51. There is in the Community a Sister who has the faculty of displeasing me in everything, in her ways, her words, her character, everything seems *very disagreeable* to me. And still she is a holy religious who must be very pleasing to God. Not wishing to give in to the natural antipathy I was experiencing, I told myself that charity must not consist in feelings but in works; then I set myself to doing for this Sister what I would do for the person I loved the most. Each time I met her I prayed to God for her, offering Him all her virtues and merits. I felt this was pleasing to Jesus, for there is no artist who doesn't like to receive praise for his

³⁸ The religious who accompanied the Procuratrix when laborers had to work in the monastery.

³⁹ 1 Corinthians 4:3-4.

⁴⁰ Luke 6:37.

works, and Jesus, the Artist of souls, is happy when we don't stop at the exterior, but, penetrating into the inner sanctuary where He chooses to dwell, we admire its beauty. I wasn't content simply with praying very much for this Sister who gave me so many struggles, but I took care to render her all the services possible, and when I was tempted to answer her back in a disagreeable manner, I was content with giving her my most friendly smile, and with changing the subject of the conversation, for the Imitation says: "*It is better to leave each one in his own opinion than to enter into arguments.*"⁴¹

52. Frequently when I was at recreation (I mean during the work periods) and had occasion to work with this Sister, I used to run away whenever my struggles became too violent. As she was absolutely unaware of my feelings for her, never did she suspect the motives for my conduct and she remained convinced that her character was very pleasing to me. One day at recreation she asked in almost these words: "Would you tell me, Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus, what attracts you so much toward me; every time you look at me, I see you smile?" Ah what attracted me was Jesus hidden in the depths of her soul; Jesus who makes sweet what is most bitter.⁴² I answered that I was smiling because I was happy to see her (it is understood that I did not add that this was from a spiritual standpoint).
53. Dear Mother, I have already told you that my last means of not being defeated in combats is desertion; I was already using this means during my novitiate, and it always succeeded perfectly with me. I wish, Mother, to give you an example which I believe will make you smile. During one of your bronchial attacks, I came to your cell very quietly one morning to return the keys of the Communion grating since I was sacristan. I wasn't too displeased at having this opportunity to see you; I was very much pleased, but I didn't dare to show it. A Sister, animated with a holy zeal, and one who loved me very much, believed I was going to awaken you when she saw me entering your quarters; she wanted to take the keys from me. I was too stubborn to give them to her and cede *my rights*. As politely as I could, I told her that it was *my duty* to return the keys. I understand now that it would have been more perfect to cede to this Sister, young, it is true, but still older than I. I did not understand it at the time, and as I wanted absolutely to enter in spite of the fact that she was pushing the door to prevent me, very soon the thing we feared most happened: the racket we were making made you open your eyes. Then Mother, everything tumbled upon me. The poor Sister whom I had resisted began to deliver a whole discourse, the gist of which was: It's Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus who made the noise; my God, how disagreeable she is, etc. I, who felt just the contrary, had a great desire to defend myself. Happily, there came a bright idea into my mind, I told myself that if I began to justify myself I would not be able to retain my peace of soul. I felt, too, that I did not have enough virtue to permit myself to be accused without saying a word. My last plank of salvation was in flight. No sooner thought than done. I left without fuss, allowing the Sister to continue her discourse which resembled the imprecations of Camillus against the city of Rome. My heart was beating so rapidly that it was impossible for me to go far, and I sat down on the stairs in order to savor the fruits of my victory. There was no bravery there, Mother; however, I believe it was

⁴¹ *The Imitation of Christ* III, 44:1.

⁴² *The Imitation of Christ* III, 5:3.

much better for me not to expose myself to combat when there was certain defeat facing me.

54. Alas! when I think of the time of my novitiate I see how imperfect I was. I made so much fuss over such little things that it makes me laugh now. Ah! how good the Lord is in having matured my soul, and in having given it wings. All the nets of the hunters would not be able to frighten me, for: *"... the net is spread in vain before the eyes on them who have wings."*⁴³ Later on, no doubt, the time in which I am now will appear filled with imperfections, but now I am astonished at nothing. I am not disturbed at seeing myself *weakness* itself. On the contrary, it is in my weakness that I glory,⁴⁴ and I expect each day to discover new imperfections in myself. Remembering that "charity covers a multitude of sins,"⁴⁵ I draw from this rich mine that Jesus has opened before me.
55. The Lord, in the Gospel, explains in what His new commandment consists. He says in St. Matthew: *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love you neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies ... pray for those who persecute you."*⁴⁶ No doubt we don't have any enemies in Carmel, but there are feelings. One feels attracted to this Sister, whereas with regard to another, one would make a long detour around in order to avoid meeting her. And so, without even knowing it, she becomes the subject of persecution. Well, Jesus is telling me that it is this Sister who must be loved, she must be prayed for even though her conduct would lead me to believe that she doesn't love me: *"If you love those who love you, what reward will you have? For even sinners love those who love them."*⁴⁷ St. Luke, VI. And it isn't enough to love; we must prove it. We are naturally happy to offer a gift to a friend; we love especially to give surprises; this is not charity, for sinners do this too. Here is what Jesus teaches me also: *"Give to EVERYONE who asks of you, and from HIM WHO TAKES AWAY your goods, ask no return."*⁴⁸ Giving to all those who ask is less sweet than offering oneself by the movement of one's own heart; again when they ask for something politely, it doesn't cost so much to give, but if, unfortunately, they don't use very delicate words, the soul is immediately up in arms if she is not well founded in charity. She finds a thousand reasons to refuse what is asked of her, and it is only after having convinced the asker of her tactlessness that she will finally give what is asked, and then only for a favor; or she will render a light service which could have been done in one-twentieth of the time that was spent in setting forth her imaginary rights.
56. Although it is difficult to give to one who asks, it is even more so *to allow one to take what belongs to you, without asking it back*. O Mother, I say it is difficult; I should have said that this *seems* difficult, for *the yoke of the Lord is sweet and light*.⁴⁹ When one accepts it, one feels its sweetness immediately, and cries out with the Psalmist: *"I have run the way of your*

⁴³ Proverbs 1:17.

⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 12:5.

⁴⁵ Proverbs 10:12.

⁴⁶ Matthew 5:43-44.

⁴⁷ Luke 6:32.

⁴⁸ Luke 6:30.

⁴⁹ Matthew 11:30.

*commandments when you enlarged my heart.*⁵⁰ It is only charity that can expand my heart. O Jesus, since this sweet flame consumes it, I run with joy in the way of *Your NEW commandment*. I want to run in it until that blessed day when, joining the virginal procession, I shall be able to follow You in the heavenly courts, singing Your *NEW canticle* which must be Love.

57. I was saying, Jesus does not want me to lay claim to what belongs to me; and this should seem easy and natural to me since *nothing is mine*. I have renounced the goods of this earth through the Vow of Poverty, and so I haven't the right to complain when one takes a thing that is not mine. On the contrary, I should rejoice when it happens that I feel the pinch of poverty. Formerly, it seemed to me that I was attached to nothing, but ever since I understood the words of Jesus, I see that on occasions I am very imperfect. For example, in my work of painting there is nothing that belongs to me, I know. But if, when I am preparing for some work, I find that the brushes and the paints are in disorder, if a rule or penknife has disappeared, patience is very close to abandoning me and I must take my courage in both hands in order to reclaim the missing object without bitterness. We really have to ask for indispensable things, but when we do it with humility, we are not failing in the commandment of Jesus; on the contrary, we are acting like the poor who extend their hand to receive what is necessary for them; if they are rebuked they are not surprised, as no one owes them anything.
58. Ah! what peace floods the soul when she rises above natural feelings. No, there is no joy comparable to that which the truly poor in spirit experience. If such a one asks for something with detachment, and if this thing is not only refused but one tries to take away what one already has, the poor in spirit follow Jesus' counsel: *"If anyone take away your coat, let go your cloak also."*⁵¹
59. To give up one's cloak is, it seems to me, renouncing one's ultimate rights; it is considering oneself as the servant and the slave of others. When one has left his cloak, it is much easier to walk, to run, and Jesus adds: *"And whoever forces you to go one mile, go two more with him."*⁵² Thus it is not enough to give *to everyone who asks*;⁵³ I must even anticipate their desires, appear to be very much obliged and honored to render service, and if anyone takes something which is for my use, I must not appear to be sorry about this but happy at being *relieved* of it. Dear Mother, I am very far from practicing what I understand, and still the desire alone I have of doing it gives me peace.
60. I feel that I have explained myself poorly, even more so than on the other days. I made a *kind of discourse* on charity which must have tired you when you were reading it. Pardon me, dear Mother, and remember at this very moment the infirmarians practice in my regard what I have just written; they don't hesitate to take two thousand paces when twenty would suffice.⁵⁴ So I have been able to contemplate charity in action! Undoubtedly my soul

⁵⁰ Psalm 118:32.

⁵¹ Matthew 5:40.

⁵² Matthew 5:41.

⁵³ Luke 6:30.

⁵⁴ She is writing in the garden in a wheelchair (note of Mother Agnes).

is embalmed with it; as far as my mind is concerned I admit it is paralyzed in the presence of such devotedness, and my pen has lost its lightness. In order for me to translate my thoughts, I have to be *like the solitary sparrow*,⁵⁵ and this is rarely my lot. When I begin to take up my pen, behold a Sister who passes by, a pitchfork on her shoulder. She believes she will distract me with a little idle chatter: hay, ducks, hens, visits of the doctor, everything is discussed; to tell the truth, this doesn't last a long time, but there is *more than one good charitable Sister*, and all of a sudden another hay worker throws flowers on my lap, perhaps believing these will inspire me with poetic thoughts. I am not looking for them at the moment and would prefer to see the flowers swaying on their stems. Finally, fatigued by opening and shutting this famous copybook, I open a book (which doesn't want to stay open) and say resolutely that I shall copy out some thoughts from the psalms and Gospels for the feast of Our Mother.⁵⁶ It's very true that I am not sparing in these quotes.

61. Dear Mother, I would amuse you, I believe, when telling you about all my adventures in the groves of Carmel; I don't know if I have been able to write ten lines without being disturbed; this should not make me laugh nor amuse me; however for the love of God and my Sisters (so charitable toward me) I take care to appear happy and especially *to be so*. For example, here is a hay worker who is just leaving me after having said very compassionately: "Poor little Sister, it must tire you out having to write like that all day long." "Don't worry," I answer, "I appear to be writing very much, but really I am writing almost nothing." "Very good!" she says, "but just the same, I am very happy we are doing the haying since this always distracts you a little." In fact it is such a great distraction for me (without taking into account the infirmarians' visits) that I am not telling any lies when I say that I am writing practically nothing.
62. Fortunately, I don't easily get discouraged and to prove it, I am going to finish explaining what Jesus makes me understand concerning charity. I have spoken to you only about external charity; now I would like to confide to you what I understand about purely spiritual charity. I am very sure I won't be long in mixing the one with the other, but, since I am speaking to you, it will not be difficult for you to grasp my thought and to unravel your child's skein.
63. It is not always possible in Carmel to practice the words of the Gospel according to the letter. One is obliged at times to refuse a service because of one's duties; but when charity has buried its roots deeply within the soul, it shows itself externally. There is such a delightful way of refusing what cannot be given that the refusal gives as much pleasure as the gift itself. It is true that one hesitates less to claim a service from a Sister who is always disposed to oblige but Jesus has said; "*...and from him who would borrow of you, do not turn away.*"⁵⁷ Thus under the pretext that one would be forced to refuse, one must not stay away from the Sisters who are always in the habit of asking for help. Neither should one be obliging in order to *appear* so or in the hope that another time the Sister whom one obliges will return the service in her turn, for Our Lord says again: "*And if you lend to those from*

⁵⁵ Psalm 101:8.

⁵⁶ Mother Marie de Gonzague's feast was on June 21, feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

⁵⁷ Matthew 5:42.

whom you hope to receive in return, what merit have you? For even sinners lend to sinners that they may get back as much in return. But do good, and lend, NOT HOPING FOR ANYTHING IN RETURN, and your reward shall be great."⁵⁸

64. Oh yes! the reward is great, even on this earth; in this way it is only the first step that costs anything. To lend without *hoping for anything* appears difficult to nature; one would prefer to give, for a thing given no longer belongs to one. When one comes to you and says in a very convincing way: "Sister, I need your help for a few hours, but don't worry, I have Mother's permission and I *will return* the time you are giving me because I know how rushed you are." Truly, when one know very well that never will the time one *lends* ever be returned, one would prefer to say: "I give it to you." This would satisfy self-love, for giving is a more generous act than lending, and then we make the Sister feel we don't depend on her services. Ah! how contrary are the teachings of Jesus to the feelings of nature! Without the help of His grace it would be impossible not only to put them into practice but to even understand them.

⁵⁸ Luke 6:34-35.

Appendix G: Session 6, CCC 2697-2708: Expressions of Prayer

THE LIFE OF PRAYER

2697 Prayer is the life of the new heart. It ought to animate us at every moment. But we tend to forget him who is our life and our all. This is why the Fathers of the spiritual life in the Deuteronomic and prophetic traditions insist that prayer is a remembrance of God often awakened by the memory of the heart "We must remember God more often than we draw breath."¹ But we cannot pray "at all times" if we do not pray at specific times, consciously willing it. These are the special times of Christian prayer, both in intensity and duration.

2698 The Tradition of the Church proposes to the faithful certain rhythms of praying intended to nourish continual prayer. Some are daily, such as morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, the Liturgy of the Hours. Sundays, centered on the Eucharist, are kept holy primarily by prayer. The cycle of the liturgical year and its great feasts are also basic rhythms of the Christian's life of prayer.

2699 The Lord leads all persons by paths and in ways pleasing to him, and each believer responds according to his heart's resolve and the personal expressions of his prayer. However, Christian Tradition has retained three major expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. They have one basic trait in common: composure of heart. This vigilance in keeping the Word and dwelling in the presence of God makes these three expressions intense times in the life of prayer.

EXPRESSIONS OF PRAYER

I. Vocal prayer

2700 Through his Word, God speaks to man. By words, mental or vocal, our prayer takes flesh. Yet it is most important that the heart should be present to him to whom we are speaking in prayer: "Whether or not our prayer is heard depends not on the number of words, but on the fervor of our souls."²

2701 Vocal prayer is an essential element of the Christian life. To his disciples, drawn by their Master's silent prayer, Jesus teaches a vocal prayer, the Our Father. He not only prayed aloud the liturgical prayers of the synagogue but, as the Gospels show, he raised his voice to express his personal prayer, from exultant blessing of the Father to the agony of Gethsemani.³

2702 The need to involve the senses in interior prayer corresponds to a requirement of our human nature. We are body and spirit, and we experience the need to translate our feelings externally. We must pray with our whole being to give all power possible to our supplication.

2703 This need also corresponds to a divine requirement. God seeks worshippers in Spirit and in Truth, and consequently living prayer that rises from the depths of the soul. He also wants the external expression that associates the body with interior prayer, for it renders him that perfect homage which is his due.

2704 Because it is external and so thoroughly human, vocal prayer is the form of prayer most readily accessible to groups. Even interior prayer, however, cannot neglect vocal prayer. Prayer

is internalized to the extent that we become aware of him "to whom we speak;"⁴ Thus vocal prayer becomes an initial form of contemplative prayer.

II. Meditation

2705 Meditation is above all a quest. the mind seeks to understand the why and how of the Christian life, in order to adhere and respond to what the Lord is asking. the required attentiveness is difficult to sustain. We are usually helped by books, and Christians do not want for them: the Sacred Scriptures, particularly the Gospels, holy icons, liturgical texts of the day or season, writings of the spiritual fathers, works of spirituality, the great book of creation, and that of history the page on which the "today" of God is written.

2706 To meditate on what we read helps us to make it our own by confronting it with ourselves. Here, another book is opened: the book of life. We pass from thoughts to reality. To the extent that we are humble and faithful, we discover in meditation the movements that stir the heart and we are able to discern them. It is a question of acting truthfully in order to come into the light: "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

2707 There are as many and varied methods of meditation as there are spiritual masters. Christians owe it to themselves to develop the desire to meditate regularly, lest they come to resemble the three first kinds of soil in the parable of the sower.⁵ But a method is only a guide; the important thing is to advance, with the Holy Spirit, along the one way of prayer: Christ Jesus.

2708 Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ. Christian prayer tries above all to meditate on the mysteries of Christ, as in lectio divina or the rosary. This form of prayerful reflection is of great value, but Christian prayer should go further: to the knowledge of the love of the Lord Jesus, to union with him.

Appendix H: Session 7, Excerpts from The Practice of the Presence of God

by Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

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Spiritual Maxims 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7

CHAPTER 2

PRACTICES NECESSARY TO ATTAIN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

6. The holiest, most ordinary, and most necessary practice of the spiritual life is that of the presence of God. It is to take delight in and become accustomed to his divine company, speaking humbly and conversing lovingly with him all the time, at every moment, without rule or measure, especially in times of temptation, suffering, aridity, weariness, even infidelity and sin.

7. We must continually apply ourselves so that all our actions, without exception, become a kind of brief conversation with God, not in a contrived manner but coming from the purity and simplicity of our hearts.

8. We must perform all our actions carefully and deliberately, not impulsively or hurriedly, for such would characterize a distracted mind. We must work gently and lovingly with God, asking him to accept our work, and by this continual attention to God we will crush the head of the devil and force the weapons from his hands.

9. During our work and other activities, even during our reading and writing, no matter how spiritual—and, I emphasize, even during our religious exercises and vocal prayers—we must stop for a moment, as often as possible, to adore God in the depths of our hearts, to savor him, even though in passing and stealthily. Since you are aware that God is present to you during your actions, that he is in the depths and center of your heart, stop your activities and even your vocal prayers, at least from time to time, to adore him within, to praise him, to ask his help, to offer him your heart, and to thank him. Nothing is more pleasing to God than to turn away from all creatures many times throughout the day to withdraw and adore him present within. Moreover, this turning inward imperceptibly destroys the self-love found only among creatures. In the end, we can offer God no greater evidence of our fidelity than by frequently renouncing and scorning creatures in order to enjoy their Creator for a moment. I do not mean by this that you must withdraw forever from your duties, for that would be impossible; prudence, the mother of all virtues, must be your guide. I do say, nonetheless, that it is a typical error among the spiritually minded not to withdraw from what is external from time to time to adore God within themselves and enjoy his divine presence in peace for a few moments. This digression was long but I thought the matter called for some explanation. Let's get back to our exercises.

10. All these adorations must be made by faith, believing that God is truly in our hearts, that we must adore, love, and serve him in spirit and in truth, that he sees everything that happens and will happen in us and in all creatures; that he is independent of everything and the one on

whom all creatures depend, infinite in every kind of perfection. He is the one who, by virtue of his infinite excellence and sovereign domain, deserves all that we are as well as everything in heaven and on earth, of which he can dispose as he wishes in time and in eternity. All our thoughts, words and actions belong by right to him. Let's put this into practice.

11. We must carefully examine which virtues are the most essential, which are the most difficult to acquire, which sins we commit most often, and which are the most frequent and inevitable of our falls. We must have recourse to God with complete confidence at the moment of combat, remain firm in the presence of his divine majesty, adore him humbly, bring him our miseries and weaknesses, and lovingly ask him for the help of his grace. In this way we will find every virtue in him without our having any of our own.

CHAPTER 3

HOW WE MUST ADORE GOD IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

12. This question contains three points to which we must respond. I say that adoring God in spirit and in truth means adoring God as we are supposed to adore him. God is spirit and we must adore him in spirit and in truth, that is, with humble, authentic adoration of spirit in the depths and center of our souls. God alone can see this adoration, which we can repeat so often that in the end it will become second nature to us, as if God were one with our souls and our souls were one with God. Practice will make this evident.

13. Adoring God in truth means recognizing him for what he is and recognizing ourselves for what we are. Adoring God in truth means recognizing truly, really, and in spirit that God is what he is, infinitely perfect, infinitely adorable, infinitely removed from all evil, and so on for all the divine attributes. Who are we, and what reason could excuse us from using all our strength to offer this great God all respect and adoration?

14. Adoring God in truth means admitting that, although we are completely opposite, he wants to make us like himself, if we so desire, we must not be so imprudent as to withhold, even for a moment, the respect, love, service and continual adoration we owe him.

CHAPTER 5

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD

20. The [practice of the] presence of God is an application of our mind to God, or a remembrance of God present, that can be brought about either by the imagination or the understanding.

21. I know someone who, for forty years, has been practicing an intellectual presence of God to which he gives several other names. Sometimes he calls it a "simple act," a "clear and distinct knowledge of God," an "indistinct view" or a "general and loving awareness of God." Other times he names it "attention to God" "silent conversation with God," "trust in God," or "the soul's life and peace." This person told me that all these forms of God's presence are nothing but synonyms for the same thing, and that it is at present second nature to him. Here is how:

22. This person says that the habit is formed by the repetition of acts and by frequently bringing the mind back into God's presence. He says that as soon as he is free from his occupations, and often even when he is most taken up by them, the recesses of his mind [*esprit*] or the innermost depths of his soul are raised with no effort on his part and remain suspended and fixed in God, above all things, as in its center and resting place. Since he is generally aware that his mind, thus held in suspension, is accompanied by faith, he is satisfied. This is what he calls "actual presence of God," which includes all the other types of presence and much more besides, so that he now lives as if only he and God were in the world. He converses with God everywhere, asks him for what he needs, and rejoices continuously with him in countless ways.

23. It is important, however, to realize that this conversation with God takes place in the depths and center of the soul. It is there that the soul speaks to God heart to heart, and always in a deep and profound peace that the soul enjoys in God. Everything that takes place outside the soul means no more to it than a lit straw that goes out as soon as it is ignited, and almost never, or very rarely, disturbs its inner peace.

24. To get back to the presence of God, I say that this gentle, loving awareness of God imperceptibly ignites a divine fire in the soul, inflaming it so intensely with love of God that one is forced to perform various activities in an effort to contain it.

25. We would be surprised to know what the soul sometimes says to God, who is so pleased with these conversations that he grants it all its desires, providing it is willing to remain with him always, and in its center. To discourage the soul from returning to created things, God takes care to provide it with everything it desires, and to such an extent that it often finds within itself a very savory, delicious nourishment, though it never sought nor did anything to obtain it, and in no way contributed to it itself, except by its consent.

26. The presence of God is then the soul's life and nourishment, which can be acquired by the Lord's grace. Here are the means:

CHAPTER 6

MEANS TO ACQUIRE THE PRESENCE OF GOD

27. The first means is great purity of life.

28. The second is great fidelity to the practice of this presence and to the fostering of this awareness of God within, which must always be performed gently, humbly, and lovingly, without giving in to disturbance or anxiety.

29. We must take special care that this inner awareness, no matter how brief it may be, precedes our activities, that it accompanies them from time to time, and that we complete all of them in the same way. Since much time and effort are required to acquire this practice, we must not get discouraged when we fail, for the habit is only formed with effort, yet once it is formed we will find contentment in everything. It is only right that the heart, the first to beat with life and the part that controls the rest of the body, should be the first and the last to love and adore God, whether by beginning or by completing our spiritual and physical activities, and

generally, in all life's exercises. This is the reason we must take care to foster this awareness, which we must do naturally and normally, as I have said, thus making it easier.

30. It would be appropriate for beginners to formulate a few words interiorly, such as: "My God, I am completely yours," or "God of love, I love you with all my heart," or "Lord, fashion me according to your heart," or any other words love spontaneously produces. But they must take care that their minds do not wander or return to creatures. The mind must be kept fixed on God alone, so that seeing itself so moved and led by the will, it will be obliged to remain with God.

31. This [practice of the] presence of God, somewhat difficult in the beginning, secretly accomplishes marvelous effects in the soul, draws abundant graces from the Lord, and, when practiced faithfully, imperceptibly leads it to this simple awareness, to this loving view of God present everywhere, which is the holiest, the surest, the easiest, and the most efficacious form of prayer.

32. Please note that to arrive at this state, mortification of the senses is presupposed, since it is impossible for a soul that still finds some satisfaction in creatures to completely enjoy this divine presence; for to be with God, we must abandon creatures.

CHAPTER 7

BENEFITS OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

33. The first benefit that the soul receives from the [practice of the] presence of God is that its faith becomes more intense and efficacious in all life's situations, and especially in times of need, since it easily obtains graces in moments of temptation and in the inevitable dealings with creatures. For the soul, accustomed to the practice of faith by this exercise, sees and senses God present by a simple remembrance. It calls out to him easily and effectively, thus obtaining what it needs. It can be said that it possesses here something resembling the state of the blessed, for the more it advances, the more intense its faith grows, becoming so penetrating in the end that you could almost say: I no longer believe, for I see and experience.

34. The practice of the presence of God strengthens us in hope. Our hope increases in proportion to our knowledge. It grows and is strengthened to the extent that our faith penetrates the secrets of the divinity by this holy exercise, to the extent that it discovers in God a beauty infinitely surpassing not only that of the bodies we see on earth but even that of the most perfect souls and of the angels. The grandeur of the blessing that it desires to enjoy, and in some manner already tastes, satisfies and sustains it.

35. This practice inspires the will with a scorn for creatures, and inflames it with a sacred fire of love. Since the will is always with God who is a consuming fire, this fire reduces to ashes all that is opposed to it. The soul thus inflamed can live only in the presence of its God, a presence that produces in its heart a holy ardor, a sacred zeal and a strong desire to see this God loved, known, served, and adored by all creatures.

36. By turning inward and practicing the presence of God, the soul becomes so intimate with God that it spends practically all its life in continual acts of love, adoration, contrition, trust,

thanksgiving, oblation, petition, and all the most excellent virtues. Sometimes it even becomes one continuous act, because the soul constantly practices this exercise of his divine presence.

37. I know that few persons reach this advanced state. It is a grace God bestows only on a few chosen souls, since this simple awareness remains ultimately a gift from his kind hand. But let me say, for the consolation of those who desire to embrace this holy practice, that he ordinarily gives it to souls who are disposed to receive it. If he does not give it, we can at least acquire, with the help of ordinary grace, a manner and state of prayer that greatly resembles this simple awareness, by means of this practice of the presence of God.

Appendix I: Session 9, meditative reading, Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love

Sayings of Light and Love by St John of the Cross (26-28)

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26. Lord God, my Beloved, if you still remember my sins in such a way that you do not do what I beg of you, do your will concerning them. And if you are waiting for my good works so as to hear my prayer through their means, grant them to me, and work them for me, and the sufferings you desire to accept, and let it be done. But if you are not waiting for my works, what is it that makes you wait, my most clement Lord? Why do you delay? For if, after all, I am to receive the grace and mercy that I entreat of you in your Son, take my mite, since you desire it, and grant me this blessing, since you also desire that.

Who can free themselves from lowly manners and limitations if you do not lift them to yourself, my God, in purity of love? How will human beings begotten and nurtured in lowliness rise up to you, Lord, if you do not raise them with your hand that made them?

You will not take from me, my God, what you once gave me in your only Son, Jesus Christ, in whom you gave me all I desire. Hence I rejoice that if I wait for you, you will not delay.

With what procrastination do you wait, since from this very moment you can love God in your heart?

27. Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth. Mine are the nations, the just are mine, and mine the sinners. The angels are mine, and the Mother of God, and all things are mine; and God himself is mine and for me, because Christ is mine and all for me. What do you ask, then, and seek, my soul? Yours is all of this, and all is for you. Do not engage yourself in something less or pay heed to the crumbs that fall from your Father's table. Go forth and exult in your Glory! Hide yourself in it and rejoice, and you will obtain the supplications of your heart.

28. The very pure spirit does not bother about the regard of others or human respect, but continues inwardly with God, alone and in solitude as to all forms, and with delightful tranquility, for the knowledge of God is received in divine silence.

Appendix J: Session 11, meditative reading, St. Thérèse's "Act of Oblation to Merciful Love"

Source: *Story of A Soul*, Study Edition, by John Clarke, OCD, and Marc Foley, OCD.
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ACT OF OBLATION TO MERCIFUL LOVE

J.M.J.T.

Offering of myself
as a Victim of Holocaust
to God's Merciful Love

O My God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to *Love* You and make you *Loved*, to work for the glory of Holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in purgatory. I desire to accomplish Your will perfectly and to reach the degree of glory You have prepared for me in Your Kingdom. I desire, in a word, to be a saint, but I feel my helplessness and I beg You, O my God! to be Yourself my *Sanctity!*

Since You loved me so much as to give me Your only Son as my Savior and my Spouse, the infinite treasures of His merits are mine. I offer them to You with gladness, begging You to look upon me only in the Face of Jesus and in His heart burning with *Love*.

I offer You, too, all the merits of the saints (in heaven and on earth), their acts of *Love*, and those of the holy angels. Finally, I offer You, *O Blessed Trinity!* the *Love* and merits of the *Blessed Virgin, my Dear Mother*. It is to her I abandon my offering, begging her to present it to You. Her Divine Son, my *Beloved Spouse*, told us in the says of His mortal life: "*Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name he will give it to you!*" I am certain, then, that You will grant my desires; I know, O my God! that *the more You want to give, the more You make us desire*. I feel in my heart immense desires and it is with confidence I ask You to come and take possession of my soul. Ah! I cannot receive Holy Communion as often as I desire, but, Lord, are You not *all-powerful?* Remain in me as in a tabernacle and never separate Yourself from Your little victim.

I want to console You for the ingratitude of the wicked, and I beg of you to take away my freedom to displease You. If through weakness I sometimes fall, may Your *Divine Glance* cleanse my soul immediately, consuming all my imperfections like the fire that transforms everything into itself.

I thank You, O my God! for all the graces You have granted me, especially the grace of making me pass through the crucible of suffering. It is with joy I shall contemplate You on the Last Day carrying the scepter of Your Cross. Since You deigned to give me a share in this very precious Cross, I hope in heaven to resemble You and to see shining in my glorified body the sacred stigmata of Your Passion.

After earth's Exile, I hope to go and enjoy You in the Fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for Your *Love Alone* with the one purpose of pleasing You, consoling Your Sacred Heart, and saving souls who will love You eternally.

In the evening of this life, I shall appear before You with empty hands, for I do not ask You, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is stained in Your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in Your own *Justice* and to receive from Your *Love* the eternal possession of *Yourself*. I want no other *Throne*, no other *Crown* but *You*, my *Beloved!*

Time is nothing in Your eyes, and a single day is like a thousand years. You can, then, in one instant prepare me to appear before You.

In order to live in one single act of perfect Love, I OFFER MYSELF AS A VICTIM OF HOLOCAUST TO YOUR MERCIFUL LOVE, Asking You to consume me incessantly, allowing the waves of *infinite tenderness* shut up within You to overflow into my soul, and that thus I may become a *martyr* of Your *Love*, O my God!

May this martyrdom, after having prepared me to appear before You, finally cause me to die and may my soul take its flight without any delay into the eternal embrace of *Your Merciful Love*.

I want, O my *Beloved*, at each beat of my heart to renew this offering to You an infinite number of times, until the shadows having disappeared I may be able to tell You of my *Love* in an *Eternal Face to Face!*

Marie-Françoise-Thérèse of the Child Jesus
and the Holy Face, unworthy Carmelite religious.

This 9th day of June,
Feast of the Most Holy Trinity,
In the year of grace, 1895

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Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

Formation I

Year B

**"I am the Way
the Truth
and the Life."**

Jn. 14:6



"The Promise made as Seculars Carmelites is not to live our poverty, our chastity, or our obedience, but to live the Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience of Jesus."

"The Beatitudes are a way of life. By living the Beatitudes, Carmelites bear witness to Christ."
Const. art. 16

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SYLLABUS FOR FORMATION I, Year B

Preparation for making the First Promise

The purpose of this stage of formation is to steep the candidate in the Teresian tradition of prayer as the foundation and basic activity of his/her daily life. Studying the legislative documents within the context of the evangelical counsels and beatitudes imbues the candidate with a deeper understanding of the Discalced Carmelite charism and community life. With emphasis given towards preparation for the First Promise, the candidate should commit him/herself to meditating upon and assimilating the writings of the Carmelite saints, the teachings of the Church, and Holy Scripture. The discernment process continues as the candidate integrates the experience of God with the experience of life.

This stage of formation normally takes two years.

Requirements

Each candidate will work toward gradually implementing the following requirements in his/her life, practicing them consistently by the end of the formation period:

- Attend and participate in monthly community meetings and formation sessions.
- Be diligent in the study and internalization of assigned materials and topics.
- Practice meditative (silent) prayer daily for at least half an hour (Ratio 90).
- Develop proficiency in praying the Liturgy of the Hours (Morning and Evening Prayer), individually and with the community. Recite Night Prayer when possible (Const. 24).
- Learn to serve as reader and cantor in community recitation of the Liturgy of the Hours (unless excused by the Council for valid reasons).
- Continue the habit of studying the OCDS Constitutions and Statutes.
- Continue to use Sacred Scripture regularly as an aid to meditation.
- Participate in daily Mass when possible.
- Engage in a daily examination of conscience.
- Participate in the community apostolate.
- Participate in community retreats and days of recollection.

Introduction to Formation I, Year B

Taking into account the origins of Carmel and the Teresian charism, the fundamental elements of the vocation of Secular Carmelites is to seek “mysterious union with God” by way of contemplation and apostolic activity, indissolubly joined together for service to the Church (see OCDS Constitutions 9.b). In her later writings, Teresa vividly recalls the origin of Carmel and its purpose:

“So I say now that all of us who wear this holy habit of Carmel are called to prayer and contemplation. This call explains our origin, we are descendants of men who felt this call, of those holy fathers on Mount Carmel who in such great solitude...sought this treasure, this precious pearl of contemplation” (Interior Castle 5:1.2).

As we can see, we are the descendants of men who gave up everything to search for “this precious pearl of contemplation.” In order to more easily understand the origin, traditions and the reform of Carmel, this year of formation is divided into two parts:

Part I) History and Traditions: A deeper understanding of the Carmelite charism.

Part II) OCDS Constitutions and Statutes: A deeper understanding of our formation, community and the Promise.

PART I

This part includes the early history of Carmelite spirituality and the representatives of the pure and prophetic spirit of the early Carmelites.

Equally important are the historical events and personal struggles that led to St Teresa’s reform movement in 16th century Spain. It is not an exaggeration to state that St Teresa was the only religious to fully document the founding of her first monastery, St. Joseph in Avila, and subsequent foundations. Certainly, she describes honestly and openly the joys and roadblocks of such an endeavor: “My Lord, how is it You command things that seem impossible? For if I were at least free, even though I am a woman! But bound on so many sides, without money or the means to raise it or to obtain the brief or anything, what can I do, Lord?” (The Book of Her Life ch. 33:11).

Teresa didn’t have to wait long. It seems that some mysterious hand was at work throughout her project and the initial objections and barriers from a variety of sources for the foundation were removed. The papal brief was obtained. Her confessor gave her permission to go ahead with the project. A house was given to set up her first foundation and much needed financial help came from her brother: “Your honor should know that some very good persons who are aware of our secret – our new undertaking – have considered it a miracle that you sent so much money at such a time. I hope that when there is need for more, God will put it into your heart to help me, even though you may not want to” (The Collected Letters of St. Teresa of Avila, Vol. 1 Letter 2). Most importantly, the Bishop of Avila, Don Álvaro de Mendoza, gave his whole-hearted support to the project.

“When everything was ready the Lord was pleased that on St. Bartholomew’s day the habit was received by some and the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, and with all due authority and

power our monastery of our most glorious father St. Joseph was founded, in 1562” (The Book of Her Life ch. 36:5). Amazing Grace indeed that the well-intended initiatives of Our Holy Mother St Teresa paved the way for a new and separate order – the Discalced Carmelite Order. When the City of Avila objected to the newly founded monastery, the Bishop of Avila had this much to say:

“This newly founded monastery of Carmelites is a reform of the ancient community. It picks up what has fallen. It renews a weakened Rule. It strives for the formation of people for the glory of the holy faith. For these reasons it must not only be tolerated by the powers of the state and of the city, but favored and protected” (The Collected Works of Edith Stein: The Hidden Life, II.2 Love for Love: Life and Works of St Teresa of Jesus, page 56).

PART II

The second half of the year covers the study of the OCDS legislative documents in order to understand and experience the vocation to Carmel within the context of a community.

The Secular Order is governed by its own Constitutions and Local Statues. It is “basically structured on the local community as a visible sign of the Church.” (Const. art. 40)

Faithful attendance and participation in the monthly meetings are integral to the vocation to Carmel. Carmelite Seculars are privileged to live an authentic spirituality in a community setting, learning from each other and sharing the responsibilities and benefits of community life. “A community that devoutly seeks God will find the balance between individual rights and the good of the community as a whole. Thus, the rights and needs of each of the members must be respected and safeguarded according to the laws of the Church, but likewise members must faithfully fulfill their duties in relation to the community, as laid down in the Constitutions” (Art. 24e).

Toward the end of this year of formation, the primary focus is on the Beatitudes in the context of the Promise. “Following Jesus as members of the Secular Order is expressed by the promise to strive for evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and through the beatitudes.” (Const. art. 11)

In conclusion, let us remember the words of St. Paul:

“May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, grant you a spirit of Wisdom and insight to know him clearly. May he enlighten your innermost vision that you may know the great hope to which he has called you, the wealth of his glorious heritage to be distributed among the members of the church, and the immeasurable scope of His power in us who believe.” (Eph 1:17-19)

The Essential Themes for Formation I, Year B

Required Reading: Candidates will need to have their own copies of LOTH/Christian Prayer, The Carmelite Tradition: Spirituality in History, by Fr Steven Payne, Liturgical Press, available from ICS; and The Book of Her Life, by St Teresa of Avila, in The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila Volume One, published by ICS Publications. Candidates should already have Welcome to the Secular Order by Fr Aloysius Deeney from their Aspirancy year. All other required reading (except for legislative documents) is included in the appendices.

Assigned Meditative Readings: Various bible passages, selections from Carmelite writings, and other materials are listed. One day a week, the candidate chooses one of these as material for his/her daily mental prayer. Meditative readings are for private use only; they are not intended to be discussed in the sessions.

Additional/optional Reading: Excerpts from Carmelite writings are included in the appendices. These are for personal enrichment and not intended for discussion during the formation sessions. However, important points relevant to the formation sessions could be mentioned during the discussion.

PART 1

History and Traditions: A Deeper Understanding of the Discalced Carmelite Charism

Session 1: The early history of Carmelite spirituality, traditions, greatest saints and teachers (continued in session 2)

“For love of our Lord, I beg you to remember how soon everything comes to an end, to remember the favor our Lord has granted us in bringing us to this order... fix your eyes always on the ancestry from which we come, those holy prophets.”

— St Teresa of Avila

Required Reading: The Carmelite Tradition: Spirituality in History, pgs. xii-xxxii and pgs. 1-23.

Additional Reading: Excerpt from The Collected Works of Edith Stein: The Hidden Life I.1 *Before the Face of God: On the History and Spirit of Carmel*, pgs. 1-6. (Appendix A)

Essential Points to Discuss:

- Mount Carmel: “Place from which this tradition takes its name” (Carmelite Tradition, pg. xxi, paragraphs 1-9).
- Mount Carmel is forever linked with the memory of the prophet Elijah, whose mission was to summon the people back to single-hearted fidelity to the one true God (see xxi).
 - Elijah suddenly bursts onto the pages of Scripture with the powerful declaration: “As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word” (1 Kgs17:1) (xxi).
 - A group of hermits settled on the western slope of Mount Carmel and built an oratory in the midst of the cells, which they dedicated to Our Lady. Gradually, Christian pilgrims and the Church at large came to identify this little community of hermits, according to the name of their chapel, as the “Brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel” (see xxii-xxiii).
 - The earliest historical spiritual documents of the Carmelite tradition are:
 - *Rule of St Albert* (1207) – the earliest surviving document related to the Carmelites (see Carmelite Tradition, pgs. 1-9).
 - *The Flaming Arrow* (1270) – also called *The Fiery Arrow* – represents the pure and prophetic spirit of the early Carmelites (see Carmelite Tradition, pgs. 10-20).
 - *The Book of the Institution of the First Monks* (1380) – brings together the Order’s Elijah and Marian spirit, as well as the prophetic and contemplative dimensions of its spirituality (see Carmelite Tradition, pgs. 21-25).

Assigned Meditative Reading: (use the following reading once per week for meditation)

1 Kings 17:1-22:40 – the story of Elijah, our spiritual father. Read slowly and with attention; pause often for reflection as the Spirit inspires.

Session 2: Loss of original home; Carmel in the West (continued from session 1)

"I understand and I know from experience 'that the Kingdom of God is within you.' Jesus has no need of books or teachers to instruct souls; he teaches without the noise of words."

— St Thérèse of the Child Jesus (Lisieux)

Required Reading: The Carmelite Tradition: Spirituality in History, pgs. xxi – xxxiii.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- The Rule of St Albert becomes the foundational document for the entire Carmelite spiritual tradition.
- "... the Carmelites began migrating westward, making foundations in Cyprus, Sicily, southern France, England, and other parts of Europe" (xxiii).
- In 1247, at the Carmelites request, Pope Innocent IV promulgated the "Innocentian" version of the Carmelite Rule, which included minor alterations to St Albert's text (see xxii).
- "With the collapse of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem in 1291, the Carmelites lost all physical contact with their original home" (xxv).
- In 1432, Pope Eugene IV granted further modifications of the Rule.
- In 1452, Blessed John Soreth, prior general of the Carmelites, obtained papal approval (the papal Bull, *Cum Nulla*) to formally accept laity into the Order as "tertiaries," and communities of women as Carmelite nuns (see xxvii).
- The Incarnation in Avila, founded in 1479, was the earliest Carmelite women's community in Avila, Spain.
- In 1535, a lively and outgoing twenty-year-old by the name of Teresa de Ahumada y Cepeda left her father's home to join the nearby Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila (see xxvii).

Assigned Meditative Reading: (use the Book of Habakkuk over four weeks)

Habakkuk – the heartbreak of exile, God's presence and protection, serving God in all situations, detachment and peace. Read slowly and with attention, pause often for reflection as the Spirit inspires.

Session 3: Reform of St Teresa of Avila (continued in sessions 4 and 5)

“This dark, loving knowledge is the surrender of the soul through the will to the loving approach of the still-concealed God: love, which is not feeling, but rather a readiness for action and sacrifice ...”

— St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

Required Reading: The Book of Her Life, chapters 32-35

Additional Reading: Excerpts from The Collected Letters of St Teresa of Avila: Volume One: Letter 2 (Letter to her brother, Don Lorenzo de Cepeda concerning her first foundation) (Appendix B) and Letter 3 (To the Lords of the town council of Avila. This letter speaks of the consolation the sisters find in their hermitages.) (Appendix C)

In Context: Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Their World, chapter 6. *The Monastery of the Incarnation*. (Appendix D)

Essential Points to Discuss:

- Referring to the papal bull of Pope Eugene IV and his further modification of the Rule of St Albert – “...the rule was not kept in its prime rigor, but was observed the way it was in the whole order, that is, according to the bull of mitigation” (32:9).
- “One day after Communion, His Majesty earnestly commanded me to strive for this new monastery with all my powers, and He made great promises that it would be founded and that He would be highly served in it” (32:11).
- There was so much talk and outcry at the Monastery of the Incarnation that the provincial changed his mind and didn’t want to accept the foundation under his jurisdiction (see 32:15). “I was very much disliked throughout my monastery because I had wanted to found a more enclosed monastery” (33:2).
- “One day, while I was greatly troubled with the thought that my confessor didn’t believe me, the Lord told me not to be anxious, that the affliction would soon end” (33:8).
- “My Confessor gave me permission again to dedicate myself entirely to this foundation. I saw clearly the toil it would bring upon me since I was very much alone and had hardly any means. We [St Teresa and her companions] agreed to carry on in total secrecy...” (33:11).
- “My Lord, how is it You command things that seem impossible?” (33:11).

Side Notes - Reasons for Reform:

1. A central and important part of the community’s common prayer was prayer for deceased donors and their families. It provided an important source of income. But at the same time, it provided an overlay of prayers and devotions that could require a great deal of time beyond the communal and personal prayer of the nuns. In her reform, Teresa wanted none of this kind of entanglement with the wealthy, nor added layers of required prayers.

2. What concerned Teresa especially was the concern for personal honor based on class distinction, so rampant in society at the time, which remained prominent in the monastery. Teresa would react strongly by eliminating all titles in the monasteries of the Reform and mandating a spirit of egalitarianism.
3. The nuns took a vow of obedience to the Carmelite general, the prioress, and their successors. There was no formal vow of poverty.
4. The spirit of enclosure – so essential for a life of tranquility, silence, and contemplation – likewise suffered. All of this was bound to undermine the broader sense of observance and spirit of recollection in the monastery.

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Psalm 1 - Meditate day and night
- Romans 8:24-27 – “For in hope we were saved...”
- Romans 12:1-2 – “Do not conform yourself to this age...”
- 1 Chronicles 22: 17-19 – “Is not the Lord your God with you?”

Session 4: The new monastery of the glorious St. Joseph, an expression of the Discalced Carmelite Charism

Silence is precious; by keeping silence and knowing how to listen to God, the soul grows in wisdom and God teaches it what it cannot learn from men.

— Blessed Anne of St Bartholomew

Required Reading: The Book of Her Life, chapter 36.

Additional Reading: Excerpt from The Collected Works of Edith Stein: The Hidden Life, Saint Joseph's of Avila, the First Monastery of the Reform, pgs. 53-58. (Appendix E)

Essential Points to Discuss:

- Friar Peter of Alcántara (a Franciscan friar/hermit) and Don Juan Balazquez (a layman), succeeded in getting Don Alvaro de Mendoza, the bishop of Avila, to accept the new foundation under his jurisdiction (see 36:1-2).
- “Everything was done in deep secrecy...” (36:3). “When everything was ready the Lord was pleased that on St Bartholomew’s Day the habit was received by some and the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, and with all due authority and power our monastery of our most glorious father St Joseph was founded, in 1562” (36:5).
- “...it was a great delight for me to see that His Majesty had used me ...as an instrument for such a marvelous work. Thus, I was so intensely happy that I was as though outside myself, in deep prayer” (36:6).
- “We observe the rule of our Lady of Mt. Carmel (St Albert Rule) and keep it without mitigation as ordained by the Friar Cardinal Hugo of Saint Sabina and given in 1248, in the fifth year of the pontificate of Pope Innocent IV” (36:26).

Explanatory note: St Teresa is referring to their giving up the text mitigated by Eugene IV, which was observed in the Monastery of the Incarnation. They substituted for this text the rule as approved by Innocent IV. This was the juridical and spiritual point of departure for her reform (see footnote to 36:27).

Assigned Meditative Reading: (choose one per week)

- Psalm 127 – unless the Lord builds the house
- Matthew 7:13-14 – enter by the narrow gate
- Matthew 7:24-27 – the house built on rock
- Matthew 13:18-23 – parable of the sower
- Luke 6:43-45 – a good tree bears good fruit
- John 15 – Christ is the vine, we are the branches
- John of the Cross – first three stanzas of *The Dark Night* (Appendix F)

Session 5: Foundation of the first monastery for Discalced Carmelite Friars.

*“O my Jesus, what a soul inflamed in Your love accomplishes!
How highly we must esteem such a soul
and how we must beg the Lord to let it remain in this life!
Whoever has this same love must follow after these souls if he can.”
— St Teresa of Avila*

Required Reading: Excerpts from The Foundations by St Teresa of Avila. (Appendix G)

Chapter 2: Paragraphs 5, 6 and 7

Chapter 3: Paragraph 17

Chapter 13: Paragraphs 1-7

Chapter 14: Paragraph 6, 11

Additional Reading: Excerpt from The Collected Works of Edith Stein: The Hidden Life, Saint Joseph's of Avila, the First Monastery of the Reform, pp. 58-61. (Appendix E) Excerpt from Journey to Carith pp. 157-169. (Appendix H)

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “After some days passed, I was thinking about how necessary it would be if monasteries of nuns were to be founded that there be friars observing the same rule” (2:5).
- St. Teresa received permission from Father General Fray Juan Bautista de Ravena for the foundation of Discalced Carmelite monasteries for friars (see 2:5). “Everything now seemed very possible, and so I set to work” (2:6). “O greatness of God! How You manifest Your power in giving courage to an ant!” (2:7).
- An important meeting took place in Medina del Campo between St Teresa and St John of the Cross (see 3:17).
- Don Rafael, a gentleman from Avila, offered St Teresa a home he owned in a little town named Duruelo (see 13:2).
- While St Teresa was waiting for the workmen to get the house ready, she had an opportunity to teach St John of the Cross about the Discalced Carmelite way of life so that he would have clear understanding of everything (see 13:5).
- “...in the year 1568, the first Mass was said in the little stable of Bethlehem...” (14:6).
- “I experienced the greatest interior joy, for it seemed to me that I saw a beginning that would be of much benefit to our order and service to our Lord. May it please His Majesty that things will continue as they are now, and that my plan will indeed be realized” (14:11).

Side note: The Discalced Carmelites were established as a separate province within the order in 1581. Finally, on Dec. 20, 1593, Pope Clement VIII established the Discalced Carmelites as an independent religious order with their own superior general and administration.

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- John 17:6-12 – Jesus’ prayer for his disciples
- John 17:13-19 – “that they may be sanctified”
- John 17:20-26 – and for those who will believe through them “that they may be one in us”
- Psalm 133: – “How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!”

Session 6: Origin and Basic Identity of the Secular Order

“Let us live with God as with a friend, let us make our faith a living faith in order to be in communion with Him, through everything, for that is what makes saints.”
— St Elizabeth of the Trinity

Required Reading: Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, *Origin and Basic Identity of Secular Order* pgs. 58-62. *A Touch of OCDS History* para. 7-15 (Appendix I). OCDS Constitutions: Articles 1-3

Additional Reading: The rest of *A Touch of OCDS History*, Elizabeth M Korves OCDS (Appendix J); Message of John Paul II to the Carmelite Family (Appendix K).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “Our membership of the Order goes back to the relationship established between laity and members of religious Orders born in the Middle Ages” (Const. art. 2).
- “...the involvement of laypersons with mendicant life was to bring the spirituality of the mendicant Orders into the life of laypersons in the world” (Welcome pg 59).
- “...mendicant Orders do not base their identity on an apostolate, but on a spirituality, and the spirituality guides and directs the apostolates to which they dedicate themselves” (Welcome pg 59).
- “The Secular Order is not conventual nor monastic, but definitely secular; that is, it does not exercise its responsibility in the convent or in the monastery, but in the world (*saeculum*)” (Welcome pg 60).
- The evolution of the OCDS Constitutions – The Manual of 1921; The Rule of Life, 1979; The Constitutions, 2003 (*A Touch of History* para. 7-15)

Assigned Meditative Reading: (weekly)

Meditate on one or more of the Beatitudes, which are a pattern of life for all the faithful – ordained, religious, and laity.

PART II

OCDS Constitutions and Statutes: A Deeper Understanding of Our Formation, Community, and the Promise

Note to the formator: Cross reference the corresponding sections of the local Provincial Statutes when discussing related topics in the OCDS Constitutions, and vice versa. For example, when discussing what the Constitutions say about the local Council, also direct the candidates' attention to what the Statutes say about the Council.

Session 7: Formation in the School of Carmel

“Awaken and enlighten us, my Lord, that we might know and love the blessings which you ever propose to us, and that we might understand that You have moved to bestow favors on us and have remembered us.”
— St John of the Cross

Required Reading; OCDS Constitutions, articles 32-36. Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, *The Role of Study in the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites*, pgs. 78-80.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “The central object of the process of formation in the Secular Order is to prepare the person to live the charism and spirituality of Carmel in its following of Christ and in service to its mission” (Const. art. 32).
- “Both initial and ongoing formation in the teachings of Teresa and John of the Cross help to develop in the Carmelite Secular a human, Christian, and spiritual maturity for the service to the Church...” (Const. art. 34).
- “... study in formation of the OCDS is not reduced to some sort of academic pursuit of knowledge...” (Welcome pg 79).
- “...study in formation of the OCDS does not have a point at which one says, ‘The End’” (Welcome pg 79).
- A basic definition of ‘study in formation of OCDS’: the process whereby we attempt to deepen our understanding of the relationship with God in the light of Catholic and Carmelite doctrines, traditions and teachings (see Welcome pg 79).

Assigned Meditative Reading: (weekly)

The Rule of Saint Albert – one or more provisions each week; reflect on how each applies to secular life.

Session 8: Organization and Government of the Order/Community

“Our Life in Carmel is to love – that is our vocation.”

— St Teresa of the Andes

Required Reading: OCDS Constitutions articles 37-50 and the corresponding local Statutes relating to Community.

Additional reading: *Pastoral Care of the Secular Order, Spiritual Assistants* (Appendix L). The entire document is available here:

http://www.carmelitaniscalzi.com/en/documents/ocds/pastoral-care_ocds_en/

Essential Points to Discuss:

- “The Secular Order is basically structured on the local community as a visible sign of the Church and ... enjoys juridical personality” (Const. art. 40)
- “The Secular Order is juridically dependent on the Discalced Carmelite Friars. The Superior General establishes the local communities...” (Const. art. 41)
- “The Provincial Superior, usually aided by the Provincial Delegate, is the Superior of the Secular Order within his territory” (Const. art. 43)
- Local communities are governed by the Council. The Council, composed of the President, three Councilors, and the Director of Formation, constitutes the immediate authority of the community (see Const. art. 46).
- “The General Superior, the Provincial Superior and the Council of the community are the legitimate superiors of the Secular Order” (Const. art. 48).
- “Every three years, each local community of the Secular Order elects its President and three Councilors.” (Const. art. 50).
- “These four officers, after consulting the Assistant, elect the director of formation from those who have made definitive promises” (Const. art. 50). Note: The Formation Director is not elected by the community.
- The Council then names a Secretary and a Treasurer (Const. art. 50). There may be a secretary for the Council and a different secretary for the community, if need be.
- “The Spiritual Assistant to each community is usually a friar of the Order. His duty is to give spiritual aid to the community... He will also endeavor to promote solidarity between the Secular Community and the friars and nuns of the Order” (Const art. 44). He is appointed by the Provincial for a set term of office (Pastoral Care of the OCDS art. 16 – this excerpt is in the Appendix L).
- Every three years, each community of the Secular Order elects its president and three councilors. The President must be definitively professed (Const. art 51); except under special circumstances, councilors are elected from the definitively professed members (art. 52).
- The procedure for the elections is to be determined by the Provincial Statutes (art. 50). A brief introduction to the procedure for election outlined is in the provincial statutes.
- To be eligible to vote, a member must be professed (at least in First Promise).
- Professed members are eligible to serve on the council nominating committee.

Election to a position in the Community is for the purpose of service. In the religious life, no one has a vocation to hierarchy. Our structure is completely on a rotational basis. One is a Councilor or President, and then goes back to being a regular member. Carmelites are always a visible sign of the Church because they are members of the Order, not because they are a President, Councilor or Formation Director (see pgs. 92-93 *Election – Welcome*).

“... [the Council’s] character as a temporary shared authority, renewed every three years, indicates that the Council receives an authority of mediation and delegation from the community that elects it. It must therefore lead it according to the spirit and charism of the Teresian Carmel, according to what is defined in the OCDS constitutions” (*Letter to OCDS*).

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Philippians 2 – humility in leadership roles
- Heb 13:17 – humility toward and cooperation with leaders
- Mark 9:35 – humility as leader and servant of all
- Eph 4:2 – humility and bearing one another in love
- Luke 17:10 – unworthy servants, only doing what we are obliged to do

Session 9: The Local Council: Understanding the function of the Council within the context of the Community

Note to the Formator: Every professed member may be expected to serve on the Council at some time. Given the lasting harm caused by a dysfunctional Council, it is extremely important that the candidates thoroughly understand the points discussed in this session.

Note to the Council: It would be appropriate to use parts of this session for community formation periodically, especially in the months before the triennial elections.

“In order to be an image of God, the spirit must turn to what is eternal, hold it in spirit, keep it in memory, and by loving it, embrace it in the will.”
– St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

Required Reading: Const. art. 46-55. Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, How Ought the Council Function, pgs. 81-96. *Letter to OCDS Communities* nos. 3-8, Fr. Saverio Cannistra, OCD, Superior General, Rome March 6, 2019 (the entire letter is in Appendix M).

Additional Reading: Entire *Letter to OCDS Communities*, Fr. Cannistra. Ratio 11, on the Council’s role in formation.

Essential Points to Discuss:

Duties, Responsibilities and Characteristics of the Local Council:

- The Council is comprised of the President, Formation Director and three Councilors. The authority of the Council is shared among these five members. The entire Council shares responsibility for the community, not just one or two members of the Council. “It should be an authority lived ‘with a mother’s love’ and with ‘discretion’...Its exercise requires active co-responsibility, both within the Council itself in the choices and decisions to be taken, and in encouraging the active and responsible participation of each member of the community in decisions concerning the good of the community” (*Letter to OCDS* no. 4).
- In Carmel – as in Christian life – authority is not about control, it is about service to the community. “Control is not service. Guidance, instruction, leadership – that is service” (Welcome pg. 94).
- “The primary responsibility of the Council is the formation and Christian and Carmelite maturing of the members of the community” (Const. art. 46). Every member of the Council is expected to get to know the candidates as individuals in order to aid their formation and properly discern for the Promise. “Today more than ever, in the face of social and ecclesial reality, a solid formation is necessary that leads to practice of discernment in community. The community is then the fertile sphere of this; it should lead each member to be co-responsible for the community, its formation and its mission” (*Letter to OCDS*, no. 4).

- Council members are obliged to respect the confidential nature of meetings and council business.
- The President is not the superior of the community or of the Council. He or she is a spokesperson and is at the service of the community. The President:
 - convokes and presides over meetings of the community and the Council
 - shows fraternal service to all the members of the community
 - is careful to avoid any demonstration of preference for some members over others
 - aids the Formation Director and Spiritual Assistant in carrying out their responsibilities (See Const. art. 51)
- “Formation Director ...has the responsibility of preparing the candidates for first and definitive promise” (Const. art. 53). The formators cooperate as a team with the Formation Director to carry out the directions given by the Council.
- The three Councilors:
 - share responsibility for the community equally with the President and Formation Director
 - attend and participate in the council meetings, taking an active role in the discussions and decision-making
 - participate in implementing the formation program of the Province
 - take an active interest in the wellbeing and formation of the community and the individual members
 - participate in discernments for the Promise
- “From these duties, we see that the Council carries out a fundamental role of accompanying and leading the Community in its mission. For this reason, it ought to walk together towards it, encouraging the *communal character of the Christian Carmelite vocation* and look upon each of the members with God’s eyes” (*Letter to OCDS 3*).
- In the practical exercise of dialogue, all must have the patience of listening – which requires humility, patience, willingness to understand, and an effort to respond in new ways. So, it is not a question of tenaciously defending one’s ideas, but of seeking the truth together with others in humility. In this form of dialogue, conflicts in the community are harmonized by the unity of the spirit. There is a need for training in communion which helps to move from the selfish “I” of the old person to the “we” of the new person (see *Letter to OCDS 6*).
- “Humility also requires having our eyes fixed on God, the true centre of each and every one, not considering oneself the center of the world and of oneself... Only with humility and detachment from self can we overcome the temptations of factions, rivalries and vainglory in the community” (*Letter to OCDS 7*).
- Fellowship is an integral part of the community meetings and the Council is responsible for fostering the sense of “togetherness” in the community. While study and prayer are important, meetings also need to include time to relax together as friends (see Welcome pgs. 94-95).

- “...the members of the Council must know well the documents that govern the OCDS and let themselves be guided by them... To carry out this service, the members of the Council must look to Jesus, who came to serve and give his life for others. This leads authority to be respectful towards the community, understanding it as a gift from above that must be guarded and as a place where the Risen One is present” (*Letter to OCDS 4-5*).

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- Luke 22:24-27 – “let the greatest among you become as the youngest”
- Matt 23:10-12 – the greatest must serve the rest
- Philippians 2:1-4 – be united in love
- Heb 13:17 – confidence in superiors
- The Collected Letters of St. Teresa of Avila, Vol. II, Letter 321. To Madre Maria Bautista, Valladolid: “You should know that I am not the same when it comes to governing. Everything is done with love. I don’t know whether this is because I have no reason for acting otherwise, or because I have come to understand that things are better dealt with in this way.”

Session 10: OCDS Members' responsibilities to the Community and the Order

“The Devil chooses to deceive some people in the following way. He will marvelously inflame their brains with the desire to uphold God’s law and destroy sin in everyone else. ... They will rebuke everyone for their faults ... and it seems to them that they dare not do otherwise for God’s sake. They tell them of the faults they see, claiming to be impelled to do so by the fire of charity and the love of God in their hearts; but in truth they are lying, for it is by the fire of hell surging in their brains and their imaginations.”
— The Cloud of Unknowing, chapter 55

Required Reading: Constitutions 15, 24a-d, Ratio 24-29; Local Statutes and policies on roles and responsibilities in the community; Community policies (if any) on community roles and responsibilities.

Additional Reading: *Our First Duty as Carmelites*, Fr. David Centner, OCD. (Appendix N)

Essential Points to Discuss:

- The need for mutual support in the spiritual life
- The need for shared responsibility and cooperation in community life
- Developing interpersonal skills and attitudes

Further Points to Cover:

- All members have the responsibility to:
 - Attend the meetings – prepared for the discussions, on time, and present for the entire meeting (unless excused by the local Council for valid reason)
 - Help with various tasks during the meeting, as the need arises
 - Foster an attitude of charity toward the other members
 - Develop an attitude of cooperation toward the local Council and the Superiors of the Order
 - Pay dues to the community and the province (unless excused by the local Council for valid reason)
- Professed members also have the responsibility to:
 - Take an active interest in the wellbeing of the community and the other members
 - Safeguard the harmony of community life by their friendliness and charity toward all members
 - Take turns with the roles of the Liturgy of the Hours
 - Cooperate with the local Council when asked to take on extra responsibilities – e.g., Secretary, Treasurer, infirmarian, librarian, liturgist, webmaster, retreat coordinator, assistant, etc. (every member has a job unless excused by the local Council for valid reason)
 - Actively participate in the community apostolate (unless excused by the local Council for valid reason)
 - Take an interest in activities of the Order beyond the local community

- Be willing to serve on the Council, if needed (see Const 52)
- Definitively professed members have the added responsibility to:
 - Be willing to serve as formators or on the Council
 - Be willing to help with community and ongoing formation sessions
 - Promote vocations to the OCDS

Note to the formator: By this time in their formation, candidates should be well on their way from mostly being nurtured to wanting to help and support others. It would be appropriate to begin discussing the various roles of service and which ones the candidates feel drawn to.

Note to the Council: Community responsibilities should be shared among the members as much as possible. Every professed member should be responsible for some ongoing service to the community (unless excused by reason of age or illness). Continuously nurturing leadership skills and experience in all the members ensures that most will be equipped and confident to take a turn on the Council. It is unhealthy for a community to always rely on just a few individuals, however gifted they may be.

Session 11: The promise in the spirit of the evangelical counsels (chastity, poverty and obedience) and the Beatitudes – the vocation to Carmel

*“Let your desire be to see God; your fear lest you lose Him;
your joy in that which will take you to Him and thus shall you live in great peace.”*

— St Teresa of Avila

Required Reading: Constitutions articles 12-16. Welcome to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, *The Beatitudes and Your Vocation to Carmel*, pgs. 61-77.

Additional Reading: The Promise and Vows, by Fr Alzinir Debastiani (Appendix O). *The Evangelical Counsels* by Gerald Alford (Appendix P).

Essential Points to Discuss:

- By the Promise made to the community, the person becomes a full member of the Secular Order and may use the OCDS designation after his/her name within the context of Carmel (Const. art. 12).
- This Promise is renewed once a year during the Easter Season (Const. art. 12; OCDS Ritual ch. 5).
- The Promise is an ecclesial act. One becomes more part of the Church by the Promise and membership in the Order. Our Promise as members of the Discalced Carmelite Order deepens our baptismal commitment to live as disciples of Christ in communion with His Church. We participate fully in the liturgical life of the Church through Mass, the sacraments, and the Liturgy of the Hours. We take part in the Church’s mission of evangelization by taking part in the Order’s mission of “knowing Christ that Christ may be known.”
- Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience are part of Jesus’ life in the Gospel. These three virtues become the measuring stick for one’s relationship with the members of the community, families, co-workers and the world. Jesus becomes the standard by which we evaluate ourselves.
- The Promise made as seculars is not to live *our* poverty, *our* chastity, or *our* obedience, but to live the Poverty, Chastity and Obedience of Jesus.
- The Beatitudes are a way of life. By living the Beatitudes, Carmelites bear witness to Christ (see Const. art. 16).
- We live in Jesus, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Through Jesus we are taken up into the life of the Trinity.

Assigned Meditative Reading:

- CCC 2544-2547 – poverty of heart
- CCC 2337-2349 – chastity and the perfection of charity
- CCC 612-618 – the obedience of Christ; uniting oneself with the suffering Christ
- Constitutions 11-16 – our commitment in Carmel

At the end of this period of formation the candidate should have:

1. A sincere appreciation of the history of the Order.
2. A basic understanding of the OCDS role in the mission of the Church through the study of the Rule of St Albert, OCDS Constitutions and Provincial Statutes.
3. A heightened desire for fidelity to a life of prayer in keeping with the teachings and example of Our Holy Mother St Teresa, demonstrated by faithfulness to daily mental prayer and the Liturgy of the Hours.
4. An understanding of Poverty, Chastity, Obedience and the Beatitudes within the context of the Promise appropriate to this stage of formation.
5. A desire to be of service to the community and ongoing development of the attitudes necessary for harmonious community life.

Note to the Council: Refer to the Ratio Institutionis 59-68 for basic qualities that indicate a vocation to Carmel.

Session 12: Rites of Admission and Ritual

Instructions for Council and Formators:

After the first stage of formation, the candidate makes a personal promise and commits himself or herself before God and the local community (fraternity) to follow the Constitutions of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites for three years. During this new state, the Secular Carmelite lives in accord with the Constitutions in a spirit of fidelity to the prescribed daily program of liturgical and contemplative prayer, in faithful participation in the meetings of the community, in formation, and in ongoing discernment. He or she does this with a view to making a life-long commitment at the end of three years (Ritual, 7-8).

The Rite of the First Promise may be celebrated during a Eucharistic Liturgy, during the common recitation of the Morning or Evening Prayer of the Church, or in the context of a Liturgy of the Word (Ritual, 7).

This Ritual has been officially approved by the Holy See and it is the only text authorized for the liturgical ceremonies of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites. The prayers of the officiating minister who presides, and the formulas of acceptance and of commitment must be kept whole and unchanged (Ritual, 3-4).

The Formation Director will meet with the candidates who have been approved for the Promise to prepare them for the Ritual, including the particular rites that will be used, the formulas of acceptance and of commitment, and the annual renewal of the Promise.

Required Reading: Ritual for the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, sections applicable to the ceremony to be used.

Essential Points to Discuss:

- The making of the Promise confers membership in the Secular Order and establishes spiritual and juridical ties with the Discalced Carmelites. By the promise of obedience, Secular Carmelites pledge themselves to cooperate with the legitimate Superiors of the Order and the governing council of the community, and to obey them, within the limits of the OCDS Constitutions (Ritual, Instruction of the Superior General).
- Rites of Admission to the First Promise during the celebration of the Eucharist/Divine Office/Liturgy of the Word, according to the rite that will be used. Special emphasis should be given to the formula of the Promise itself.
- When making the First Promise, the candidate's given name is retained, to which the candidate may add a title of devotion (in those provinces where this is allowed). The Formation Director should help candidates understand the purpose and meaning of this title of devotion, and when and how it is used.
- Candidates should understand when it is appropriate to publicly use the OCDS designation. (Refer to provincial policy or best practices, according to what is used in the local province.)
- Review the formula for the Renewal of the Promise and when and how it is to be made (Ritual 84).

Recommended Meditative Reading:

The Promise:

I _____, inspired by the Holy Spirit, in response to God's call, sincerely promise to the Superiors of the Order of the Teresian Carmel and to you my brothers and sisters, to tend toward evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, obedience, and of the Beatitudes, according to the Constitutions of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites, for three years. I confidently entrust this, my Promise, to the Virgin Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Session 1,

Excerpt from The Collected Works of Edith Stein Vol 4, the Hidden Life

Pg. 1-6

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Before the Face of God

I.1. On the History and Spirit of Carmel

Until a few years ago, very little from our silent monasteries penetrated into the world. It is different today. People talk a lot about Carmel and want to hear something about life behind the high walls. This is chiefly attributable to the great saints of our time who have captivated the entire Catholic world with amazing speed, for instance *St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus*. Gertrud von le Fort's novel about Carmel has vigorously directed German intellectual circles to our Order, as has her beautiful foreward to the letters of Marie Antoinette de Geuser.

What does the average Catholic know about Carmel? That it is a very strict, perhaps the strictest penitential order, and that from it comes the holy habit of the Mother of God, the brown scapular, which unites many of the faithful in the world to us. The whole church celebrates with us the patronal feast of our Order, the feast of the scapular, on July 16. Most people also recognize at least the names of "little" Thérèse and "great" Teresa, whom we call our Holy Mother. She is generally seen as the founder of the Discalced Carmelites. The person who is a little more familiar with the history of the church and monasteries certainly knows that we revere the prophet Elijah as our leader and father. But people consider this a "legend" that does not mean very much. We who live in Carmel and who daily call on our Holy Father Elijah in prayer know that for us he is not a shadowy figure out of the dim past. His spirit is active among us in a vital tradition and determines how we live. Our Holy Mother strenuously denied that she was founding a new Order. She wanted nothing except to reawaken the original spirit of the old Rule [of St. Albert].

Our Holy Father Elijah succinctly says what is most important in the first words of his that Scriptures give us. He says to King Ahab who worshipped idols (1 Kgs 17:1), "As the Lord the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."

To stand before the face of the living God – that is our vocation. The holy prophet set us an example. He stood before God's face because this was the eternal treasure for whose sake he gave up all earthly goods. He had no house; he lived wherever the Lord directed him from moment to moment: in the loneliness beside the brook of Carith, in the little house of the poor widow of Zarephath of Sidon, or in the caves of Mount Carmel. His clothing was an animal hide like that of that other great penitent and prophet, the Baptist. The hide of a dead animal reminds us that the human body is also subject to death. Elijah is not concerned about his daily bread. He lives trusting in the solicitude of the heavenly Father and is marvelously sustained. A

raven brings him his daily food while he is in solitude. The miraculously increased provisions of the pious widow nourish him in Zarephath. Prior to the long trek to the holy mountain where the Lord was to appear to him, an angel with heavenly bread strengthens him. So he is for us an example of the gospel poverty that we have vowed, an authentic prototype of the Savior.

Elijah stands before God's face because all of his love belongs to the Lord. He lives outside all natural human relationships. We hear nothing of his father and mother, nothing of a wife or child. His "relatives" are those who do the will of the Father as he does: Elisha, whom God has designated as his successor, and the "sons of the prophets," who follow him as their leader. Glorifying God is his joy. His zeal to serve God tears him apart: "I am filled with jealous zeal for the Lord, the God of hosts" (1 Kgs 19:10, 14; these words were used as a motto on the shield of the Order). By living penitentially, he atones for the sins of his time. The offense that the misguided people give to the Lord by their manner of worship hurts him so much that he wants to die. And the Lord consoles him only as he consoles his especially chosen ones: He himself appears to Elijah on a lonely mountain, reveals himself in soft rustling after a thunderstorm, and announces his will to him in clear words.

The prophet, who serves the Lord in complete purity of heart and completely stripped of everything earthly, is also a model of obedience. He stands before God's face like the angels before the eternal throne, awaiting God's sign, always ready to serve. Elijah has no other will than the will of his Lord. When God bids, he goes before the king and fearlessly risks giving him bad news that must arouse the king's hatred. When God wills it, he leaves the country at the threat of violence; but he also returns at God's command, though the danger has not disappeared.

Anyone who is so unconditionally faithful to God can also be certain of God's faithfulness. He is permitted to speak "as someone who has power," may open and close heaven, may command the waters to let him walk through and remain dry, may call down fire from heaven to consume his sacrifice, to execute punishment on God's enemies, and may breathe new life into a dead person. We see the Savior's predecessor provided with all the graces that he has promised to his own. And the greatest crown is still in reserve for Elijah: Before the eyes of his true disciple, Elisha, he is carried off in a fiery carriage to a secret place far from all human abodes. According to the testimony of the Book of Revelation, he will return near the end of the world to suffer a martyr's death for his Lord in the battle against the Antichrist.

On his feast, which we celebrate on July 20, the priest goes to the altar in red vestments. On this day the monastery of our friars on Mount Carmel, the site of Elijah's grotto, is the goal of mighty bands of pilgrims. Jews, Moslems, and Christians of all denominations vie in honoring the great prophet. We remember him in the liturgy on still another day, in the epistle and preface of the *Feast of Mount Carmel*, as we usually call the feast of the scapular. On this day we give thanks that our dear Lady has clothed us with the "garment of salvation." The events providing the occasion for this feast did not occur until much later in the Western world. In the year 1251 [according to tradition] the Blessed Virgin appeared to the general of the Order, Simon Stock, an Englishman, and gave him the scapular. But the preface reminds us that it was our dear Lady of Mount Carmel who bestowed this visible sign of her motherly protection on her children far from the original home of the Order. It was she who manifested herself to the

prophet Elijah in the form of a little rain cloud and for whom the sons of the prophets built the first shrine on Mount Carmel. The legend of the Order tells us that the Mother of God would have liked to remain with the hermit brothers on Mount Carmel. We can certainly understand that she felt drawn to the place where she had been venerated through the ages and where the holy prophet had lived in the same spirit that also filled her from the time her earthly sojourn began. Released from everything earthly, to stand in worship in the presence of God, to love him with her whole heart, to beseech his grace for sinful people, and in atonement to substitute herself for these people, as the maidservant of the Lord to await his beckoning – this was her life.

The hermits of Carmel lived as sons of the great prophet and as “brothers of the Blessed Virgin.” St. Berthold organized them as cenobites, and at the instigation of St. Brocard, the spirit they had received from their predecessors was laid down in our holy *Rule*. Around 1200, it was given to the Order by St. Albert, the patriarch of Jerusalem, and authorized by Pope Innocent IV in 1247. It also condenses the entire meaning of our life in a short statement: “All are to remain in their own cells..., meditating on the law of the Lord day and night and watching in prayer, unless otherwise justly employed.” “To watch in prayer” – this is to say the same thing that Elijah said with the words, “to stand before the face of God.” Prayer is looking up into the face of the Eternal. We can do this only when the spirit is awake in its innermost depths, freed from all earthly occupations and pleasures that numb it. Being awake in body does not guarantee this consciousness, nor does the rest required by nature interfere. “To meditate on the Law of the Lord” – this can be a form of prayer when we take prayer in its usual broad sense. But if we think of “watching in prayer” as being immersed in God, which is characteristic of contemplation, then meditation on the law is only a means to contemplation.

What is meant by “the Law of the Lord”? Psalm 118, which we pray every Sunday and on solemnities at Prime, is entirely filled with the command to know the Law and to be led by it through life. The Psalmist was certainly thinking of the Law of the Old Covenant. Knowing it actually did require life-long study, and fulfilling it, life-long exertion of the will. But the Lord has freed us from the yoke of the Law. We can consider the Savior’s great commandment of love, which he says includes the whole Law and the Prophets, as the Law of the New Covenant. Perfect love of God and of neighbor can certainly be a subject worthy of an entire lifetime of meditation. But we understand the Law of the New Covenant, even better, to be the Lord himself, since he has in fact lived as an example for us of the life we should live. We thus fulfill our Rule when we hold the image of the Lord continually before our eyes in order to make ourselves like him. We can never finish studying the Gospels.

But we have the Savior not only in the form of reports of witnesses to his life. He is present to us in the most Blessed Sacrament. The hours of adoration before the Highest Good, and listening for the voice of the eucharistic God, are simultaneously “meditation on the Law of the Lord” and “watching in prayer.” But the highest level is reached “when the Law is deep within our hearts” (Ps 40:8), when we are so united with the triune God, whose temple we are, that his Spirit rules all we do or omit. Then it does not mean we are forsaking the Lord when we do the work that obedience requires of us. Work is unavoidable as long as we are subject to nature’s laws and to the necessities of life. And, following the word and example of the apostle Paul, our holy Rule commands us to earn our bread by the work of our hands. But for us this

work is always merely a means and must never be an end in itself. To stand before the face of God continues to be the real content of our lives.

Islam's conquest of the Holy Land drove the hermit brothers from Carmel. Only for the past 300 years has our Order again had a shrine of the Mother of God on the holy mountain. The transition from solitude into the everyday life of Western culture led to a falsification of the original spirit of the Order. The protective walls of separation, of rigorous penance and of silence fell, and the pleasures and cares of the world pressed through the opened gates. The Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila, which our Holy Mother entered is the year 1535, was such a monastery of the mitigated Rule. For decades she endured the conflict between the snares of worldly relationships and the pull of undivided surrender to God. But the Lord allowed her no rest until she let go of everything that bound her and really became serious about recognizing that *God alone suffices*.

The great schism of faith that was tearing Europe apart during her time, the loss of so many souls, aroused in her the passionate desire to stop the harm and to offer the Lord recompense, whereupon God gave her the idea of taking a little flock of selected souls and founding a monastery according to the original Rule and of serving him there with the greatest perfection. After innumerable battles and difficulties, she was able to found the monastery of St. Joseph in Avila. Her great work of reform grew from there. At her death she left behind 36 monasteries of women and men of the strict observance, the new branch of the Order, the "Discalced" Carmelites. The monasteries of the reform were to be places where the spirit of the ancient Carmel was to live again. The reestablished original Rule and the Constitutions drawn up by the saint herself form the fence by means of which she intended to protect her vineyards against the dangers from without. Her writings on prayer, the most complete and most animated presentation of the inner life, are the precious legacy through which her spirit continues to work among us. ... It is the ancient spirit of Carmel. However, influenced by the battles over faith raging in her time, she gave stronger emphasis than did the primitive Carmel to the thought of reparation and of supporting the servants of the church who withstood the enemy in the front lines.

As our second father and leader, we revere the first male discalced Carmelite of the reform, St. John of the Cross. We find in him the ancient eremitical spirit in its purest form. His life gives an impression as though he had no inner struggles. Just as from his earliest childhood he was under the special protection of the Mother of God, so from the time he reached the age of reason, he was drawn to rigorous penance, to solitude, to letting go of everything earthly, and to union with God. He was the instrument chosen to be an example and to teach the reformed Carmel the spirit of Holy Father Elijah. Together with Mother Teresa, he spiritually formed the first generation of male and female discalced Carmelites, and through his writings, he also illumines for us the way on the "Ascent of Mount Carmel."

The daughters of St Teresa, personally trained by her and Father John, founded the first monasteries of the reform in France and Belgium. From there the Order also soon advanced into the Rhineland. The great French Revolution and the Kulturkampf in Germany tried to suppress it by force. But as soon as the pressure abated, it sprang to life again. It was in this garden that the "little white flower" [i.e. Thérèse of Lisieux] bloomed, so quickly captivating

hearts far beyond the boundaries of the Order, not only as a worker of miracles for those in need, but also as a director of “little souls” on the path of “spiritual childhood.” Many people came to know this path through her, but very few know that it is not really a new discovery, but the path onto which life in Carmel pushes us. The greatness of the young saint was that she recognized this path with ingenious deduction and that she followed it with heroic decisiveness to the end. The walls of our monasteries enclose a narrow space. To erect the structure of holiness in it, one must dig deep and build high, must descend into the depths of the dark night of one’s own nothingness in order to be raised up high into the sunlight of divine love and compassion.

Not every century produces a work of reform as powerful as that of our Holy Mother. Not does every age give us a reign of terror during which we have the opportunity to lay our heads on the executioner’s block for our faith and for the ideal of our Order as did the sixteen Carmelites of Compiègne. But all who enter Carmel must give themselves wholly to the Lord. Only one who values her little place in the choir before the tabernacle more highly than all the splendor of the world can live here, can then truly find a joy that no worldly splendor has to offer.

Our daily schedule ensures us of hours for solitary dialogue with the Lord, and these are the foundation of our life. Together with priests and other ancient orders of the church, we pray the Liturgy of the Hours, and this Divine Office is for us as for them our first and most sacred duty. But it is not for us the supporting ground. No human eye can see what God does in the soul during hours of inner prayer. It is grace upon grace. And all of life’s other hours are our thanks for them.

Carmelites can repay God’s love by their everyday lives in no other way than by carrying out their daily duties faithfully in every respect – all the little sacrifices that a regimen structured day after day in all its details demands of an active spirit; all the self-control that living in close proximity with different kinds of people continually requires and that is achieved with a loving smile; letting no opportunity go by for serving others in love. Finally, crowning this is the personal sacrifice that the Lord may impose on the individual soul. This is the “little way,” a bouquet of insignificant little blossoms that are daily placed before the Almighty – perhaps a silent life-long martyrdom that no one suspects and that is at the same time a source of deep peace and hearty joyousness and a fountain of grace that bubbles over everything – we do not know where it goes, and the people whom it reaches do not know from whence it comes.

Appendix B: Session 3, Letter 2, from The Collected Letters of St. Teresa of Avila Vol One

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Letter 2. To Don Lorenzo de Cepeda, Quito (Ecuador)
Avila, 23 December, 1561

Teresa is living outside her monastery in the home of Doña Guiomar de Ulloa in Avila. From there she is supervising the renovation of the house bought for her first foundation. She is in dire financial need. Unexpectedly, several Indians who were Lorenzo's friends brought letters and money. A mysterious promise made by St. Joseph is fulfilled. Deeply moved, Teresa writes in haste before Lorenzo's messenger leaves.

1. Jesus. Señor. May the Holy Spirit be always with your honor, amen, and repay you for the care with which you have so diligently come to the help of all. I hope in the majesty of God that you will gain much in his eyes. Certainly all those to whom you sent the money received it at such an opportune moment that I was greatly consoled. I believe it was God who stirred you to send me so much. The amount of money brought by Juan Pedro de Espinosa and Varrona (which I think was the name of the other merchant)—would have been enough to keep a poor worthless nun like myself who goes about in patches—which I now consider an honor, glory to God—out of need for some years.

2. I have already written you a long letter about a matter that for many reasons I could not escape doing, since God's inspirations are the source. Because these things are hard to speak of in a letter, I mention only the fact that saintly and learned persons think I am obliged not to be cowardly but do all I can for this project—a monastery of nuns. There will be no more than fifteen nuns in it, who will practice very strict enclosure, never going out or allowing themselves to be seen without veils covering their faces. Their life will be one of prayer and mortification as I have written more at length in a letter to you. I will write another for Antonio Morán when he leaves.

3. That lady, Doña Guiomar, who is also writing to you, is a help to me. She is the wife of Francisco Dávila, of Salobralajo, if you recall. Her husband died nine years ago. He had an annual income of 1,000,000 maravedis. She, for her part, has an entailed estate in addition to what she has from her husband. Although she was left a widow at the age of twenty-five, she has not married again but has devoted herself very much to the Lord. She is deeply spiritual. For more than four years we have been devoted friends, closer than if we were sisters. She still helps me very much, for she contributes a good portion of her income. At present she is without funds, so it is up to me to buy and prepare the house. With God's favor, I have received two dowries beforehand and have bought the house, although secretly. But I did not have the means to pay for the work still needed to be done. So trusting in God alone (for God wants it to be done and will provide), I entered into an agreement with the workers. It seemed a foolish thing to do. But then His Majesty comes along and moves you to provide for it. And what amazes me is that the forty pesos you added was just what I needed. I believe that St. Joseph—

after whom the house will be named—wanted us to have the money, and I know that he will repay you. In sum, although the house is small and poor, the property has a field and some beautiful views. And that's sufficient.

4. They have gone to Rome for the papal bulls, for although the house belongs to my own religious order, we are rendering our obedience to the bishop. I hope the foundation will give the Lord much glory, if he allows it to come about. I believe without a doubt that it will, for the souls who are planning to enter will give an excellent example of humility, as well as penance and prayer. They are choice souls. Will you all pray to God for this project, for by the time Antonio Morán departs, everything will be completed with God's favor.

5. Antonio Morán came here and was a great consolation to me. He seemed to be a loyal and highly gifted man. I was especially consoled to learn about all of you, for one of the great favors the Lord has granted me is that he has given you understanding of what the world is, and so you have chosen to live quiet lives. Now I know, too, that you have taken the path of heaven. This is what I wanted most to know, for up until now I was always in dread. Glory to the One who does all. May it please him that you always advance in His service. Since there is no measure to his remunerations, we should never stop trying to serve the Lord. Each day we will advance at least a little further, and with fervor. It seems, and so it is, that we are always at war, and until we are victorious, we must not grow careless.

6. All those with whom you have sent money have been reliable men, but Antonio Morán has surpassed them all. He has sold the gold at the highest price without charge, as you will see, and has brought the money here from Madrid despite his health poor health—although today he is better, for it was caused by an accident. I notice that he thinks highly of you. He also brought the money from Varrona and did so with great care. Rodriguez came here too, and has done everything well. I will write to you through him, for perhaps he will be the first to leave. Antonio Morán showed me the letter you had written him. Believe me, I think that all this care is not only the fruit of his virtue, but also the result of God's inspiration.

7. Yesterday my sister Maria sent me the enclosed letter. When they bring her the other money she will write again. The help came just in time for her. She is a very good Christian and undergoes many trials. If Juan de Ovalle initiates a lawsuit, it would destroy her children. Certainly he doesn't have as much a claim as he thinks he does, even though the sale of everything went badly and proved a disaster. But Martin de Guzmán also had good intentions—God rest his soul—and the judge ruled in his favor, even though not well enough. I cannot bear that anyone should now claim what my father—may he enjoy eternal glory—sold. And the rest, as I say, would only kill Maria, my sister. God deliver me from the self-interest that brings so much harm to one's relatives. It has reached the point here that it's a wonder if there's a father who cares about his son or a brother who cares about his brother. Thus I'm not surprised by Juan de Ovalle; rather, he has done well by setting this litigation aside for now out of love for me. He is by nature good, but in this case it would be unwise to trust in that. When you send him the 1,000 pesos, you should ask him for a written promise to be given to me; and the day that he reintroduces the lawsuit, 500 ducats will go to Doña María.

8. The houses at Gotarrendura are still not sold, but Martín de Guzmán received 300,000 maravedis from them, and it was only right that this amount went to Juan de Ovalle. Along with

the 1,000 pesos you sent, he is taken care of and will be able to live here. For this is what he has done, he has come here and now needs to remain. He would be unable to live here other than badly and for only short periods of time without help from over there.

9. His marriage is a good one. But I must tell you that Doña Juana is so honorable and trustworthy that she makes you want to praise God, and she has the soul of an angel. I've turned out to be the worst sister; the way I am, you ought not even acknowledge me as your sister. I don't know why you're all so fond of me. I say this in all truthfulness. Juana has undergone many trials and born them well. If you can send the money without placing yourself in need, do so quickly, even if little by little.

10. The money you sent was allocated as you will see from the letters. Toribia is dead as is also her husband. It was a great help for her children, who are poor. The Masses have been said according to your intentions—some of them before the money arrived—and by the best persons I could find, all of them excellent. I was edified by the intentions for which you had them said.

11. I am staying in the house of Señora Doña Guiomar during these business affairs. It makes me happy to be with persons who speak to me about you; indeed, it is my pleasure. One of this lady's daughters, who is a nun in our monastery, had to come out and stay with her mother, and our provincial ordered me to be her companion. Here, more than at my sister's house, I am at liberty to do the many things I need to do. All the conversation here is about God, and we live in great recollection. I will remain here until given other orders, even though it would be better for me to stay here so as to handle the above business matters.

12. Now to speak of my dear sister, Señora Doña Juana, for although I mention her last, she is not so in my heart. That is certain, for I pray to God for her as intensely as I do for you. I kiss both your hands a thousand times for all the kindnesses you have shown me. I don't know how to repay you other than by praying fervently for our little boy. And this is being done, for the saintly friar Peter of Alcántara has promised to do so (he is the discalced friar about whom I wrote you), and the Theatines and other persons whom God will hear are doing so. May it please His Majesty to make the child better than his parents, for good as you are, I want more for God. Continue writing to me about your joy and resignation to God's will, for that makes me very happy.

13. I mentioned that when Antonio Morán leaves I will send along for you a copy of the patent letters of nobility, which they say couldn't be better. I'll take great care in doing this. And if this time it gets lost on the way, I'll keep sending others until one arrives. For some foolish reasons it was not sent (it was the responsibility of a third party who did not want to—I'll say no more). I'll also send you some relics, for the reliquary isn't worth much. I kiss my brother's hands a thousand times for what he has sent me. If it had come at a time when I wore gold jewelry, I would have been very envious of the medal, for it is extremely beautiful. May God keep you and your wife for many years. And may he give you a happy new year, for tomorrow is New Year's Eve for 1562.

14. Since I spent a long time with Antonio Morán, I began this letter late; otherwise I would say more, but he wants to leave tomorrow. I will write again through Jerónimo de Cepeda, and

since I'll be doing so soon, it doesn't matter that I don't say more here. Always read my letters yourself. I went to great lengths to use good ink. This letter was written so quickly; and, as I say, it is so late that I cannot take time to read it over. My health is better than usual. May God give you health in body and soul, as I desire, amen.

15. I'm not writing to Hernando de Ahumada or Pedro de Ahumada for lack of time; I will do so soon. Your honor should know that some very good persons who are aware of our secret—our new undertaking—have considered it a miracle that you sent so much money at such a time. I hope that when there is need for more, God will put it into your heart to help me, even though you may not want to.

Your devoted servant,

Doña Teresa de Ahumada

Appendix C: Session 3, Letter 3, from The Collected Letters of St. Teresa of Avila Vol One.

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3. To the Lords of the Town Council, Avila
Avila, 5 December 1563

This letter speaks of the consolation the sisters find in their hermitages, places of solitude in their garden where they can praise God and pray for the city. A lawsuit was initiated against the nuns because one of the hermitages was constructed at a site harmful to the city's water supply.

Most Honorable Lords:

1. Since we received information that the little hermitages constructed on our property would cause no damage to the city's water ways, and the need was very great, we never thought your honors would be disturbed. What we did only serves for God's praise and provides us with a place apart for prayer, for it is in these hermitages that we beg God in a special way to preserve this city in his service.
2. Aware that your honors are displeased—which distresses us all—we beg you to come and see. We are prepared to comply with all the documents, promises, and pledges your lawyers might require so as to be sure that no damage will be done at any time; and we have always resolved to act in this way.
3. If despite this your honors are not satisfied and want the hermitages removed, may you first consider the benefit and not the harm that may come from them. What we want most to avoid is that you be displeased. We would be distressed if we had to go without the consolation we find in them, for it is spiritual.
4. May our Lord keep and preserve you, most honorable gentlemen, in his service, amen.

Your unworthy servants who respectfully kiss your hands,

The poor sisters of San José

**Appendix D: Session 3, In Context by Fr Mark O’Keefe, OSB,
chapter 6, *The Monastery of the Incarnation***

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Teresa of Jesus had been a nun of the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila for twenty-seven years (1535—1562) when she began the Discalced Reform with the foundation of the Monastery of St. Joseph in the same city. In the *Life*, she speaks with great affection of the community and praises the religious spirit and sanctity of many of its nuns. In fact, she had known some truly exemplary nuns (L 7.3). Even when Teresa reluctantly returned as prioress and worked to bring some reform to the monastery—without trying to bring her own Discalced vision—she spoke with affection and respect of the nuns. But she was not without criticism. And it has been somewhat traditional—at least in more popular presentations—to take her more critical comments “and run with them” to suggest that the Incarnation was somehow decadent or in scandalous need of reform. But this does not seem at all to be the case.

It is true that the monastery had its areas of laxness in observance. As we will see, in the visitation of the monastery by the Carmelite general Rubeo (Giovanni Battista Rossi) in 1566-1567, many of its nuns said the same. But as we have seen, Teresa and Rubeo—and with him, many of the nuns of the Incarnation—seem to have had different views of what Carmelite reform would mean. Rubeo’s aim was to bring the Incarnation more fully into conformity with the mitigated rule of 1432 and subsequent reform decrees. Teresa, on the other hand, wanted her reform to return more fully to the eremitical and contemplative focus of the mitigated rule of 1247 with an eye to the founding vision of the Carmelites, as she understood it. This was consistent as well with the wider “observant” reform of religious orders at the time and with the more contemplative spirituality that was partnered with it. This wider reform and spirituality were embedded in Teresa’s reading of Francisco de Osuna and others as well as in her many contacts with observant Franciscans, Dominicans, and Jesuits. As we have seen, all of the reform movements in the religious communities of the time were directed to the reclaiming of their primitive rules without subsequent mitigations.

Teresa of Jesus did not launch her reform because the monastery of her profession and early religious life was decadent. She did share many of the concerns that other nuns of the community themselves expressed to their prior general at the time of his visitation. But Teresa wanted something more than what the Incarnation, even in a more fully reformed state, could provide her. Unless we see this, we do a disservice to the monastery of the Incarnation that Teresa herself never intended—and we would fail to see the true nature of Teresa’s own reform. We would further misunderstand the initial displeasure of many of the nuns of the Incarnation when Teresa was later appointed prioress there. They were not decadent nuns, fearful of reform, but they did not share the specifically Discalced vision of reform that had been initiated elsewhere by their new prioress.

A Little Village in Itself

The feminine branch of the Carmelites was only formally established in 1452—only sixty years before Teresa’s birth. The monastery of the Incarnation was founded first in 1479 as a *beaterio*—that is, as a community of pious women living together without formal religious profession. As was not unusual in the time, it was founded by a wealthy widow, Doña Elvira Gonzalez, together with women drawn from family and friends. Both the Dominican and the Augustinian convents in Avila had a similar history. In 1485, it moved to another location and became more formally a monastery of women. Ten years later, in 1495, the community received the deed to what had been a Jewish cemetery before the expulsion, outside the city walls. The little community moved to that location and was formally accepted as a Carmelite monastery of women in 1515, the year of Teresa’s birth. This was the location that Teresa came to know (and that is still its location to this day).

The monastery subsequently grew quickly, and it became a favored place for the daughters of the prominent families of Avila. Its prioresses were generally drawn from the nobility of the area. It had a good reputation in the city, and the ever-increasing size of the community lent it a certain sense of prominence. When Teresa entered the monastery in 1535, there were about forty nuns. Only five years later, in 1540, there were 120. In 1545, the number had increased to 165. By 1566, there were almost two hundred nuns—in addition to the personal servants and boarders living in the monastery. Already in 1547, the prioress had noted overcrowding. After all, the community had grown by almost five times in only thirty years.

There were many reasons that a young woman would choose to enter the monastery, and girls as young as twelve could be admitted. Some, of course, were drawn by a sincere sense of personal vocation. But others were unable to marry for a variety of reasons—whether simply unable to find a suitable husband in a time when men were being drawn into foreign wars and to the New World, because a wealthy family could not afford adequate dowries for the marriage of multiple daughters in keeping with their sense of social rank, or because the woman’s reputation was tarnished through some supposed indiscretion. In any case, except for widows, nuns, and *beatas*, single women were the exception in Spanish society of the time. Perhaps, as Teresa herself suggests, some women had an unconscious sense that the life of a nun would bring greater freedom than that of a married woman in the culture. (See, for example, the insight that Teresa describes in L 34.4.)

In addition to the nuns and others living in the monastery itself, many other individuals were housed on the monastery precincts and grounds. There were homes for the lay administrators of the nuns’ properties; for those who collected the rents/income from the nuns’ lands, servants, gardeners, and caretakers of the monastery’s livestock; for those who processed the nuns’ grain and produce; and for chaplains, confessors, a doctor, a surgeon, and a notary. The presence of assorted mules, pigs, goats, sheep, and chickens virtually made of the monastery and its grounds a small village of its own.

The Spiritual and Liturgical Life of the Monastery

It appears that the Divine Office and Eucharist were celebrated by the nuns of the Incarnation faithfully and reverently. There was a devout Marian and eucharistic piety in the community. The nuns received Communion once or twice a month—which was considered frequent at the time. In fact, there were fifteen to twenty days per year set for the nuns to receive Communion, and they were all generally expected to receive on those days. Teresa herself followed this practice for many years at the Incarnation, but later in her time there she began to receive daily. In order to avoid notoriety for this at-the-time unusual practice, she often received at an earlier Mass rather than at the conventual Mass where she would have been more likely to be noticed.

The nuns ate only one meal a day, three days a week, from September 14 until Easter. They observed abstinence from meat on four days per week and fasted during Advent and Lent. They had public reading in their refectory. They took the discipline (self-flagellation) three times a week, a common ascetical practice among serious religious of the period. There was mandated silence in the church, the choir, the cloister, the refectory, and the cells (though, as we shall see, this was not always well observed).

The nun's constitutions mandated that each nun confess each week or at least every other week. For this purpose they had two regular Carmelite confessors (John of the Cross and another Discalced friar would replace their two Calced counterparts when Teresa later became prioress—much to the consternation of the Calced and, initially, to many of the nuns who feared they would be too harsh). But the nuns could also avail themselves of several other approved confessors from among the city's secular and religious clergy. It appears that many of the nuns actually preferred these outside confessors, feeling that they were better formed, showed a better religious spirit, and perhaps were less prone to show favoritism among the nuns. In Rubeo's visitation, for example, he reports that one of nuns opined that the friars would do well to read more spiritual books.

A central and important part of the community's common prayer was prayers for deceased donors and their families. The community sometimes contracted with wealthy families for specific prayers and devotions over many years, and these agreements would be witnessed by a notary. This practice typical of the time, more tightly tied the monastery to the wealthy families of the city and to its culture. It provided an important source of income, especially for special projects like repairs and building. But at the same time, it provided an overlay of prayers and devotions that could require a great deal of time beyond the communal and personal prayer of the nuns.

A particularly glaring example of the institutionalization of this practice involved a wealthy landowner, Bernardo Robles, who, in 1530, made a very sizeable donation to the monastery in order to build a much needed church and choir with the promise of more funds upon his death. In return, the nuns agreed that, upon his death, his body could be interred in their church. And in perpetuity, day and night, a nun would kneel before the Blessed Sacrament with a lighted candle in her hand, praying for his soul. Robles died in 1531, and the nuns faithfully fulfilled the agreement for a year and a half. This meant, of course, that a different nun would have to be awakened each hour through the night. Eventually feeling overburdened, the nuns petitioned

Rome for and received a mitigation—against the strong objections of the deceased man’s family. The conflict between the nuns and the family dragged on until 1545 when the final compromise was reached that the nuns agreed to pray the seven penitential psalms in choir and to offer Mass once a week for the deceased as well as keeping a special lamp burning before the Blessed Sacrament. In 1574, while prioress of the Incarnation, Teresa was able to obtain a further mitigation that required offering the regular psalms of the Divine Office for Robles and to reverently keep the special lamp burning before the Blessed Sacrament. In her reform, Teresa wanted none of this kind of entanglement with the wealthy, nor the added layers of required prayers.

Social Hierarchy

The social hierarchy so prevalent in society was mirrored within the monastery. Nuns who came from prominent and wealthy families, like Teresa, were addressed by the title Doña (Lady) and retained their claim on their illustrious family names. And so, Teresa was “Doña Teresa Sánchez de Cepeda y Ahumada.” Their former status in the world was recognized by more prominent places in choir. They were able to live in ample private cells, sometimes with more than one room. Teresa herself had a cell with two separate levels. This allowed her, like other nuns, to provide accommodations even for an extended time to female family members (as she did for several years for her sister Juana). These cells could, in fact, be bought and sold between nuns. The nuns with the necessary means could prepare—or have prepared by personal servants—their own meals in their cells with food provided by family. One nun was reported to maintain a slave.

Meanwhile the nuns from poorer backgrounds lived in common dormitories and shared the common recreation space of the monastery. They ate whatever it was that the monastery provided in the common refectory. And their upkeep and sustenance were subject to the economic ups and downs of the community.

There was no precise uniformity in habit. This was a source of some complaint during Rubeo’s visit. The nuns of humbler origins wore simple habits provided by the monastery. In times of financial difficulty for the community, they might find it difficult to have adequate shoes. Meanwhile, the nuns from families of means could wear habits of finer cloth, sometimes with fancy collars, lace, decorated belts, rings, and even colored petticoats.

What concerned Teresa especially was the concern for personal honor, so rampant in society, which remained prominent in the monastery. Nuns could take great offense if their family status and rank were not recognized appropriately by being offered the correct greeting or their proper place. Teresa would react strongly by eliminating all titles in the monasteries of the reform and mandating a spirit of egalitarianism.

Dire Economic Circumstances and Its Impact on Observance

During Rubeo’s visitation of the monastery in 1566-1567, the nuns reported severe financial difficulties. He found some deficiencies in the community’s financial administration, but clearly

the main problem was that the large number of members seriously taxed the monastery's financial resources.

The income from the monastery's extensive lands was significant. Such lands came to the monastery through dowries or inheritance by individual nuns. But much of what they received was not in the form of money but rather in grains and vegetables, which had to be transported and processed. On the days that the nuns ate meat, they required about 110 pounds of it, plus a large sack of potatoes and about one hundred loaves of bread. The income from their lands could only cover about a third of the regular budget of the monastery—and this only if the income were not decimated by bad harvests (which were frequent in the mid-sixteenth century). The nuns from wealthier families also brought ample dowries, and there were many of them. But beyond just the salaries of the many employees and servants and the maintenance of the nuns, there were costly expansions and constant repairs to be made. The monastery was forced to sell some of its lands, and still the community accrued a large debt. In 1565, the monastery petitioned the city government for financial assistance.

An extant vow chart from the time of Teresa shows that the nuns took a vow of obedience to the Carmelite general, the prioress, and their successors according to the Rule. There was no formal vow of poverty or of enclosure, though these would have been general expectations, to some degree, flowing from the rule and constitutions. Although the nuns did not vow poverty, they were expected to give up the right to disposition over any money or property received—using them only with the permission of their superior. But because of the monastery's economic situation, even these restrictions were only loosely enforced. It became virtually necessary for individual nuns to seek help from outside for their own upkeep.

The nuns from wealthy families did not themselves feel so acutely the privations caused by economic problems. They could depend on income from family or even from their own properties. But those without outside assistance experienced poverty even in the cloister. Nuns complained to Rubeo that the monastery lacked the funds to provide them with adequate medical treatment or relief. Individually, some nuns sought additional income themselves through educating girls in their cells, taking in sewing, or even personally seeking alms.

The structures and spirit of poverty were not the only casualties of the economic circumstances. The spirit of enclosure—so essential for a life of tranquility, silence, and contemplation—likewise suffered. It became necessary for the nuns to be able to come and go more frequently and for longer periods in order to relieve the monastery of the burden of their upkeep or to seek the goodwill of wealthy family and other donors toward the monastery and its needs. When the Council of Trent mandated strict cloister for nuns, it was practically impossible to realize because of the very real need for the nuns to be able to seek outside assistance. King Philip II was opposed to implementing this conciliar ruling precisely for this reason.

One response to the Incarnation's financial distress was to have nuns leave the cloister in order to eat with families and friends or even to live with them for a time. Between 1560 and 1565, as many as fifty nuns—about a third of the community—were living outside the cloister. Or nuns were sent out as companions to wealthy women who had lost husbands or children—as Teresa was ordered to do for Luisa de la Cerda in 1561. This relieved the monastery of providing for

them but also served as a way to promote good relations with wealthy donors. Such visiting outside the monastery would rather naturally slip into comings and goings for more frivolous reasons.

The monastery maintained visiting parlors in which the nuns could conduct the monastery's business with the outside world, speak with their confessors, and visit occasionally with family and friends. But in hard economic times, it was especially important for the nuns to maintain good relations with wealthy family and friends. But these visiting parlors became places for frequent, more frivolous visits—a social pastime for the upper classes of Avila to pay a call on the nuns. Teresa herself confesses to being a frequent participant in such conversations in the parlors. It appears that men who were not family members—people of less than good repute or intention—would also come calling on the nuns. (Here we must recall that not all of the nuns entered the monastery because of a personal sense of vocation but were rather forced by other circumstances into the community.) The visiting and idle conversations extended beyond the visiting parlors to conversations from the lower windows of the monastery to people on the street below, at the door of the sacristy, or through the water conduits that allowed water to flow from outside the monastery walls into the nuns' gardens.

All of this—much of it begun or necessitated by economic stress—was bound to undermine the broader sense of observance and the spirit of recollection in the monastery.

But Neither Decadent nor Scandalous

Although the nuns themselves complained to Rubeo about some of the abuses or failures in observance mentioned above, they judged the community in general to have a good spirit and a solid, if sometimes shaky, observance. Rubeo's final overall evaluation too was positive.

The fact is that the nuns of the Incarnation had neither strict cloister nor a vow of strict poverty. Their unfortunate financial circumstances allowed this fact to open the door to a serious loosening of observance and even abuses in a number of areas. The majority of nuns, along with Rubeo, saw this reality. Teresa too saw it. And in her reformed monasteries, there would be both strict cloister and poverty. But the reform of Teresa was aimed at something more fundamental than bringing the monastery of her profession into better conformity with the mitigated rule of 1432. Her sisters in the community saw for themselves the same problems that Teresa saw, but she wanted something more fundamental than most of them did: a deeper reform, a return to an earlier form of the rule, and the broader and deeper reclaiming of the contemplative and eremitical spirit of the first Carmelites.

Appendix E: Session 4, Excerpt from *Love for Love: Life and Works of St. Teresa of Jesus*, 12-16. Saint Joseph's of Avila, the First Monastery of the Reform

Part of The Collected Works of Edith Stein Vol 4, [the Hidden Life](#)

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[L=Life, W=Way of Perfection, F=Foundations, ST=Spiritual Testimonies, C=Interior Castle]

12. Saint Joseph's of Avila, the First Monastery of the Reform

A small group of nuns and visitors present for worship on the feast of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel on July 16, 1560, were discussing the obstacles to a life of prayer presented by the large number of nuns living in the monastery and the many visitors. María de Ocampo, a young relative of the saint and a celebrated beauty, suggested that someone should establish a monastery in which the life of the ancient hermits could be revived. In all seriousness she offered her dowry for this. The next day Teresa told her trusted friend Doña Guiomar de Ulloa (a young widow who like her led a life of prayer under the strict direction of Fr. Baltasar Alvarez) of this conversation. Doña Guiomar enthusiastically took up the idea. But what was decisive was that the Lord himself was calling for the project. "He assured me that he would be very well-served in a monastery I might find, that this house would become a star shedding the brightest light. God added that, even though they had lost some of their earlier enthusiasm, the orders were nevertheless of great service to him. What would the world be if there were no more monasteries?" [see L, 32, 11]. According to the will of the Lord, the new house was to be consecrated to St. Joseph.

Now Teresa no longer hesitated. First she turned to her confessor. He made his consent dependent on the consent of the provincial of the Carmelites, Fr. Angel de Salazar. This consent was easier to get than expected because of the mediation of Doña Guiomar. Three very devout religious, whose advice Teresa sought, gave encouraging replies: Jesuit Francis Borgia, Dominican Luis Beltrán, and Franciscan Peter of Alcántara. Now the next task was to find a house. But before that could happen the public scented Teresa's plans, and this aroused a storm of indignation against her and her friends. One can certainly understand that the nuns of the Monastery of the Incarnation would take it as malicious arrogance for one of their own to want to leave their house to live in greater perfection than the community in which she had been formed. And people in the city shared this view. The two women received their first strong support from the scholarly and highly respected Dominican, Fr. Pedro Ibáñez. When the provincial withdrew his consent under the pressure of Teresa's sisters and compelled the saint to inaction, her friends continued with the work of preparation: Doña Guiomar, directed by Fr. Ibáñez, Don Francisco de Salcedo, and Gaspar Daza (the two who had once by their doubt caused her so much soul searching, but were now entirely won over to her). A little house was discovered. Her brother-in-law, Juan de Ovalle, the husband of her youngest sister Juana, who herself had been raised in the Monastery of the Incarnation and loved Teresa greatly, bought it and moved in to protect it until it could be given over to its real purpose.

It seemed like a great hindrance to her plans when the saint received the surprising order from her Father Provincial to go to the palace of Duchess Luisa de la Cerda in Toledo, because this influential lady sought the comfort of the saint in her grief over the death of her husband. Teresa's friends hated to see her leave Avila. But the stay in Toledo was to be richly blessed. Doña Luisa became a powerful and faithful patroness of the reform. In the circle of women and girls that gathered around Teresa at the palace to seek her advice, there was someone soon to be one of her strongest supporters, the young María de Salazar (later María of St. Joseph, prioress of Seville). Above all, Teresa found the leisure here to write the story of her interior life, a project given to her the previous year by Fr. Ibáñez. This book was to make her name known in all Catholic lands, and down through the centuries would become a guide for countless people.

Even in regard to her foundation in Avila the time was not wasted. In the house of the Duchess de la Cerda, she was sought out by María of Jesus, a Carmelite from Granada who had reform ideas similar to Teresa's and wanted to talk them over with her. She also found occasion for a consultation with St. Peter of Alcántara, who on an earlier occasion had tested the state of her soul and consoled her greatly. Now he encouraged her to found the Monastery of St. Joseph without an income, as the primitive Rule prescribed.

Teresa was permitted to return to Avila only in June of 1562, after a six-month stay. Good news that came on the day of her arrival awaited her there: the papal brief that permitted Doña Guiomar and her mother to establish a Carmelite monastery according to the primitive Rule, placing it under the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop, giving it the same rights as other monasteries of the same order, and prohibiting anyone from disturbing it in any way. Teresa's name was not mentioned in the document. By a lucky coincidence, Peter of Alcántara was just then in Avila—for the last time, for he died shortly thereafter. His efforts succeeded in winning the bishop of Avila, Don Alvaro de Mendoza, for the foundation. From then on the bishop was one of the most enthusiastic promoters of the reform.

The illness of her brother-in-law, Juan de Ovalle, resulted in her gaining the permission of her provincial to move into his house, her future monastery, to care for him. This gave her the opportunity to supervise the construction personally. When the workers left the house, the patient was also healed and the monastery could become what it was meant to be. Now the most important thing was to find suitable living stones for the new foundation. There were four postulants about whom the Holy Mother herself said, "My first daughters were four orphans without dowries, but great servants of God. I found just what I had wished for, because my most ardent desire was that the first to enter would by their example be suitable building blocks of the spiritual edifice, would fulfill our intentions and lead lives of contemplation and perfection" [see L, 36, 6]. On August 24, the feast of St. Bartholomew, these first four Carmelites of the reform arrived at the little monastery where the saint awaited them. The friends who had helped to make the foundation made their appearance. By commission of the Bishop of Avila, Gaspar Daza celebrated the first Mass and reserved the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel. Thereby the foundation was completed. Then Teresa clothed her daughters in the robe of the discalced Carmelites ("discalced," or "without shoes," because instead of shoes they wore the footwear of the poor, sandals made of hemp). Their habits and scapulars were made of coarse brown frieze; the mantles of white frieze; the toques of linen; and over them for the

time being they wore the white novice's veil. Overjoyed, the mother remained behind with her daughters in the quiet of the holy place when the visitors departed. But people did not leave her in peace for long. The rumor of the accomplished foundation quickly spread to the entire city. The opposition stirred up all the townspeople. A monastery without any income would consume the alms of the poor. The prioress of the Incarnation, pressured by the indignant sisters, sent Teresa an order to return to her monastery immediately. The Saint obeyed at once. She left the four novices behind under the protection of St. Joseph and the direction of the oldest, Ursula of the Saints. On August 26 the city's municipal judge summoned the mayor and the cathedral chapter to a meeting in the city hall. The consensus was that the monastery was to be suppressed, and the municipal judge himself went there. But Teresa's young daughters did not allow themselves to be intimidated. When threatened with force, they answered through the grille, ". . . You may use force. But... such actions are judged here on earth by his Majesty Philip II, and in heaven by another judge, whom you should fear a great deal more, the almighty God, the champion of the oppressed." The city magistrate left without doing anything and called another, larger gathering for the next day. In an inflammatory speech he explained that this foundation was an innovation and as such suspect. The maintenance of the nuns would excessively burden the nobility of Avila. Opening the house without the permission of the city was illegal. Therefore, one must conclude that it be suppressed. The speaker already had the majority on his side when a Dominican asked to speak. It was Fr. Domingo Báñez who had only been in Avila for a short time, but was famous for his scholarship. He did not know Teresa, but his love for justice impelled him to become a spokesman for her cause.

Is it a sufficient reason to destroy something because it is new? Were not all societies of orders innovations when they arose from the bosom of the Church? And when our Lord and God founded the Church, did his work not bear the mark of innovation? ...This newly founded monastery of Carmelites is a reform of the ancient community. It picks up what has fallen. It renews a weakened *Rule*. It strives for the formation of people for the glory of the holy faith. For these reasons it must not only be tolerated by the powers of the state and of the city, but favored and protected.

...How can anyone believe that poor women confined in a corner who pray to God for us could become such a heavy burden and a danger to the people? ...The frightening specter that is the entire cause of the disturbance in Avila is that of four humble, peace-loving Carmelites living at the outermost end of a suburb.... It seems to me of little use to Avila to call a council for such an insignificant reason.

The existence of the monastery is inviolable, since the Most Reverend Bishop Alvaro de Mendoza has taken it under his protection and the Holy See has given its approval in a brief, against which all of Avila can do nothing.... [cf. L, 36, 15]

In response to his speech, the gathering broke up and the little monastery was rescued. However, it took several more months of negotiations and the sacrificial efforts of all the friends to overcome the rest of the hindrances. Finally, on December 5, 1562, the provincial Angel de Salazar gave Teresa permission to go to her daughters. She was even allowed to take

along four nuns from the Monastery of the Incarnation. In overflowing thanks to the Lord, she once again consecrated herself and her little religious family to his service. Now she and those accompanying her put on the rough habit of the reform and exchanged their shoes for coarse sandals. At the same time, in order to bury all reminders of rank and status in the world, they gave up their family names and chose a noble title that came from heaven. From that day on, Teresa de Ahumada was called *Teresa of Jesus*.

The chaplain, Julián de Avila, the first confessor at St. Joseph's and a faithful assistant to the saint in the work of reform, wrote a history of the founding of this house after the saint's death. He gives us a picture of heavenly life in this solitude: "God wanted...to have a house where he could recreate, a dwelling for his consolation. He wanted a garden with flowers, not those flowers that grow on the earth, but those that unfold in heaven..., a flower garden with these selected souls in whose midst he could take his repose, to whom he could disclose his secrets and open his heart." "Because our Lord and Savior has so many enemies and so few friends, at least the latter must be very good," said the saint herself [see W, 1, 2]. And she educated the young souls entrusted into her hands to be such good friends of the Lord. Girls of youthful beauty, rich and sparkling with talent, rushed to St. Joseph's in order to discard all finery, in order to consecrate themselves to the Lord in unlimited self-forgetfulness and humble submission. Postulants also came without any dowries and were received just as joyfully, in fact, even more lovingly. For the Holy Mother was concerned with having the real spirit of the order in her house, not with external goods. Soon the number reached thirteen, which Teresa originally did not want to exceed. (Later it was raised to twenty.) She regulated life in the house with the greatest wisdom. Each sister received an office in which she served the requirements of the little monastic family. The day was strictly apportioned between work and prayer. And this work, which was to contribute support, had to be simple and modest, not giving rise to pride, and thereby preserving their recollection in God. The work was carried out in solitude and silence. Only during the hour of recreation did the sisters come together in heartfelt and spontaneous conversation. Teresa made this hour into a required practice and set great store by it, to allow the spirit the relaxation that nature demands and to give sufficient opportunity for the practice of sisterly love. But even during this hour of recreation there was no idleness. During lively conversation or joyful song, busy hands raced as fast as they could.

Her little family's spirit was Teresa's greatest reward for all her efforts and sacrifice. She herself stood in wonder before her daughters:

Oh how I recognize all the superiorities of these sisters over me! No sooner had God given them some understanding, some love, than for his sake they disdained the lives to which they used to be attached and sacrificed themselves for him. They find their delight in solitude. All their happiness lies in thoughts of making progress in serving God. Their blessedness is to live alone with him. Many of them spent their youth in the vanity of the world. They intended to find their happiness there and to make decisions according to the world's standards. But precisely these are the most joyful. God rewards them with true joy for the false delights they have left for him. I cannot say how much comfort I feel living in the company of such innocent souls who have renounced everything. [see L, 35, 12]

The saint also had no other desire than to live in this separation from the world with her little family, to lead them ever more deeply into the spirit of prayer, into the heroic exercise of virtues—humility, obedience, complete giving of oneself, poverty, the most heartfelt love for God and for people—and to consecrate with them this whole life of prayer, sacrifice, voluntary penance (on which, however, she set a wise limit and so obviated an unhealthy enthusiasm) to the glory of God and his church, for the salvation of souls and as a support for priests who were doing battle with the great errors of the time. But she was not to conclude her life in the quiet of St. Joseph's.

13. Spread of the Reform

Again, it was her burning desire for the salvation of souls that led Teresa to new action. One day a Franciscan from the missions visited her and told her about the sad spiritual and moral condition of people in heathen lands. Shaken, she withdrew into her hermitage in the garden. "I cried to the Savior, I pleaded with him for the means of winning souls for him because the evil enemy robs him of so many. I asked him to help himself a little by my prayers, because that was all I could offer him" [F, 1, 7]. After petitioning like this for many days, the Lord appeared to her and spoke the comforting words, "Wait a little while, my daughter, and you will see great things" [F, 1, 8]. Six months later came the fulfillment of this promise.

In the spring of the year 1567 she received news of an upcoming visit to Spain by the Carmelite General, Giovanni Battista Rossi (Rubeo). "This was something most unusual. The generals of our order always have been situated in Rome. None had ever come to Spain before" [F, 2, 1]. The nun who had left her monastery and founded a new one had reason to be afraid of the arrival of her highest superior. He had the power to destroy her work. With the consent of the bishop of Avila who had jurisdiction of her house, Teresa invited the general to visit. He came, and Teresa gave him a completely candid account of the entire history of the foundation. What he saw convinced him of the spirit that ruled in this little monastery and he was moved to tears. It was evident that here was a perfect realization of the goal for which he had come to Spain. He was considering a reform of the entire Order, a return to the old traditions, but he had not risked proceeding as radically as Teresa. King Philip II had called him to Spain to renew discipline in the monasteries of his land. Fr. Rubeo had found little friendly reception in other places. Now he confided his concerns to Teresa. For her part, she responded with love and a daughter's trust. When he departed from Avila, he left Teresa with permits to found additional women's monasteries of the reform. All these monasteries were to be directly under the general. No provincial was to have the right to hinder their foundation or to involve himself in their affairs. When he returned to Madrid, Fr. Rubeo spoke enthusiastically to the king about Teresa and her work. Philip II asked for her prayers and those of her daughters, and was from then on the most powerful friend and protector of the reform. After returning to Rome, the Father General gave the saint even more power: to found two monasteries for men according to the primitive Rule if she could obtain the permission of the present provincial and that of his predecessor. This permission was obtained for her by the bishop of Avila, who himself had been the first to express the wish for monasteries of friars of the reform. Teresa now found herself in an unusual position. Instead of a quiet little monastery to which she could retreat with a few selected souls, she was now to found an entire order for men and women. "And only a poor, unshod Carmelite was there to accomplish this, even though furnished with permits and the

best wishes, but without any means for initiating the work and without any other support than that of the Lord [F, 2, 6]. But this support sufficed. Before long, what was most important for a monastery of men appeared: the first friars. While she was making the first foundation for nuns in Medina del Campo, the prior of the Carmelite monastery of the mitigated rule there, Fr. Antonio de Heredia, energetically stood by Teresa's side. When she told him of her plan, he declared himself ready to be the first male discalced Carmelite. Teresa was surprised and not absolutely happy, because she did not fully credit him with having the strength to sustain the primitive Rule. However, he stayed firm in his decision. A few days later, a companion for him appeared who was most satisfactory to the saint: a young Carmelite at that time called John of St. Matthias, who from his early youth had lived a life of prayer and the strictest self-denial. He had gained the permission of his superior to follow the primitive Rule personally. Not satisfied with this, he was thinking of becoming a Carthusian. Teresa persuaded him, instead, to become the living cornerstone of the Carmelite Order of the primitive Rule.

Some time later a little house in Duruelo, a hamlet between Avila and Medina del Campo, was offered to her for the planned foundation. It was in miserable condition, but neither Teresa nor the two fathers were taken aback by it. Fr. Antonio still needed some time to end his priorship and put all his affairs in order. In the meantime, Fr. John joined Holy Mother to acquaint himself with the spirit and rule of life of the reform under her personal direction. On September 20, 1568 he went to Duruelo, having been clothed by Teresa in the habit of the reform, which she herself had made for him. As the Holy Mother had anticipated, he divided the single room of the pitiful little hut into two cells, an attic room into the choir, a vestibule into a chapel where he celebrated the first Mass the next morning. Soon he was considered a saint by the peasants in the neighborhood. On November 27, Fr. Antonio joined him. Together they now committed themselves to the primitive Rule and changed their names. From then on they were called Anthony of Jesus [Antonio de Jesús] and John of the Cross [Juan de la Cruz].

A few months later the Holy Mother could visit them and get to know their way of life. She says about this:

I came there during Lent in the year 1569. It was morning. Father Antonio in his always cheerful mood was sweeping the doorway to the church. "What does this mean, my father," I said, "and where is your self-respect?" Oh, cursed be the time when I paid attention to that," he answered chuckling. I went into the chapel and was seized by the spirit of fervor and poverty with which God had filled it. I was not the only one so moved. Two merchants with whom I was friendly and who had accompanied me from Medina del Campo looked at the house with me. They could only weep. There were crosses and skulls everywhere. I will never forget a little wooden cross over a holy water font to which an image of the Savior had been glued. This image was made of simple paper; however, it flooded me with more devotion than if it had been very valuable and beautifully made. The choir, once an attic room, was raised in the middle so that the fathers could comfortably pray the Office. But one still had to bow deeply when entering. At both sides of the church, there were two little hermitages where they could only sit or lie down and even so their heads would touch the roof. The floor was so damp that they had to put straw on it. I learned

that the fathers, instead of going to sleep after matins, retreated to these little hermitages and meditated there until prime. In fact, they once were praying in such recollection that when snow fell on them through the slats in the roof, they did not notice it at all, and returned to the choir without it occurring to them even to shake their robes. [F, 14, 7]

Duruelo was the cradle of the male branch of the reformed Carmel. It spread vigorously from there, always directed by the Holy Mother's prayer and illuminating suggestions, but nevertheless relatively independent. The humble little John of the Cross, the great saint of the church, inspired it with the spirit. But he was entirely a person of prayer, of penance. Others took on the external direction. Besides Fr. Antonio, there were the enthusiastic Italians, Fr. Mariano and Fr. Nicolás Doria. But, above all, the most faithful support for the Holy Mother during her last years was, as she was convinced, the choice instrument of the reform, the youthful, brilliantly gifted Fr. Jerónimo Gracián of the Mother of God.

Teresa herself had hardly any time for quiet monastic life after she left the peace of St. Joseph's upon founding the first daughter house in Medina del Campo. She was called now here, now there, to establish new houses of the reform. Despite her always fragile health and increasing age, she indefatigably undertook the most difficult journeys as often as the Lord's service required. Everywhere there were hard battles to endure: Sometimes there were difficulties with the spiritual and civil authorities, sometimes the lack of a suitable house and the basic necessities of life, sometimes disagreements with upper-class founders who made impossible demands of the monasteries. When finally all obstacles had been overcome and everything organized so that the true life of Carmel could begin, she who had done it all had, without pause, to move on to new tasks. The only consolation she had was that a new garden was blooming for the Lord to enjoy.

14. Prioress at the Monastery of the Incarnation

While the spiritual gardens of Mother Teresa were spreading their lovely fragrance over all of Spain, the Monastery of the Incarnation, her former home, was in a sad state. Income had not increased in proportion to the number of nuns, and since they were used to living comfortably and not (as in the reformed Carmel) to finding their greatest joy in holy poverty, discontent and slackening of spirit spread. In the year 1570, Fr. Fernández of the Order of St. Dominic came to this house. He was the apostolic visitor entrusted by Pope Pius V with examining the disciplinary state of monasteries in Castile. Since he had already become thoroughly acquainted with some monasteries of the reform, the contrast must have shocked him. He thought of a radical remedy. By the authority of his position, he named Mother Teresa as prioress of the Monastery of the Incarnation and ordered her to return to Avila at once to assume her position. In the midst of her work for the reform, she now had to undertake a task that for all intents and purposes appeared impossible. Exhorted by the Lord himself, she declared her readiness. However, with the agreement of Fr. Fernández, she gave a written statement that she personally would continue to follow the primitive Rule. One can imagine the vehement indignation of the nuns who were to have a prioress sent to them—one not elected by them—a sister of theirs who had left them eight years earlier and whom they considered an adventuress, a mischief-maker. The storm broke as the provincial led her into the house. The

provincial, Fr. Angel de Salazar, could not make himself heard in the noisy gathering. The “Te Deum” that he intoned was drowned out by the sounds of indignation. Teresa’s goodness and humility finally brought about enough quiet for the sisters to go to their cells and to tolerate her presence in the house.

They were saving the decisive declarations for the first chapter meeting. But how amazed they were when they entered the chapter room at the sound of the bell to see in the prioress’ seat the statue of our dear Lady, the Queen of Carmel, with the keys to the monastery in her hands and the new prioress at her feet. Their hearts were conquered even before Teresa began to speak and in her indisputably loving manner presented to them how she conceived and intended to conduct her office. In a short time, under her wise and temperate direction, above all by the influence of her character and conduct, the spirit of the house was renewed. Her greatest support in this was Fr. John of the Cross, whom she called to Avila as confessor for the monastery.

This time of greatest expenditure of energy when Teresa, along with being prioress of the Monastery of the Incarnation, retained the spiritual direction of her eight reformed monasteries, was also a time of the greatest attestation of grace. At that time she had a vision that she herself described as a “spiritual marriage.” On November 18, 1572, the Lord appeared to her during Holy Communion. “He offered me his right hand and spoke, ‘See this nail. It is the sign of our union. From this day on you are my bride. Up to now you had not earned it. But now you will not only see me as your Creator, your King, your God, but from now on you will care for my honor as my true bride. My honor is yours; your glory is mine” [ST, 31]. From that moment on, she found herself united blissfully with the Lord, a union that remained with her for the entire last decade of her life, her own life mortified, “full of the inexpressible joy of having found her true rest, and of the sense that Jesus Christ was living in her. She characterized as the first result of this union “such a complete forgetfulness of self that it truly seems as if this soul had lost its own being. It no longer recognizes itself. It no longer thinks about heaven for itself, about life, about honor. The only thing she cares about any longer is the honor of God” [C, 7, 3, 2]. The second result is an inner desire for suffering, a desire, however, that no longer disturbs her soul as earlier. She desires with such fervor that God’s will be fulfilled in her that everything that pleases the divine Master seems good to her. If he wants her to suffer, she is happy; if he does not, his will be done.

But the following surprised me the most. This soul whose life has been martyrdom, because of her strong desire to enjoy the vision of God, has now become so consumed by the wish to serve him, to glorify his name, and to be useful to other souls that, far from wishing to die, she would like to live for many years in the greatest suffering....

In this soul there is no more interior pain or dryness, but only a sweet and constant joy. Should she for a short time be less attentive to the presence of God, he himself immediately awakens her. He works to bring her to complete perfection and imparts his doctrines in a completely hidden way in the midst of such a deep peace that it reminds me of the building of Solomon’s temple.

Actually, the soul becomes the temple of God where only God alone and the soul mutually delight in each other in greatest quiet. [C, 7, 3, 6-11]

15. Doing Battle for Her Life's Work

The greatest grace that can befall a soul was probably necessary to strengthen the saint for the storm that was soon to break over the reform. Even during her term as prioress, she had to resume her journeys of foundation and leave a vicaress in charge in Avila. At the end of her years as prioress it was only with some effort that she stopped the nuns from re-electing her. Those who had so struggled against her assuming the position clung to her with such great love. Her humility and goodness, her superior intelligence and wise moderation in this case had been able to bridge the rift between the "calced" and the "discalced." Her spiritual sons were not so lucky. They had founded new monasteries in addition to the two for which the general of the Order, Fr. Rubeo, had previously given Teresa authorization. They had the permission of the apostolic visitor from Andalusia, Fr. Vargas, but no arrangement with the Order's superiors. Their extraordinary penances (which often caused the saint herself concern) and their zeal soon aroused the admiration of the people. This, along with the apostolic visitor's evident preference for the monasteries of the reform, made those not of the reform fear they themselves would soon be pushed entirely into the background, even that the reform might be imposed on the entire Order. Their envoys turned the general in Rome completely against the discalced as disobedient and as agitators. To suppress their "revolt," Fr. Tostado, a Portuguese Carmelite with special authority, was sent to Spain. A clash between the two branches of the Order ensued, which must have filled the heart of the humble and peace-loving Holy Mother with the greatest pain. In addition, it appeared that her entire work was threatened. She herself was called "a gadabout" by the new papal nuncio in Spain, "disobedient, ambitious, who presumes to teach others like a doctor of the church despite the prohibition of Saint Paul." She was ordered to choose one of the reformed monasteries as her permanent residence and to make no further trips. How grateful she would have been for the quiet in the monastery of Toledo, which Fr. Gracián suggested to her, had there not been such a hostile design behind the command! All the monasteries of the reform were prohibited from taking in novices, condemning them to extinction. Her beloved sons were reviled and persecuted. Fr. John of the Cross, who had always kept himself far from all conflict, was even secretly abducted and kept in humiliating confinement in the monastery of the calced in Toledo. He was cruelly abused until the Blessed Virgin, his protectress since childhood, miraculously freed him. In this storm that finally made everyone lose courage, Holy Mother alone stood erect. Together with her daughters, she stormed heaven. She was indefatigable in encouraging her sons with letters and advice, in calling her friends for help, in presenting the true circumstances to the Father General who had once been so good to her, in appealing to her most powerful patron, the king, for protection. And finally she arrived at the solution that she recommended as the only possible one: the complete separation of the calced from the discalced Carmelites into two provinces. The Congregation of Religious in Rome had been occupied with the unfortunate conflict for a long time. A well-informed cardinal, whom Pope Gregory XIII questioned concerning the state of affairs, responded, "The Congregation has thoroughly investigated all the complaints of the Carmelites of the mitigated Rule. It comes down to the following: Those with the mitigated Rule fear that the reform will finally reform them also." The pope then

decided that the monasteries of Carmelite friars and nuns of the reform were to constitute a province of their own under a provincial chosen by them. A brief dated June 27, 1580 announced this decision. In March of 1581, the chapter of Alcalá elected Fr. Jerónimo Gracián as its first provincial in accordance with the Holy Mother's wishes.

16. The End

Teresa greeted the end of the years of suffering with overflowing thanks. "God alone knew in full about the bitterness, and now only he alone knows of the boundless joy that fills my soul, as I see the end of these many torments. I wish the whole world would thank God with me! Now we are all at peace, calced and discalced Carmelites, and nothing is to stop us from serving God. Now then, my brothers and sisters, let us hurry to offer ourselves up for the honor of the divine Master who has heard our prayers so well" [F, 29, 31-32]. During the short span of time still given to her, she herself sacrificed her final strength for new journeys to make foundations. The erection of the monastery in Burgos, the last one that she brought to life, cost her much effort and time. She had left Avila on January 2, 1582, to go there. It was July before she could begin the trip home, but she was not to reach the desired goal any more. After she had visited a number of other monasteries of the nuns, Fr. Antonio of Jesus brought her to Alba to comply with a wish of the Duchess María Henríquez, the great patroness of that monastery. Completely exhausted, Teresa arrived on September 20. According to a number of witnesses, she had predicted some years earlier that she would die at this place and at this time. Even though the attending physician saw her condition as hopeless, she continued to take part in all the monastic exercises until September 29. Then she had to lie down. On October 2, in accordance with her wish, Fr. Antonio heard her last confession. On the third she requested Viaticum. An eyewitness gave this report: "At the moment when the Blessed Sacrament was brought into her cell, the Holy Mother raised herself without anyone's help and got on her knees. She would even have gotten out of her bed if she had not been prevented. Her expression was very beautiful and radiated divine love. With a lively expression of joy and piety, she spoke such exalted divine words to the Lord that we were all filled with great devotion." During the day she repeated again and again the words from the "Miserere" (Psalm 51): *Cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, no despicias* ("A broken and contrite heart, God, you will not despise"). In the evening she asked to be anointed. Concerning her last day, October 4, we again have an eyewitness account by Sr. María of St. Francis:

On the morning of the feast of St. Francis, at about 7 o'clock, our Holy Mother turned on her side toward the nuns, a crucifix in her hand, her expression more beautiful, more glowing, than I had ever seen it during her life. I do not know how her wrinkles disappeared, since the Holy Mother, in view of her great age and her continual suffering, had very deep ones. She remained in this position in prayer full of deep peace and great repose. Occasionally she gave some outward sign of surprise or amazement. But everything proceeded in great repose. It seemed as if she were hearing a voice that she answered. Her facial expression was so wondrously changed that it looked like a celestial body to us. Thus immersed in prayer, happy and smiling, she went out of this world into eternal life.

The wondrous events that occurred at the Saint's burial, the incorrupt state of her body that was determined by repeated disinterments, the numerous miracles that she worked during her life and then really in earnest after her death, the enthusiastic devotion of the entire Spanish people for their saint—all of this led to the initiation of the investigations preparatory to her canonization, already in the year 1595. Paul V declared her blessed in a brief on April 24, 1614. Her canonization by Gregory XV followed on March 22, 1622. Her feast day was designated as October 15, because the ten days after her death were dropped (October 5-14, 1582) due to the Gregorian calendar reform.

Luis de Leon said of Teresa: "I neither saw nor knew the saint during her lifetime. But today, albeit she is in heaven, I know her and see her in her two living reflections, that is, in her daughters and in her writings. Actually, there are few saints as humanly near to us as our Holy Mother. Her writings, which she penned as they came to her, in obedience to the order of her confessor, wedged in among all of her burdens and work, serve as classical masterpieces of Spanish literature. In incomparably clear, simple and sincere language they tell of the wonders of grace that God worked in a chosen soul. They tell of the indefatigable efforts of a woman with the daring and strength of a man, revealing natural intelligence and heavenly wisdom, a deep knowledge of human nature and a rich spirit's innate sense of humor, the infinite love of a heart tender as a bride's and kind as a mother's. The great family of religious that she founded, all who have been given the enormous grace of being called her sons and daughters, look up with thankful love to their Holy Mother and have no other desire than to be filled by her spirit, to walk the way of perfection hand in hand with her to its goal.

Appendix F: The Dark Night

STANZAS OF THE SOUL

1. One dark night,
fired with love's urgent longings
—ah, the sheer grace!—
I went out unseen,
my house being now all stilled.
2. In darkness, and secure,
by the secret ladder, disguised,
—ah, the sheer grace!—
in darkness and concealment,
my house being now all stilled.
3. On that glad night,
in secret, for no one saw me,
nor did I look at anything,
with no other light or guide
than the one that burned in my heart.
4. This guided me
more surely than the light of noon
to where he was awaiting me
—him I knew so well—
there in a place where no one appeared.
5. O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
the Lover with his beloved,
transforming the beloved in her Lover.
6. Upon my flowering breast
which I kept wholly for him alone,
there he lay sleeping,
and I caressing him
there in a breeze from the fanning
cedars.
7. When the breeze blew from the turret,
as I parted his hair,
it wounded my neck
with its gentle hand,
suspending all my senses.
8. I abandoned and forgot myself,
laying my face on my Beloved;
all things ceased; I went out from myself,
leaving my cares
forgotten among the lilies.

Appendix G: Session 5, Excerpts from Foundations, on the first friars

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Chapter 2: 5,6,7,

5. After some days passed, I was thinking about how necessary it would be if monasteries of nuns were to be founded that there be friars observing the same rule. Seeing how few friars there were in this province, making me even wonder whether or not they were going to die out, I prayed to the Lord over the matter very much and wrote to Father General. In the letter, I begged him for this permission as best I knew how, giving him the reasons why it would be a great service to God. I pointed out how the difficulties that could arise were not sufficient to set aside so good a work, and suggested to him what service it would render to our Lady, to whom he was very devoted. She must have been the one who arranged it. This letter reached him while he was in Valencia, and from there he sent me the permission for the foundation of two monasteries because he desired the best religious observance for the order. So that there wouldn't be any opposition, he made his permission subject to the approval, difficult to obtain, of both the present and the former provincial. But since I saw that the main thing was accomplished, I had special hope the Lord would do the rest. And so it happened that through the kindness of the bishop, who took up this matter as his own, both provincials gave their permission.

6. Well then, being consoled in having the permissions, my concern grew in that there was no friar in the province that I knew of who could begin this work, nor any layman who desired to make such a start. I didn't do anything but beg our Lord that he would awaken at least one person. Neither did I have a house or the means to get one. Here I was, a poor discalced nun, without help from anywhere—only from the Lord—weighed down with patent letters and good desires, and without there being any possibility of my getting the work started. Neither courage nor hope failed, for since the Lord had given the one thing, He would give the other. Everything now seemed very possible, and so I set to work.

7. O greatness of God! How You manifest Your power in giving courage to an ant! How true, my Lord, that it is not because of You that those who love You fail to do great works but because of our own cowardice and pusillanimity. Since we are never determined, but full of human prudence and a thousand fears, You, consequently, my God, do not do your marvelous and great works. Who is more fond than You of giving, or of serving even at a cost to Yourself, when there is someone open to receive? May it please Your Majesty that I render You some service and that I not have to render an accounting for all that I have received, amen.

Chapter 3:17

17. A little later it happened that a young Father came there who was studying at Salamanca. He came along with another, as his companion, who told me great things about the life this

Father was leading. The young Father's name was Fray John of the Cross. I praised our Lord. And when I spoke with this young friar, he pleased me very much. I learned from him he also wanted to go to the Carthusians. Telling him what I was attempting to do, I begged him to wait until the Lord would give us a monastery and pointed out the great good that would be accomplished if in his desire to improve he were to remain in his own order and that much greater service would be rendered to the Lord. He promised me he would remain as long as he wouldn't have to wait long. When I saw that I already had two friars to begin with, it seemed to me the matter was taken care of; although I still wasn't so satisfied with the prior, and thus I waited a while, and waited also for the sake of finding a place where they could begin.

Chapter 13:1-7

1. Before making the foundation of Valladolid, I had already agreed with both Father Fray Antonio de Jesús, who was then prior of the Carmelite monastery of St. Anne in Medina, and Fray John of the Cross, as I have already mentioned, that they would be the first to enter if a monastery for discolored friars were founded for the observance of the primitive rule. Since I had no resources for acquiring a house, I did nothing but commend the matter to our Lord. For, as I have said, I was now satisfied with these Fathers. The Lord had indeed exercised Father Fray Antonio de Jesús in trials during the year since I had spoken with him; and he suffered them with much perfection. As for Father Fray John of the Cross, no trial was necessary. Even though he had lived among the calced friars, those of the cloth, he always lived a life of great perfection and religious observance. Since the Lord had given me the chief requirement for a beginning, which was friars, He was pleased to arrange the rest.

2. A gentleman from Avila, named Don Rafael, with whom I had never spoken, found out, I don't know how (for I don't remember), about my desire to make a foundation for discolored friars. He came and offered me a house he owned in a little town of very few inhabitants (I don't think even twenty, but I don't remember now). He kept the house there for an administrator who collected the revenue from his grain fields. Although I imagined how it might look, I praised our Lord and thanked this gentleman very much. He told me it was on the direct route to Medina del Campo and that since I had to pass by there to make the foundation in Valladolid I could see it. I told him I would, and indeed that is what I did. I left Avila with a nun companion and with Father Julián de Avila, the chaplain at St. Joseph's in Avila, the priest I mentioned who helped me in these travels.

3. Although we left in the morning, we got lost because we didn't know the road; and since the place is little known, we couldn't get much information about where it was. Thus, our traveling that day was very trying and the sun was very hot. When we thought we were near, we discovered we had just as far to go. I always remember the tiredness we felt and the wrong roads we took on that journey. The result was that we arrived shortly before nightfall.

When we entered the house it was in such a state that we dared not remain there that night; it wasn't at all clean and was filled with vermin. It had a fairly good entrance way, a room double in size, a loft, and a small kitchen. This was all we had for our monastery. I figured that the entrance way could serve as the chapel, the loft as the choir, which would adapt well, and the room for sleeping.

My companion, although much better than I and very fond of penance, couldn't bear the thought of my planning to found a monastery there and said to me: "Surely, Mother, there isn't a soul, however good, that could put up with this. Don't even consider it." The Father who came with me, although he agreed with my companion, did not oppose me since I had told him my intentions. We went to spend the night in the church, although not in vigil because we were exhausted.

4. When we arrived in Medina, I spoke immediately with Father Fray Antonio, and I told him what took place and that if he would have the courage to stay there for a while, I was certain God would soon provide a remedy, and that the important thing was to begin. It seems to me I was most aware of what the Lord had done and was feeling sure, so to speak; just as I do now from what I see and even much more so because of what up till now I have seen, for at the time of my writing this there are, through the goodness of God, ten monasteries of discalced friars. And I told him he should realize that neither the provincial at that time nor the previous one would give permission—for the foundation needed their consent, as I said at the beginning — if we were seen living in a well established house. This was apart from the fact that we did not have the means for such a house. And I pointed out that in that little place and house the foundation would not attract attention. And so Fray Antonio told me that he would be willing to live not only there but in a pigsty. Fray John of the Cross was of the same mind.

5. Now what remained was to obtain the consent of the two Fathers I mentioned because this was the condition under which our Father General granted the permission. I hoped in our Lord to obtain it, and so I told Father Fray Antonio to take care to do all he could to gather something together for this house. I went with Fray John of the Cross to the foundation of Valladolid about which I have written. And since we spent some days before establishing the enclosure on account of the workmen who were getting the house ready, there was an opportunity to teach Father Fray John of the Cross about our way of life so that he would have a clear understanding of everything, whether it concerned mortification or the style of both our community life and the recreation we have together. The recreation is taken with such moderation that it only serves to reveal the Sisters' faults and to provide a little relief so that the rule may be kept in its strictness. He was so good that I, at least, could have learned much more from him than he from me. Yet this is not what I did, but I taught him about the lifestyle of the Sisters."

6. It pleased God that the provincial, Fray Alonso González, from whom I had to obtain approbation, was there. He was elderly, good natured, and without malice. I told him many things, and reminded him of the account he would have to give if he hindered a work as good as this when asked by God to carry it out. His Majesty, wanting the foundation, put him in the right disposition, for he mellowed very much. When Doña Maria de Mendoza and the bishop of Avila, her brother (who is the one who always favored and protected us) came, they convinced both him and Father Fray Angel de Salazar, the previous provincial, the one from whom I feared all the difficulty. Moreover, a certain need arose at the time for which the latter provincial had need of assistance from Doña Maria de Mendoza. This fact, I believe, helped a great deal, although even if this opportunity had not been present, our Lord would have moved the provincial's heart just as He did the heart of Father General which was anything but inclined to the idea.

7. Oh, God help me, how many obstacles I have seen in these business matters that seemed impossible to overcome, and how easy it was for His Majesty to remove them. And how ashamed I am not to be better after seeing what I have seen. For now as I am writing, I am growing fearful and want our Lord to make known to everyone how in these foundations we creatures have done next to nothing. The Lord has directed all by means of such lowly beginnings that only His Majesty could have raised the work to what it now is. May He be always blessed, amen.

Chapter 14: 6,11

6. On the First or Second Sunday of Advent (I don't remember which of these Sundays it was), in the year 1568, the first Mass was said in that little stable of Bethlehem, for it doesn't seem to me the house was any better. The following Lent, while on my way to the foundation in Toledo, I passed by there. When I arrived in the morning, Father Fray Antonio was sweeping the doorway to the church with that joyful expression on his face that he always has. I said to him: "What's this, my Father; what has become of your honor?" Telling me of his great happiness, he answered with these words: "I curse the day I had any."

When I entered the little church, I was astonished to see the spirit the Lord had put there. And it wasn't only I, for the two merchants, my friends from Medina who had accompanied me there, did nothing else but weep. There were so many crosses, so many skulls! I never forget a little cross made for the holy water fount from sticks with a paper image of Christ attached to it; it inspired more devotion than if it had been something very expertly carved.

11. I couldn't thank our Lord enough when I saw that little house, which shortly before was uninhabitable, with such a spirit that everywhere I looked I found something edifying. And by the way they were living, I learned of the mortification, prayer, and good example they were giving. A gentleman and his wife, whom I knew and who lived in a nearby town, came to see me there, and they never stopped telling me about the sanctity of these Fathers and the great good they were doing in those towns. I experienced the greatest interior joy, for it seemed to me that I saw a beginning that would be of much benefit to our order and service to our Lord. May it please His Majesty that things will continue as they are now, and that my plan will indeed be realized.

The merchants who had accompanied me told me that not for all the world would they have missed having gone there. What a thing virtue is, for that poverty pleased those merchants more than all their riches, and their souls were left satisfied and comforted.

Appendix H: Session 5, Excerpt from Chapter V The Reform, pp 157-169 of Journey to Carith,

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On the founding of the reform monasteries for the friars

It is not quite clear how much precise thinking Teresa had been doing about additional convents before Rossi's visit. The multiplication of convents following the primitive rule was beyond her original scope, and yet after his visit, and armed with his permissions, she began to plan other foundations. And something else, too:

After some days, I began to think how necessary it was, if convents for women were to be founded, that there should be friars following the same rule, and seeing how few there were in this province—it even seemed to me that they were dying out—I commended the matter earnestly to our Lord, and wrote a letter to our Father General, begging him as well as I could to grant this permission.

Teresa's letter, which outlined her reasons for friars who would follow the primitive rule and which concluded by "representing to him what a service it would be to our Lady," reached Rossi in Barcelona. He replied immediately, granting her request and allowing her to establish two monasteries of friars who were to be called "contemplative Carmelites"; and he prudently sent a copy of the permission to the Carmelite provincial. Teresa, however, was preoccupied with making the second convent of reformed nuns, and she had chosen the city of Medina del Campo, fifty miles north of Avila; she thus put the question of the friars aside for a moment: "Here was a poor Discalced nun, without help from anyone except the Lord, loaded with patents and good wishes but devoid of either courage or hope."

The Jesuits at Medina del Campo made the preliminary arrangements for her foundation, and in the summer of 1567 she set off in three lumbering, creaking carts to establish the second house of the reform. She took six nuns with her, two from St. Joseph's and four from the Incarnation who wanted to join the movement. They spent the night at Arévalo, and in the morning the prior of the Carmelite monastery in Medina, Anthony de Heredia, came out to escort them into the city. The prior offered Mass in the new monastery, but a close inspection afterward showed that the building needed extensive repairs before it would be fit for habitation. A wealthy merchant offered the nuns the upper story of his home while they waited for the repairs to be completed, and Teresa gladly accepted the offer. The nuns remained in these temporary quarters for about two months. During that time Teresa had the opportunity to discuss her reform with the prior and she revealed to him the permission she had from the general to found two houses of reformed friars. She was startled when he volunteered to become the first friar of the new reform. Anthony de Heredia, was an esteemed Carmelite from Valencia who had entered the Order at the age of ten, later graduated from Salamanca University, and served as prior in three different monasteries. But he was now fifty-seven years old, and his health was not good. Teresa later wrote about Anthony's offer: "I thought it was a joke, and told him so." But the prior protested, even stating that he had been planning to leave

the Carmelites and join the Carthusians so he could find a more dedicated form of life. However, Teresa felt uneasy about him: “Nevertheless I was not very well satisfied, although it made me happy to hear him, and I asked him to let us wait awhile.”

The following month Anthony brought another Carmelite to meet Teresa at her temporary dwelling. He was a newly ordained priest, twenty-five years old, and he had confided to the prior that he too wanted to leave the Order and join the Carthusians. Anthony felt that the young man had better speak to Teresa. His name was John de Yepes.

St. John of the Cross, one of the original group of reformed Carmelite friars, occupies a major position in the history of Christian thought—as a doctor of the church, the “mystical doctor”; and as perhaps the Church’s most outstanding writer on mystical theology. In association with St. Teresa he was a key figure in the reform movement within the Carmelite Order, although his role was a far different one from hers. Teresa was the organizer, the administrative genius who was able to wrest permissions and donations from the proper people and thus move the work of reform relentlessly forward; John was never considered a major administrative force in the work of reform, although he did for a while occupy a number of important administrative positions: his contribution to reform, rather, was in the area of inspiration, where he stood as a blinding symbol of dedication and fidelity to original Carmelite ideals.

Temperamentally, he presented a striking contrast to the voluble, outgoing Teresa. He was basically a quiet man, deeply reflective, somewhat withdrawn, but nevertheless a friendly, approachable person, who put people immediately at ease. Despite his own personal uncompromising asceticism and austerity, he was extremely kind and sympathetic with others, understanding of their problems and eager to help. But above all, this quiet Carmelite friar, this man of deep prayer and profound mystical experience, presented a vivid image of complete commitment and, if necessary, grim determination.

John was born at Fontiveros, a small town some twenty-five miles northwest of Avila, about the year 1542, the third child of Gonzalo de Yepes and Catalina Álvarez.¹ Gonzalo de Yepes came from a good family in Toledo, and after both his parents died when he was still quite young he was sponsored by his uncles who were wealthy silk merchants. Gonzalo kept the accounts for his uncles and performed a number of tasks of a general business nature. His work frequently took him to Fontiveros, where he met Catalina Álvarez, an attractive young woman from an impoverished background who worked as a silk weaver. They fell in love and soon married, but Gonzalo’s uncles were so infuriated at him because he had married beneath his station that they discharged him from their employment and banished him from their homes. Suddenly deprived of his position, the young man was forced to learn his wife’s trade of silk weaving. But he apparently had little success at it because the family lived in dire poverty. Shortly after John’s birth, Gonzalo died, leaving his almost destitute widow with three small children.

Catalina trudged to Toledo, carrying John in her arms, seeking some assistance from her late husband’s relatives, but they all refused to help, except a doctor who agreed to take care of one of the three boys, Francis. However, the doctor’s wife abused the young boy, and he soon

¹ His full legal name, therefore, was Juan de Yepes y Alvarez. The records of his birth have been lost, and the year 1542 is an approximation.

returned to his mother. The second child died about this time, and Catalina desperately began to hunt for the most advantageous place to rear her two other sons. She chose Medina del Campo, where she taught Francis to assist her in silk weaving and sent John, then age nine, to the catechism school, a residential institution for poor boys. John lived at the school for eight years, and he was apprenticed to a number of different artisans, notably a carpenter and a tailor, but he was completely inept at any of these trades. He was a serious and upright boy, however, and he came to the attention of Don Alonso Alvarez, the governor of the plague hospital in Medina, who invited him to live and work at the hospital. John acted as a nurse and a collector of alms, but Alvarez also allowed him to attend the new Jesuit college in the city, where he received an excellent education in the classics for four years.

John expressed a desire to become a priest, and Álvarez volunteered to defray the cost of his education, in the hope that he would one day serve as chaplain in the hospital. But John had become acquainted with the recently founded Carmelite community in Medina, and he was preparing to enter the Order. Álvarez apparently protested this decision so much that when the young man of twenty-one entered the monastery he had to steal away from the hospital secretly at night, and thus both he and his future associate Teresa joined the Order by fleeing furtively from their homes.

After his profession of vows in 1564 he was sent to the Carmelite College of St. Andrew at the University of Salamanca where he attended classes in philosophy and theology at both the university and St. Andrew's. During his years as a student he was carefully evaluating his position as a Carmelite, and he requested permission from his superiors to follow the primitive rule without mitigation, insofar as he could in the framework of the actual situation. This did not seem too practicable, because we soon find him planning to leave the Order and join the Carthusians. In 1567, while he was still pondering all these personal problems, he was ordained, and in September of that year he returned to Medina for the purpose of offering his first Mass. It was then that he met Teresa of Avila.

The young priest of twenty-five whom Teresa saw was an extremely short man, about five feet in height, thin, with a swarthy complexion and dark eyes. His face was slightly oval, his forehead broad, and his hairline was receding into early baldness. Teresa was then fifty-two, and still attractive in her middle age, despite the fact that she was becoming slightly plump. The nun and the priest presented an interesting study in contrasts—the vivacious middle-aged nun from an affluent family, and the quiet young priest from an impoverished background who had worked his way tenaciously through school. “When I spoke to the friar I liked him very much,” Teresa said, and she explained her project to him, asking him to put off his plan to enter the Carthusians until she had obtained a monastery for reformed friars. She told him that if he wanted to lead a more perfect life “he should lead it within his own Order.” Teresa’s singular persuasiveness worked again, and John agreed to her proposal, “provided there were no long delay.” John had to return to Salamanca for a final year of theology, and Teresa promised to do something about finding a house suitable for a monastery of friars during that time.

Teresa was immediately enthused with John de Yepes. “Although he is small in stature,” she later wrote, “I believe he is great in the sight of God.” After John and Anthony left her temporary convent that autumn day in 1567, she told the nuns that she now felt she could

proceed with the establishment of the friars' monastery, "although I was still not quite satisfied with the prior." She said that she now had "a friar and a half," and that phrase has caused a minor controversy among historians. Some have said that the "half friar" was the diminutive John of the Cross, while others have contended that she was referring to her doubts about Anthony, and that she would certainly not jest about the small stature of the future doctor of the church. Or would she?

After Teresa had established the nuns at Medina del Campo in their regular convent, she departed for Madrid and eventually arrived at Alcalá de Henares in late November. Then in February she was off to Malagón where she founded another convent. This was the pattern of her life for the next fourteen years, and by the time of her death in 1582 she had personally founded fifteen convents of nuns.

In May of 1568 Teresa left Malagón and returned for a visit to St. Joseph's in Avila. While there, a relative of hers, Raphael Mejía, offered her an abandoned farm house at Duruelo some twenty-five miles away, which she could use as a monastery for the friars. At the end of June, on her way back to Medina del Campo, she visited the site, accompanied by another nun and Julian of Avila, the chaplain at St. Joseph's. "I always remember the fatigue of that long roundabout journey," Teresa wrote. The sun was scorching, and no one they met had ever heard of the site at Duruelo. They lost their way, wandered in circles for hours, and did not arrive at the property until dusk. And then they found the wooden farm house to be severely disappointing: "It had a fair-sized porch, a room divided into two, with a loft above it, and a little kitchen: that was all there was of the building which was to be our monastery." Teresa's companion said that the building was completely uninhabitable and that no one could endure living there, but the saint began to make plans for using the limited space: she determined that the porch could be used for a small chapel, and the loft as a choir, while the friars could sleep in the downstairs area. The building was so dirty that they were unable to spend the night there, and they had to sleep in a nearby church.

The following morning they made their way to Medina del Campo, where Teresa immediately described the site at Duruelo to Anthony, sparing none of the harsh facts. She told him that if he had the courage to at least begin the foundation the Lord would provide better quarters in due time, but "the important thing was to make a start." Anthony eagerly agreed to begin at Duruelo, adding that "he would be willing to live, not only there, but in a pigsty." John returned to Medina del Campo from his school year at Salamanca in the early summer of that year, 1568, and Teresa took him with her to Valladolid where she was planning yet another convent. He remained with the nuns from August until October, while Teresa instructed John "all about our way of life, so that he might have an exact knowledge of everything." It seems that at this point Teresa had a finer sense of the original Carmelite tradition than John, and she carefully explained to her young protégé the mechanics of the primitive rule. She later wrote that he was such a good man that "I could have learned much more from him than he from me." But she adds, in her typical fashion: "I did not do so, however, but merely showed him the way the nuns lived."

Anthony came to visit Teresa in Valladolid, informing her of the preparations he had made and the articles he had gathered for the foundation at Duruelo. For some odd reason he had

collected five clocks, and Teresa commented: "I thought that very amusing. I do not think he even had anything to sleep on." It was arranged that John would go to Duruelo as soon as possible to prepare the building, while Anthony remained in Medina del Campo to conclude his affairs and resign his office of prior. Teresa herself sewed the new habit to be worn by the reformed friars, a Carmelite habit which, like the nuns' habits, was shorn of all excesses—the capuche was shortened, the extra folds of material were eradicated, the mantle reduced in length, and of course, the effete additions of the Renaissance age were removed: the gleaming buckles, the silver buttons on the sleeves, the ruffles and the lace collars. John tried on the habit in Valladolid, but did not wear it regularly until he arrived at Duruelo.

He reached Duruelo sometime in early October, accompanied by a young man who had asked to become a lay brother in the reform. The two men worked on the dilapidated farm house until it was in some semblance of order and ready for community living. On November 27, Anthony arrived at Duruelo in the company of the provincial, Alonso González, and two more recruits: a young Carmelite from Medina del Campo named Joseph who was a deacon; and Luke de Celis, a Carmelite priest who wanted to live in the reformed monastery for a while before deciding whether he should join. On the following day, the first Sunday of Advent, the provincial offered Mass, and then Anthony, John, and the deacon Joseph approached the altar, where they formally renounced the mitigation of Eugene IV and promised to live according to the rule of 1247. After this significant ceremony they signed the deed of foundation:

We, Brother Anthony of Jesus, Brother John of the Cross, and Brother Joseph of Christ, begin this day, 28 November 1568, to live the primitive rule.

They followed Teresa's practice of omitting their family names and adopting a religious title instead, and it is the first time that John used the title "of the Cross." Anthony of Jesus was then appointed prior of the monastery by the provincial, and John of the Cross novice master. The reform of the friars had begun.

Of the original group of five at Duruelo only two persevered through the first year. The lay brother aspirant soon departed; Luke de Celis became ill and returned to Medina del Campo; and Joseph of Christ disappeared from the official records, and is presumed either to have left the reform or to have died. However, other recruits came rapidly from the Carmelite monasteries in Castile, men who wanted to renounce the mitigation and follow the primitive rule, and by the end of the first year there were seven Carmelites at Duruelo. The community followed a brief and simple set of constitutions modeled closely on Teresa's constitutions for the nuns, with strong emphasis on solitude, poverty, two hours of daily meditation, and the simple, one-tone recitation of the Divine Office. Teresa visited the new foundation three months after its inception while she was on her way to establish the nuns in Toledo, and she was deeply impressed with what she saw. "I was amazed to see what spirituality the Lord had inspired there," she wrote. She noted that they had arranged the house according to her plan, and that the small loft which had holes in the roof was used as a choir where the friars chanted the office. They rose at midnight to chant matins, and remained in the choir for some time afterward in deep prayer, and Teresa observed that sometimes "their habits would be covered with snow without their having noticed it." Following the primitive tradition of the prophetic vocation, the friars also preached in the neighboring areas, and Teresa commented on this:

They used to go out and preach in many places in the district which were without instruction, and for that reason, too, I was glad that the house had been founded there, for they told me that there was no monastery near, nor any means of getting one, which was a great pity. In this short time they had gained such a good reputation that, when I heard of it, it made me extremely happy. . . . When they had preached and heard confessions and had returned to their monastery for a meal it would be very late. But this was very little concern to them, because they were so happy.

She had only one complaint: “severity in matters of penance, in which they were very strict.” She cautioned Anthony to exercise prudence in the use of penitential practices, because she was afraid that a lack of moderation might destroy the foundation; and “it had cost me so many desires and prayers to obtain men from the Lord who would make a good beginning.” The friars were going barefooted at that initial stage, even on their preaching expeditions, but they later began to wear hemp sandals like the nuns before them.

When Teresa left Duruelo she expressed her “great inward joy” at what had been accomplished. “For I saw quite well that this was a much greater grace than He had given me in enabling me to found houses for nuns.” Duruelo represented, as she wrote, “the beginnings of a restoration of the rule of the Virgin, His mother, and our Lady and Patroness.”

The second monastery of reformed friars was founded quickly by Teresa in her typically impetuous manner. She was at Toledo in her new convent when she received a message from the Princess of Eboli, stating that she wanted Teresa to come to the little town of Pastrana near Guadalajara and found a convent there. The princess was the wife of Ruy Gómez de Silva, a close friend and advisor to King Philip II, and one of the most influential men in Spain. Teresa did not want to leave Toledo so soon, but she was reluctant to displease the princess because “we were in a very bad way, the reform of the friars having just begun, and from every standpoint it would be useful to have Ruy Gómez on our side, since he had such influence with the king.” As she was pondering the matter, the Lord spoke to her and told her to go immediately, “for there was far more afoot than that foundation.” She traveled first to Madrid, where she stayed in a Franciscan convent. The morning after her arrival she was introduced to two hermits who had been leading a solitary life by themselves for a number of years. She talked to the elder of the two men, Mariano Azaro, an Italian of extraordinary background: he was a doctor, a mathematician, an engineer, he had attended the Council of Trent as a legal advisor, and he had worked in close collaboration with King Philip II on navigation and irrigation problems in Spain; and when he decided to abandon all of this for a life of complete dedication to God he investigated every Order but found them all “unsuitable for a man of his type”; thus he had been living as a hermit for eight years. He also informed Teresa that Ruy Gómez had given him a good piece of property at Pastrana for use as a hermitage.

Teresa was intrigued with this amazing Italian from Naples, and she tried to convince him that he should join her reform because “in our Order he could keep all his observances with less trouble, for they were the same as our own.” She talked to him at great length and concluded by telling him that “he could be of great service to God in this habit of ours.” Mariano replied that he wanted to think about it overnight, but Teresa’s dazzling persuasiveness had worked again and in the morning he agreed to join the reform, and to bring the other hermit with him,

and to deed the property at Pastrana to her. Teresa later wrote that Mariano was “amazed to find that he had so quickly changed his mind, especially—as he occasionally mentions even to this day—at the suggestion of a woman.”

Teresa acted quickly. She wrote letters to the Carmelite provincial for permission to establish at Pastrana the second of the two monasteries for which the general had given permission; to Anthony, requesting him to leave for Pastrana immediately, so that he could supervise the beginning of this second monastery; and to Balthasar Nieto, a Carmelite at Medina, a celebrated and eloquent preacher, who had sought admission to the reform, asking him to enter the reform at Pastrana. Teresa and her nuns made habits for the friars from brown frieze given her by the prince, and then they waited for Anthony to arrive. Balthasar arrived first, but Mariano was so impatient to begin the reform in Pastrana that, with Teresa’s approval, they had Balthasar invest them in the habit and begin the observance of the primitive rule. The three new friars were known as Balthasar of Jesus, Mariano of St. Benedict, and John of the Misery.² Anthony arrived four days late; on July 13, 1569, and remained to instruct the small community in Carmelite life. He eventually made Balthasar the prior. Mariano and John both entered the Order as lay brothers, but five years later, at the command of his superiors, Mariano was ordained to the priesthood.

The monastery at Pastrana ultimately became the most celebrated and important monastery of the reform in Spain, the house of novitiate where generations of Carmelites were trained in the spirit of the primitive rule. For two centuries most of the general chapters of the reform in Spain were held at Pastrana. St. Teresa had less good fortune with the convent of nuns she established at Pastrana, and her problems were due to the capricious Princess of Eboli. ... Teresa finally removed the entire community of nuns and relocated the convent in Segovia.

In 1570 the overcrowded community of friars at Duruelo was moved to a new site some four miles away at Mancera de Abajo. Don Luis, the lord of Mancera de Abajo, gave the property to the Carmelites because he felt indebted to Anthony of Jesus. When his wife was in perilous labor at the end of a particularly difficult pregnancy, Don Luis asked Anthony to visit his wife. The prior of Duruelo laid his scapular on the sick woman, and her child was born quickly and safely. In gratitude, Don Luis gave the Carmelites a new church he had just built, and he constructed a monastery for the friars adjacent to it. Teresa said of the church: “I never saw anything more beautiful in my life.” On June 11, the seven friars from Duruelo walked in a silent procession from Duruelo to Mancera de Abajo, with Anthony of Jesus and John of the Cross leading them, to take possession of their new monastery.

² John of the Misery was born John Narduch in Naples. He was a painter and sculptor by profession, but he had joined Mariano to live with him as a hermit. As a lay brother in the reform he continued to paint occasionally, and he had St. Teresa sit for his famous portrait of her. During the period of persecution against the reform he became frightened and rejoined the mitigation for a time, but he was ultimately accepted back into the reform again. His last years were saddened by paralysis and blindness, and he died in 1616. His name in the original Spanish is Juan de la Miseria. “Miseria” has no precise English counterpart, and “misery” is only an approximation. The word implies humility and abjection, a posture of nothingness before Almighty God. Such terms of self-contempt were frequently used in Spanish religious life at that time: one nun wrote Teresa and signed the letter “Elizabeth of the Dunghill”; and Teresa responded tartly, “I hope you mean that, and they are not just words.”

Thus by the summer of 1570 a healthy reform movement was flourishing in the Castilian province of Spain. There were two monasteries of friars, Mancera de Abajo and Pastrana, and six convents of nuns, all following the primitive Carmelite rule. The general in Rome, John Rossi, was pleased with the movement, but he was watching it very carefully because he did not want it to get out of hand as had the Albi reform. However, Rossi regarded Teresa's reform as fundamentally a Spanish phenomenon, and not a real solution to his nagging problem: the reform of the entire Order. When Rossi assumed the leadership of the Order in 1562 the prolonged Council of Trent was drawing to a close. The Council had sparked a vigorous reform movement within the entire Church which ultimately eradicated the most grievous abuses of the Renaissance era. Rossi rode on the crest of this cleansing tide in the Church and attempted to reform his own Order. He was able, by dint of his forceful and sometimes ruthless efforts, to stamp out most of the more serious faults, especially the moral ones, but he was unable to effect a fundamental change of spirit. The Order now seemed to be wedded to the fifteenth-century mitigation, rather than to the original thirteenth-century tradition. Until the end of his life Rossi unceasingly urged a return to the original Carmelite ideal.

Appendix I: Session 6, Excerpt from *A Touch of OCDS History*

by Elizabeth M Korves OCDS
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Paragraphs 7-15

7. Toward the end of the 17th century, the Third Order began to grow in the Low Countries, then France, and finally into Italy. In 1699, a book offering a short rule appeared in Belgium and was approved for that province. In 1708, a rule, ceremonial, and directory were published in France. This rule gave a specific title of “Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa” for the members and included a statement that the third order was present in many cities and villages in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Belgium. The preface indicates the book was meant to put an end to “great confusion” about the third order since different people were doing different things.
8. This 1708 rule called for daily mass, reciting the Little Office, one hour of mental prayer (half in the morning, half in the evening), fasting and works of charity. The novitiate was one year and then members were admitted to the profession of charity and obedience to God, to Our Lady of Mt Carmel, to St Teresa, and to the Superior General and his successor.ⁱ
9. Other rules for tertiaries came out in 1848 and 1857. In 1883, the Definitory General approved a revision of the 1848 rule and imposed it on all Congregations of the Third Secular Order. This remained the legislation for tertiaries until 1912.
10. In 1912, an official Manual of the Third Secular Order was published in Rome. It had been written by Fr. Elia of St. Ambrose and received approval by the Definitory General in 1911. In 1921, the Holy See approved it after some revision to bring the legislation in line with the 1918 Code of Canon Law. This Manual was the guiding legislation until Vatican II.ⁱⁱ
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12. A trial version of the Rule was received in Oct 1970 for a five-year trial period. Fr. Finian Monahan, then Father General, called together a commission of “experts from all regions” to

write this Rule. This commission consisted of six or seven friars, including Fr. Sam Anthony. The original draft was in Italian.^v ^{vi} The final version of the Rule was approved in 1979 but it was not until 1982 that it was printed in English.^{vii} This new Rule more fully emphasized the lay charism and also saw the introduction of First Promises. Prior to the 1979 Rule, vows of chastity and obedience were made after one year of novitiate.^{viii}

13. Since that Rule was written we've had a new Code of Canon Law, the Synod on the Laity, and other Church documents pertaining to the laity that were not taken into account when the Rule was written. In 1996, an international Congress of OCDS was held in Rome. This was the first such congress and one of the things that came out of that congress was a sense that our Rule needed to be updated.
14. In 2000, a second congress was held in Guadalajara, Mexico to specifically talk about revising the Rule of Life. Each province throughout the world was asked to send two delegates. Others able to make the trip also attended the congress. The two representatives for the Central Province were Mati Martinez, then of the Austin, TX community, now with the Killeen, TX study group, and Nancy Thompson of the Cedar Rapids, IA study group. Fr. John Michael Payne attended as our Provincial Delegate. As a result of that congress, 10 OCDS from around the world were appointed to write what are now our Constitutions. Pedro J. Gonzalez of the Bradenton, FL community was chosen as the representative from the US. They worked via email and met in Rome a few times.
15. In spring 2002, a draft of the constitutions was released. Fr Aloysius Deeney, our Secretary General (and from our province) posted them on the web and immediately received lots of feedback from those of us online. Feedback also came through the slower channels after the draft was distributed via the Flos Carmeli and other provincial newsletters. In September of that year, Fr. Aloysius presented a revision to the General Definitory which approved it. The new Constitutions were then forwarded to the appropriate office in Rome for approval for a five-year experimental period. On June 19th, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life approved the Constitutions definitely, not experimentally. However, Fr. Aloysius does plan to receive feedback over the next five years and then ask for amendments/revision.

ⁱ Rodriguez, pg 52-53.

ⁱⁱ Rodriguez, pg. 54.

ⁱⁱⁱ Unknown author, The Development of the Rule of Life of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, unpublished manuscript, pg. 4.

^{iv} Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

^v Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

^{vi} Unknown author, pg. 5.

^{vii} Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

^{viii} Rodriguez, pg.54.

Appendix J: Session 6, Entire article, *A Touch of OCDS History*

by Elizabeth M Korves OCDS
of the Oklahoma Province, USA

1. In some respects, the history of laity being associated with the Carmelite Order goes back to the very beginning, to the hermits on Mt Carmel. Those hermits were laity who formed a community and early in the 13th century asked St Albert for a Rule. One would consider that the order was officially created with the giving the Rule. As those first Carmelites moved from Mt Carmel into Europe, their way of life changed and they became recognized as a mendicant order and accepted ordination into Holy Orders, thus leaving behind their earlier lay status.^{ix}
2. Tracing the history of the secular/third order in Carmel and other orders is difficult because there is little documentation and a confusion of terms. Members of possible third orders have been referred to as *confraires*, *contratres*, *beatas*, *pinzocchere*, and *tertiary*. St Francis is believed to have founded the very first third order, having written a rule for them in 1221. Other mendicant orders imitated this Franciscan rule when they later founded their own third orders.^x
3. Evidence exists for a “Confrairie N.-D. du Mont-Carmel” at Toulouse in 1273 and a “Compagnia di Santa Maria del Carmino” at Bologna in 1280. Exactly what these groups were is uncertain due to lack of documentation and they may well have merely been some form of merchant guild associated with the local Carmelite parishes.^{xi}
4. The first solid evidence for a third order in Carmel comes during the time that Bl. John Soreth was Prior General of the order. In 1452, he obtained permission from Pope Nicholas V for the formation of both second and third orders of Carmelites. In 1455, John Soreth wrote the first rule for third orders. It was based heavily upon the Rule of St Albert and unlike our current Constitutions, showed much less recognition for the secular state of laity. The Rule that John Soreth wrote included wearing of the fuller habit (no mention of the veil), living communally, saying the full Office, and instructed tertiaries to “finally accommodate yourself to the holy customs of the entire Order as much as possible.”^{xii xiii}
5. In 1580, when the Discalced Carmelites were formed as a separate province within the order, a papal bull granted them all the graces and privileges of the Carmelite Order. Later documents extended these to the Discalced Carmelites once they were formed as a separate order. While Teresa of Avila was known to have given the scapular to benefactors and supporters, there is no indication that she considered forming a Third Order.^{xiv} Some authors claim that the brother of John of the Cross was a third order member but none seem to cite any documentation confirming it was anything official.
6. In actuality, the early Discalced Carmelites were rather disinclined to have tertiaries. When Fr. Jerome Gracián wrote the first Constitutions for the friars in 1576, he specifically forbade tertiaries. This prohibition was included in later versions of the friars’ Constitutions. The Order split into two congregations in 1600 (Spanish and Italian). Opposition in the Spanish congregation to tertiaries resulted in that congregation concentrating on enrolling people into the Confraternity of the Scapular instead of the Third Order. The Italian congregation

maintained a similar attitude.^{xv} In the meantime, in 1635, Theodor Strazzio, then Prior General of the Ancient Observance wrote a rule for their third order which was adopted by some Discalced for use with third order members. This rule was revised in 1678.^{xvi}

7. Toward the end of the 17th century, the Third Order began to grow in the Low Countries, then France, and finally into Italy. In 1699, a book offering a short rule appeared in Belgium and was approved for that province. In 1708, a rule, ceremonial, and directory were published in France. This rule gave a specific title of “Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Saint Teresa” for the members and included a statement that the third order was present in many cities and villages in France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and Belgium. The preface indicates the book was meant to put an end to “great confusion” about the third order since different people were doing different things.
8. This 1708 rule called for daily mass, reciting the Little Office, one hour of mental prayer (half in the morning, half in the evening), fasting and works of charity. The novitiate was one year and then members were admitted to the profession of charity and obedience to God, to Our Lady of Mt Carmel, to St Teresa, and to the Superior General and his successor.^{xvii}
9. Other rules for tertiaries came out in 1848 and 1857. In 1883, the Definitory General approved a revision of the 1848 rule and imposed it on all Congregations of the Third Secular Order. This remained the legislation for tertiaries until 1912.
10. In 1912, an official Manual of the Third Secular Order was published in Rome. It had been written by Fr. Elia of St. Ambrose and received approval by the Definitory General in 1911. In 1921, the Holy See approved it after some revision to bring the legislation in line with the 1918 Code of Canon Law. This Manual was the guiding legislation until Vatican II.^{xviii}
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12. A trial version of the Rule was received in Oct 1970 for a five-year trial period. Fr. Finian Monahan, then Father General, called together a commission of “experts from all regions” to write this Rule. This commission consisted of six or seven friars, including Fr. Sam Anthony. The original draft was in Italian.^{xxi xxii} The final version of the Rule was approved in 1979 but it was not until 1982 that it was printed in English.^{xxiii} This new Rule more fully emphasized the lay

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16. After this more generalized history of the Secular Order and our Rules and Constitutions, let us take a moment to briefly learn the history of Secular Carmel within the Central Province. Fr Evarist V. Foix began the first OCDS community in Oklahoma City while he was pastor on 9 Nov 1937 (all dates refer to canonical establishment). The St. Louis, MO community was founded in 1948. Fr. Evarist was elected provincial in May 1951 and appointed Fr. Felix DaPrato as the first provincial delegate to the Third Order. Apparently, Fr. Evarist billed himself as the "Provincial of the Third Order" and it was during his term as Provincial that the Secular Order grew. A "Tertiary Page" was begun that July in the Little Flower Magazine and the following year Fr. Felix decided that a Congress of Tertiaries in the Southwest should be organized to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the creation of the Third Order (marking when Bl. John Soreth received permission to start it).^{xxv}

¹ Even though the OCDS is canonically an association of the faithful (see Art. 37 of the Constitutions), we come under the jurisdiction of Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life rather than the Pontifical Council for the Laity. This is due to the fact that we fall under the juridical authority of the friars.

17. During the 1950's, communities were founded in Lafayette LA (1951), Jackson MS (1951), Little Rock AR (1953), New Orleans LA, (1953), Dallas TX (1954), Mobile AL (1954) and San Antonio TX (1956). Only two new communities were founded in the 1960's: Gulf Coast MS (1961) and Houston TX (1963). In the 1980's and 1990's, Secular communities once again blossomed with new communities founded in Baton Rouge LA (1984), Birmingham AL (1987), Austin TX (1989), Sioux City IA (1992), New Iberia LA (1995), Alexandria LA (1999), New Caney TX (1998), and a second community in Houston TX (1998).
18. Currently (2004) the Secular Order has Secular Order Groups in Jackson MS, Mobile AL (reduced from canonical community status), Vidalia LA, Amarillo TX, Savannah GA, Conyers GA, Cedar Rapids IA, Covington LA, Killeen TX, Lubbock TX, McAllen TX, Topeka KS, Waco TX, Thomasville GA and Knoxville TN. There are also six study groups that are in discernment about becoming part of the Secular Carmelite Order.^{xxvi}

© Elizabeth M Korves, April 2004

^{ix} Jotischky, Andrew, The Perfection of Solitude: Hermits and Monks in the Crusader States, Pennsylvania State University Press, Union Park, PA, 1995.

^x Rodriguez, Otilio OCD, *The Secular Order of the Teresian Carmel: Its Origin and History*, Carmelite Digest, vol. 2, no. 1, Winter 1987, pg. 49.

^{xi} Jarret, Bede, et al., *Third Orders*, Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 14, 1912 edition. Online at www.newadvent.org

^{xii} Rodriguez, pg. 50.

^{xiii} *The Rule of Bl. John Soreth*, Carmelite Digest, vol. 2, no. 1, Winter 1987, pg. 46-49.

^{xiv} Rodriguez, pg. 50.

^{xv} Rodriguez, pg. 51-52.

^{xvi} Hartdegen, S., *Third Orders*, Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 14, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967, pg.94.

^{xvii} Rodriguez, pg 52-53.

^{xviii} Rodriguez, pg. 54.

^{xix} Unknown author, The Development of the Rule of Life of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, unpublished manuscript, pg. 4.

^{xx} Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

^{xxi} Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

^{xxii} Unknown author, pg. 5.

^{xxiii} Morello, Sam Anthony, private email communication.

^{xxiv} Rodriguez, pg.54.

^{xxv} Payne, John Michael, private email communication.

^{xxvi} Payne, John Michael, Directory and Catalog of the Oklahoma Province of Saint Therese . OCDS Section, Feb 2003.

Appendix K: Session 6, Message of John Paul II to The Carmelite Family

To the Most Reverend Fathers

Joseph Chalmers

Prior General of the Order of Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel (O.Carm.)

and

Camilo Maccise

Superior General of the Order of Discalced Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel (O.C.D.)

1. The providential event of grace, which the Jubilee Year has been for the Church, prompts her to look with trust and hope to the journey we have just begun in the new millennium. *"At the beginning of this new century", I wrote in the Apostolic Letter Novo millennio ineunte, "our steps must quicken.... On this journey we are accompanied by the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom ... I entrusted the third millennium" (n. 58).*

I therefore learned with deep joy that the two branches of the Order of Carmel, the ancient and the reformed, intend to express their filial love for their Patroness by dedicating the year 2001 to her, invoked as the Flower of Carmel, Mother and Guide on the way of holiness. In this regard, I cannot fail to stress a happy coincidence: the celebration of this Marian year for the whole of Carmel is taking place, according to a venerable tradition of the Order itself, on the 750th anniversary of the bestowal of the Scapular. This celebration is therefore a marvellous occasion for the entire Carmelite Family to deepen not only its Marian spirituality, but to live it more and more in the light of the place which the Virgin Mother of God and of mankind holds in the mystery of Christ and the Church, and therefore to follow her who is the "Star of Evangelization" (cf. *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 58).

2. In their journey towards the "mountain of God, Christ the Lord" (*Roman Missal*, Opening Prayer of the Mass in honour of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 16 July), the various generations of Carmel, from the beginning until today, have sought to model their lives on Mary's example.

In Carmel therefore and in every soul moved by tender affection for the Blessed Virgin and Mother, there has thrived a contemplation of her, who from the beginning knew how to open herself to hearing God's Word and to obeying his will (Lk 2: 19, 51). For Mary, taught and formed by the Spirit (cf. Lk 2: 44-50), was able by faith to understand her own history (cf. Lk 1: 46-55) and, docile to the divine promptings, "advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan (cf. Jn 19: 25), enduring with her Only-begotten Son the intensity of his suffering and associating herself with his sacrifice in her mother's heart" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58).

3. Contemplation of the Virgin presents her to us as a loving Mother who sees her Son growing up in Nazareth (cf. Lk 2: 40, 52), follows him on the roads of Palestine, helps him at the wedding at Cana (cf. Jn 2: 5) and, at the foot of the Cross, becomes the Mother associated with his offering and given to all people when Jesus himself entrusts her to his beloved disciple (cf. Jn 19: 26). As Mother of the Church, the Blessed Virgin is one with the disciples in "constant prayer" (Acts 1: 14); as the new Woman who anticipates in herself what will one day come to pass for us all in the full enjoyment of Trinitarian life, she is taken up into heaven from where

she spreads the protective mantle of her mercy over her children on their pilgrimage to the holy mountain of glory.

Such a contemplative attitude of mind and heart prompts admiration for the Virgin's experience of faith and love; she already lives in herself all that every believer desires and hopes to attain in the mystery of Christ and the Church (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 103; *Lumen gentium*, n. 53).

Therefore, Carmelites have chosen Mary as their Patroness and spiritual Mother and always keep before the eyes of their heart the Most Pure Virgin who guides everyone to the perfect knowledge and imitation of Christ.

Thus an intimacy of spiritual relations has blossomed, leading to an ever increasing communion with Christ and Mary. For the members of the Carmelite Family, Mary, the Virgin Mother of God and mankind, is not only a model to imitate but also the sweet presence of a Mother and Sister in whom to confide. St Teresa of Jesus rightly urged her sisters: "Imitate Our Lady and consider how great she must be and what a good thing it is that we have her for our Patroness" (*Interior Castle*, III, 1, 3).

4. This intense Marian life, which is expressed in trusting prayer, enthusiastic praise and diligent imitation, enables us to understand how the most genuine form of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, expressed by the humble sign of the Scapular, is consecration to her Immaculate Heart (cf. Pius XII, Letter *Neminem profecto latet* [11 February 1950: AAS 42, 1950, pp. 390-391]; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, n. 67). In this way, the heart grows in communion and familiarity with the Blessed Virgin, "as a new way of living for God and of continuing here on earth the love of Jesus the Son for his Mother Mary" (cf. *Angelus Address*, in *Insegnamenti* XI/3, 1988, p. 173). Thus, as the blessed Carmelite martyr Titus Brandsma expressed it, we are put in profound harmony with Mary the *Theotokos* and become, like her, transmitters of divine life: "The Lord also sends his angel to us ... we too must accept God in our hearts, carry him in our hearts, nourish him and make him grow in us so that he is born of us and lives with us as the God-with-us, Emmanuel" (*From the report of Bl. Titus Brandsma to the Mariological Congress of Tongerlo, August 1936*).

Over time this rich Marian heritage of Carmel has become, through the spread of the Holy Scapular devotion, a treasure for the whole Church. By its simplicity, its anthropological value and its relationship to Mary's role in regard to the Church and humanity, this devotion was so deeply and widely accepted by the People of God that it came to be expressed in the memorial of 16 July on the liturgical calendar of the universal Church.

5. The sign of the Scapular points to an effective synthesis of Marian spirituality, which nourishes the devotion of believers and makes them sensitive to the Virgin Mother's loving presence in their lives. The Scapular is essentially a "habit". Those who receive it are associated more or less closely with the Order of Carmel and dedicate themselves to the service of Our Lady for the good of the whole Church (cf. "Formula of Enrolment in the Scapular", in the *Rite of Blessing of and Enrolment in the Scapular*, approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, 5 January 1996). Those who wear the Scapular are thus brought into the land of Carmel, so that they may "eat its fruits and its good things" (cf. Jer 2:7),

and experience the loving and motherly presence of Mary in their daily commitment to be clothed in Jesus Christ and to manifest him in their life for the good of the Church and the whole of humanity (cf. "Formula of Enrolment in the Scapular", cit.).

Therefore two truths are evoked by the sign of the Scapular: on the one hand, the constant protection of the Blessed Virgin, not only on life's journey, but also at the moment of passing into the fullness of eternal glory; on the other, the awareness that devotion to her cannot be limited to prayers and tributes in her honour on certain occasions, but must become a "habit", that is, a permanent orientation of one's own Christian conduct, woven of prayer and interior life, through frequent reception of the sacraments and the concrete practice of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. In this way the Scapular becomes a sign of the "covenant" and reciprocal communion between Mary and the faithful: indeed, it concretely translates the gift of his Mother, which Jesus gave on the Cross to John and, through him, to all of us, and the entrustment of the beloved Apostle and of us to her, who became our spiritual Mother.

6. A splendid example of this Marian spirituality, which inwardly moulds individuals and conforms them to Christ, the firstborn of many brethren, is the witness to holiness and wisdom given by so many Carmelite saints, all of whom grew up in the shadow and under the protection of their Mother.

I too have worn the Scapular of Carmel over my heart for a long time! Out of my love for our common heavenly Mother, whose protection I constantly experience, I hope that this Marian year will help all the men and women religious of Carmel and the devout faithful who venerate her with filial affection to grow in her love and to radiate to the world the presence of this Woman of silence and prayer, invoked as Mother of Mercy, Mother of Hope and Grace.

With these wishes, I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing to all the friars, nuns, sisters and lay people of the Carmelite Family, who work so hard to spread among the people of God true devotion to Mary, Star of the Sea and Flower of Carmel!

From the Vatican, 25 March 2001.

Appendix L: Session 8, Pastoral Care of the Secular Order (Excerpt)

14 December 2006

Spiritual Assistants¹

Art. 14

1. The spiritual assistant is the person designated by the competent major superior to carry out this service for a specific community of the OCDS.
2. In order to be a witness of Discalced Carmelite spirituality and of the fraternal affection of the religious towards the secular Discalced Carmelites, and to be a bond of communion between his Order and the OCDS, the spiritual assistant should preferably be a Discalced Carmelite Friar.

Art. 15

1. The principal task of the assistant is to foster a deeper insight into Discalced Carmelite spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the Secular Discalced Carmelites.
2. In the Council of the community and at the time of community elections the assistant will be respectful of the responsibilities and role of the Secular Discalced Carmelites, giving them priority with regard to the guidance, co-ordination, and animation of the community.
3. The assistant, when invited by the Council, participates actively in the discussions and decisions taken by the Council or by the Chapter.
4. The assistant is specifically responsible for the animation of liturgical celebrations and spiritual reflections during the meetings of the council or of the community.

Art. 16

1. The Assistant is appointed by the competent major Superior, after consultation with the council of the community concerned.
2. The appointment of the Assistant is made in writing and for a specified time.
3. When it is not possible to give the community a spiritual Assistant who is a member of the Order, the competent major Superior can entrust the service of spiritual assistance to:
 - religious of other Carmelite institutes;
 - clergy who are Secular Discalced Carmelites, specially prepared for such service;
 - other diocesan clerics or non-Discalced Carmelite religious, specially prepared for such service.

Art. 17

The local assistant fosters communion within the community and between the community and the Province. In harmony with Provincial or Provincial Delegate, the assistant sees to it that

¹ Constitutions OCDS, 44

between the religious and the secular communities a real life-giving union with each other exists. He fosters the active presence of the community in the Church and in society.

Art. 18

1. The local Assistant has the very important responsibility to support the Council of the community, especially the director of formation, in the formation of the candidates. The council may invite the local assistant to express his assessment of each of the candidates at different stages of formation.
2. The Council may ask the assistant to discuss with brothers or sisters who have difficulties, who want to retire from the community or who act in serious opposition to the Constitutions.

Appendix M: Session 9, Letter to the OCDS from Fr Saverio Cannistrà OCD Superior General

CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI
CORSO D'ITALIA, 38
00198 ROMA

To my very dear Brothers and Sisters of the OCDS

In Christ Jesus and his Holy Spirit, greetings of peace and communion!

1. For some years I have been meeting with you through the letter to the OCDS. By this means, I want to exercise part of my service of “spiritual and pastoral care of the OCDS”, as well as “guaranteeing the fidelity of the OCDS to the charism of the Discalced Carmelite Order, unity... and communion with the Church” (*Pastoral Care of the Secular Order*: 1; 3:2; cfr. 6-7).

In this regard, I would like to reflect with you on some issues related to the *Councils of the Secular Order communities*. I would like to help you in the service of guiding communities, of which you are “the immediate authority” (CC = OCDS Constitutions 46). At the same time, I think that these reflections can also shed light on the service provided by the Provincial Councils of the OCDS in promoting formation, apostolate and unity in the Provinces, even if they do not have a legal authority on par with that of the local councils (cf. CC 57-58).

2. From documents concerning the Secular Order emerge the *characteristics* and *duties* of the local Council.

This is composed of a President, three Councillors and the Director of formation who has made definitive promises (CC 52-53). Together with the General and the Provincial, the Council has the responsibility of guiding the Community “in discerning and accepting God’s ways” (CC 15), as legitimate Superiors of the Secular Order (CC 48). With regard to matters arising that are outside the “competence of the Council, it is the obligation of the President to bring it to the attention of the Provincial” (CC 47g).

The “primary responsibility” of the local Council is taking care of the “formation and Christian and Carmelite maturing of the members of the community” (CC 46; cfr. *Ratio Institutionis of the Secular Order* n. 6, 10, 11, 28, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35). In order that this may come about, the Council must meet frequently “in reference to taking care of formation programs and the growth of their own community” (CC 47). Other duties in the formation field are: to exercise discernment in admitting candidates to formation (cfr. *Ratio OCDS* 59-93), to first promise and to definitive promise and to give its consent to admit those called to vows (CC 36b, c, d; 39; 47a). For just motives and with the consent of the Provincial, it may reduce the period of formation to the first promise (CC 47b); lastly, it can receive a member transferring from another community (CC 47f).

Another fundamental aspect of the mission of the Council is involving the Community, remembering that it has a responsibility in formation (cfr. *Ratio of the Secular Order*: 28). What benefits this greatly is *preserving fraternal communion* within the Community according to the style of St Teresa. This, its crucial role, appears in article 24d of the Constitutions, to which I refer you.

Every three years the Council must convene the Community for the elections of the new Council (CC 47c), according to the electoral process established in the Provincial Statutes. Once the members of the new Council are elected, they appoint a Secretary and a Treasurer (CC 50, 54-55) from whom to receive the minutes of the meetings and the half-yearly report of the accounts. For a serious reason, the Council may replace a member of the Council itself (CC 47d).

After consultation with the Council, the OCD Provincial appoints a Spiritual Assistant for the Community (CC 43); the Assistant, although not part of the Council, may be invited to participate in its meetings and consulted on the ability of a candidate to assume the responsibility of a vocation to the OCDS (CC 44). Here, in thanking every Assistant for his dedication, I mention that he is the guarantor of the fidelity of the community to the charism (cf. CC 44; *Guide for Pastoral Care to the Secular Order*, 14-18) and in charge of its liturgical celebrations (ritual 13, 31, 51, 66). In addition, the Assistant plays the most important role of being a bond of fraternal communion between the community and the friars and the nuns of the Order, in whose name he fulfils this ministry of assistance.

Finally, it is up to the Council to take care of the processes of dismissal of members of the Community, as well as evaluating and discerning together with a member who, of his or her own accord, wants to leave the Community (CC 24e; 47e).

3. From these duties, we see that the Council carries out a fundamental role of accompanying and leading the Community in its mission. For this reason, it ought to walk together towards it, encouraging the *communal character of the Christian and Carmelite* vocation and look upon each of the members with God's eyes.

The Church, being a mystery of communion (cf. LG 2-4), formed of people created in the "image of divine communion" (Evangeliium Gaudium = EG 178; cfr. Gen 1:26,27), Christians must bear witness to a "captivating fraternity" (Final document of 2018 Synod: 1), the root of which is in the Most Holy Trinity. Communion in the Church leads to communion with Christ (cf. 1Jn 1:3), which in turn builds communion between men and women. In fact, in this communion, all the baptized participate in the commonly held meaning (*sensus commune*) of the faith (cf. LG 12; EG 119-120) and are called to become actively engaged in evangelization (EG 120). Thus, they "make real the human person's call to live communion, which comes about through sincere self-giving, union with God and unity with our brothers and sisters in Christ." Then, "the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyse, dialogue, discern and offer advice on taking pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will" (cf. International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church*, March 2, 2018 (= ITC) 43, 68).

4. The authority of the Council is shared among its 5 members by different functions. Firstly, I think that the warning of our Holy Mother to the Discalced friars is also useful for the Council, that is, that "their leaders be in accord" (Spiritual Testimonies 64). It should be an authority lived "with a mother's love" and with "discretion" (S. Teresa of Jesus, Constitutions 34, or cfr. Foundations 18:6-8). Its exercise requires *active co-responsibility*, both within the Council itself in the choices and decisions to be taken, and in arousing the active and responsible participation of each member of the community, in decisions concerning the good of the

community and in the exercise of the discernment of truth. Today more than ever, in the face of social and ecclesial reality, a solid formation is necessary that leads to the practice of discernment in community. The community is then the fertile sphere of this; it should lead each member to be co-responsible for the community, its formation and its mission (GE 175; cf. Final Document 2018 Synod, 119-124).

Lastly, its character as *a temporary shared authority*, renewed every three years, indicates that the Council receives an authority of mediation and delegation from the community that elects it. It must therefore lead it according to the spirit and charism of the Teresian Carmel, according to what is defined in the OCDS constitutions. By fulfilling this condition, it elicits and strengthens the identity and sense of belonging to the Order, and favours encounter with God and with the brethren, thus facilitating embodiment in each member. For this to happen, the members of the Council must know well the documents that govern the OCDS and let themselves be guided by them.

5. As an immediate authority, the Council serves as a support for the community's good; it must stand out *by its great esteem for the charism of the Teresian Carmel and a fraternal relationship* with the friars and nuns and the other members of the Teresian Carmel family. Its role, therefore, is to mediate between the Order and the members of the community, to which the Council lends a humble service (cf. CC 24d). To this end, they must cherish a love of the truths of Sacred Scripture, docility and submission to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church and Order, avoiding radicalism and strange, fanatical or anachronistic conceptions about the Church or the Order (See Ratio 67). The community must not close in on itself, but feel itself in communion with other communities, since we are all branches of the one vine (cf. Jn 15:5-6).

To carry out this service, the members of the Council must look to Jesus, who came to serve and give his life for others (cf. Mk 10:43-45). This leads authority to be respectful towards the community, understanding it as a gift from above that must be guarded (cf. Benedict XVI *Caritas in Veritate*, 34) and as a place where the Risen One is present (GE 142; cfr. VC 42). It must seek the community's good and lead it to human, Christian and Carmelite growth, with the attitudes of the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11-15), until all arrive at the final goal of Faith: eternal life (cf. 2Cor 5:1).

6. Another very important quality in the exercise of the Council's service is the ability to live and promote *confident dialogue* at different levels: within the Council itself; between the Council and the other members of the community; it must also foster dialogue with other communities, with the Provincial Council and other realities of the Order.

In the practical exercise of dialogue, on the one hand, all must have *the patience of listening*. It must be understood as "an encounter in freedom, which requires humility, patience, willingness to understand, and an effort to respond in new ways. Listening transforms the heart of those who do it especially when it takes place with an inner disposition of harmony and docility to the Spirit" (Final Document of the 2018 Synod: 6). On the other hand, it also implies having *the courage to speak*. This must be done with frankness and openly, and refer to what one has prayed about and weighed up, in the silence of a heart at peace and in the light of God, having therefore perceived that it is in conformity with the truths of Scripture and the

Magisterium. So, it is not a question here of tenaciously defending one's ideas, but of seeking the truth together with others in humility.

It is also a dialogue respectful of others and of the diversity of opinions and experiences in the community. Only so can we develop, through dialogue, the acceptance of what is different from me in a unity that generates life, making possible a "communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity" (EG 228; cf. 226-230). In this form of dialogue, possible and eventual conflicts in the community that could fragment it (cf. *Way of Perfection* 7:10), are harmonized by the unity of the spirit.

7. In order that what has been said so far can come about, *humility* is essential. The Apostle Paul proposes in the letter to the Philippians (Phil 2:2-11) the example of the self-emptying (kenosis) of Christ. It implies first of all an attitude of service and considering others superior to oneself. All are called to be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Humility also requires having our eyes fixed on God, the true centre of each and every one, not considering oneself the centre of the world and of oneself. Thanks to this, the humble person recognizes that he or she needs others, to which our Holy Father John of the Cross has already drawn our attention: "[Humble people] do not dare deal with God independently, nor can they be completely satisfied without human counsel and direction. God wants this (...) he draws near those who come together in an endeavour to know it [truth]" (St. John of the Cross, 2 *Ascent* 22:11). Only with humility and detachment from self can we overcome the temptations of factions, rivalries and vainglory in the community (cf. *Way of Perfection* 10:3-4).

8. Finally, so that there may be a co-responsible exercise of authority by the Council and all the members, there is a need for *training in communion* which helps to move from the selfish "I" of the old person to the "we" of the new person (cf. NMI 43; ITC 107-109). In the first place comes the common good, sought by all. Everyone must feel in search of the fulfillment of God's will, following in the footsteps of Jesus under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, at the service of the mission.

Since for each community attention is required to be given to the new generations, who appreciate a readiness and a capacity for working collaboratively, it should be remembered that "the skill required for working collaboratively involves cultivating specific relational virtues: the discipline of listening and the capacity to give the other person space, readiness to forgive and willingness to 'put oneself on the line', according to a genuine spirituality of communion" (*Final Document of 2018 Synod*: 103).

In this formation, the celebration of the Eucharist plays a primordial role. In fact, in the Eucharist that "source and paradigm of the spirituality of communion", there are the principles of communion among all, in the equal dignity received in Baptism.

Constituted into a Eucharistic assembly, with the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity and participating in the sacred action in a full, conscious, pious and active form (cf. SC 4& 14), the members of the community, through their various gifts and charisms received from the Father of all, express and renew the commitment of each one to unity, promoted by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, recognizing their own fragility and personal sins (*penitential act*), they are called to live and to choose again the path of communion, by implementing reconciliation with God and with their brothers and sisters. Then, the common listening to the word of God recalls that learning to listen to God takes first place and leads to listening to others. The offering of gifts reminds us of the union with Christ in our daily activities and works which, lived in the faith and spirit of Christ in the liturgy, are now united to His unique offering (cf. SC 61). Communion with the body and blood of Christ, received by those present, in turn realizes the unity of the members in the one bread, creating and favouring communion with God and with the brothers and sisters. Finally, nourished by the Eucharist, they are led to mission, to be a community of faith “outgoing” towards all (cf. ITC 109). Thus, in the Eucharist “source and apex of the whole Christian Life” (LG 11), is formed and nourished in the members of the community a reciprocal affection that leads to walking together, which is a “constitutive dimension of the Church (ITC 1.5.42.57, 94, 120).

9. My dear Secular Order members, what I have told you may seem an ideal difficult to achieve, in the face of the countless challenges you encounter in carrying out this task. Nevertheless, the important thing is to take steps in this direction, to start and to follow the processes of growth (cf. EG 222-225). I am sure that we are in an authentic time of grace. It is *now and here* that we are called to be prophetic, sensing in faith the way to go together, thus corresponding to God’s will. “God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness” (LG 9; cfr. GS 32; GE 6). For this reason, we have the guarantee of the grace received in the consecration of Baptism and Confirmation. More concretely, with the call to the Teresian Carmel we have the guarantee of divine support in continuing to walk the path of holiness in community, with the virtues of “endurance, patience and meekness, joy and sense of humour, daring and fervour” (cf. GE 110-157). St. John of the Cross confirms this to us: “The Lord has always revealed to mortals the treasures of his wisdom and his spirit, but now that the face of evil bares itself more and more, so does the Lord bare his treasures more” (*Sayings 1*).

Dear brothers and sisters: May the Holy Spirit continue to shed light on your path. Following the example of Jesus and in fidelity to the Teresian charism, promote always the witness of the kingdom in the midst of the world and thus collaborate in the mission of the Church and the Order.

In thanking you for your fraternal affection so often shown, I offer dear and brotherly greeting to you, your families and communities. I wish you a fruitful Lenten time and a holy Easter of the Resurrection: Let it be the inexhaustible source of hope and joy for each one of you. Imploring upon you the Lord’s blessing, I beg Our Lady of Mt Carmel to guard you and gather you around her Son.

Fraternally,

Fr Saverio Cannistrà OCD

Superior General

Rome, 6th March 2019

Ash Wednesday

Appendix N: Session 10, Our First Duties as Carmelites

Fr. David Centner, OCD

7/21/2006

What is the *pars potior* (the most important part) of the Carmelite vocation?

The answer usually given was prayer; by that meaning quiet or contemplative prayer.

Is this a sufficient answer?

The Rule itself makes it clear that our first duty is to serve Christ with pure hearts and upright consciences. In scriptural terms, that means that we believe in him and put his word into practice.

To serve Christ rightly, we must turn to the gospels and learn what it is that he commands us to do. In the pages of John's Gospel we learn that his commandment is: "Love one another as I have loved you." It would follow that the *pars potior* of our vocation is to love and cherish one another.

That statement surprises many Carmelites who think that their chief responsibility is prayer and sacrifice. Yet, as St Paul tells us, if we do not have charity, everything else; including our prayer and sacrifices is of no avail. He even tells us, "Bear one another's burdens and you will fulfill the Law of Christ."

When Mother Isabel of the Angels, the only one of the Spanish Mothers to remain in France when Carmel was established there, was asked by the Carmel of Amiens to write some words of encouragement, she wrote (in deliciously mixed French and Spanish) about charity, not about observance. Her words were something like this: "As we have so little opportunity to converse with one another, we must anticipate one another's needs. This is what our Mother Teresa wanted, for this is the principal part of our religious observance."

Secular Carmelites have even less opportunity to converse with each other than do friars or nuns who live in communities. Yet the obligation of cherishing one another is as important for seculars as for religious. When we see communities that fail to love one another unconditionally as Christ does, we can doubt if all their knowledge of our spirituality and their practice of prayer has any value at all.

But how do we learn to cherish one another, especially when we know that all of us (myself included) have moments when we are disagreeable and all of us have natural antipathies? I think these things are extremely important:

"Do not judge and you will not be judged...for the measure you measure will be measured back to you." Holy Mother Teresa put this into practice by refusing to say anything negative about anyone, especially in their absence. As a consequence, she drew many to herself. 7/21/06 76

Always consider others better than yourself. By this we do not mean false humility. We mean the recognition that God gives different talents to everyone. There is no one alive who is not naturally better than I am in some respect. And as for supernaturally better, only God knows.

But we do know this, the moment we exalt ourselves for some virtue, we lose it, for then charity has gone out of it.

As a consequence we listen readily to one another, and we reach out to help one another. We grow in patience and compassion, for we know that God has been very compassionate with us. In this way, we open the door to letting Christ bring to perfection His charity within us.

Conclusion: If we are to be true friends of Christ, as Holy Mother so ardently desires, because Jesus himself desires that, we must determine to be true friends of one another.

Appendix O: Session 11, Promise & Vows in the Secular Order of The Discalced Carmelites

by Fr Alzinir Debastiani, OCD
2016

We are living through a period in the Church, when many of the faithful laity gathered in the various lay movements and associations; seek to live the evangelical counsels in a more committed way through some form of consecration of life, whether in the making of promises or vows or by some other affiliation.

Thus, the lay faithful, gathered around the Tertiary or secular Orders, live out the charism of a religious Institute, under its authority, cultivating perfection in charity and an apostolate in the world.

What is certain is that the existing Constitutions of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmel contain some reflections and directives with regard to the matter of promises and vows, so that it seemed opportune to go deeper into some aspects given the vocation of the laity.

What is our understanding of the promises and vows taken by members of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmel? What meaning do they have?

I will try to respond to these questions after carrying out a brief historical résumé of the meaning of the act of commitment which was formerly done through the vows, which today are done through the promise. From a theological perspective, the promise is intended to be an aid to living by following Jesus, a process begun in Baptism. We will then have a short reflection on the theme of the promise taken by the secular Order, ending with a reflection on following Jesus in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and those of the Beatitudes.

With this résumé, I hope to help in understanding and situating the significance of the commitment, which the laity of our Order make, as its aim is to be a witness to the Gospel in the midst of the world according to the Carmelite-Teresian charism.

I thank the following for the suggestions, corrections and textual revisions: Fray Luis David OCD, Fr. Pedro Zubieta OCD and Fr. Aloysius Deeney OCD. A special thanks to Myrna Torbay OCDS for her patient editing of the text in Spanish.

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1. From the vows to the promise

We go back to the year 1452, when Pope Nicholas V, in the papal bull entitled *Cum nulla fidelium* of 7th October, canonically authorized John Soreth, General of the Order of Carmelites, to initiate the Second Order (nuns) and the Third Order (the laity) of Carmel, by which they could receive and give the habit to lay people called to live the spirituality of the Order, as

already existed with the Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians. This document, together with the Papal Bull *Dum attenta* by Sixtus IV (28th November 1476) made the structure of such groups more explicit.

At that time, lay people made their commitment to the Order through vows, as foreseen in the ancient missals of the Order of Carmelites, like the one edited in Venice in the year 1504, where there is a rite for the admission of vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and another dating from 1587, in which only the vows of chastity and obedience, were made for the admission of married people to be admitted.¹

Later, Pope Clement VIII, with the papal bull *Cum dudum* of 23rd March 1594, extended privileges given to the Order of Carmelites of the Ancient Observance, for also allowing the organization of groups of seculars next to the monasteries of the Order of Discalced Carmelites. Nonetheless and despite the Constitutions of Alcalá in the year 1581, explicitly forbidding the acceptance of seculars, there are reports that recount that prior to the year 1600, Fr. Pedro de la Madre de Dios, superior of the monastery of Santa Maria della Scala in Rome, was admitting secular persons and that they were called "*tertiarii ad instar*"²; furthermore, this was happening in several countries in Europe.

It is indeed certain that there have always and continuously been a presence of lay people, who, committed to the spirit of the evangelical counsels (through vows of chastity and obedience depending on their relationship to the superiors of the Order³), living out the spirituality of the Teresian Carmel, imitating the life of perfection of the religious in the world, carrying this out in diverse styles of life: whether in the family and work, adjacent to the monasteries, joined to the monasteries, as religious or associated in fraternities, oratories or brotherhoods. Although, let us remember that for many years evangelical perfection was reserved for religious and clerics, since some of the great theologians described it thus, as did certain documents of the Church's Magisterium.

In the XVII-XVIII centuries, various documents evolved which sought to unify and organize the life of these lay people, one of the most important of which was published in Marseille in the year 1708: *The Rule, ceremonial and directory of the Sisters of the Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Teresa established in various cities in France, Italy, Spain and Germany*. This document was in some respects the precursor of the Manual of 1921, which we will examine next.

1 Cf. Letter from the General OCD to the Congregation for Divine Worship seeking approbation for the Rite of the Secular Order, Rome 26th June 1990.

2 Cf. Isidoro a Sancto Ioseph, *Historia generalis fratrum discalceatorum Ordinis B. Virginis Mariae de Monte Carmelo; congregationis S. Eliae*. Tomo I. Romae, ex typographia Philippi Mariae Mancini. 1668. p. 198 & ff. Available in, <http://books.googleusercontent.com/books/> cf. V. Macca, *Appunti per una storia*, in, Anastasio del SS. Rosario, *Partecipi dello stesso carisma; L'Ordine Secolare dei Carmelitani Scalzi*. Firenze: Fiamma teresiana 1980. p. 71-83.

3 We can assume that this was an ancient custom in the Order, already present in the Missal of the Order published in Venice in the year 1504, in which a rite by which to receive people into the Order with simple vows of *chastity, poverty and obedience* was foreseen. Another reference appeared in the Missal published in Rome in the year 1587, where there is a rite for the reception of members with vows of *chastity and obedience*, making it possible to admit married persons to the Third Order. This custom would remain in later editions and would be the norm and custom to the present day for taking vows.

1.1. The Manual of 1921

This was the first official document of the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites, approved by Benedict XV on 6th March, 1921⁴, entitled *Rule of the Secular Third Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus*. It is structured in two parts: I- *Of the nature of the Third Order and the duties of Tertiaries*; II- *Of the organization of the Third Order*, comprising 162 articles in total.

Although, most certainly its content is very valuable, we will only pause to look at that which refers to the vows as the original expression of the present promise. Let us take into account that at that time and according to the Code of Canon Law of 1917, the Third Orders were “instituted to promote the perfection of Christian life among members in the midst of the world” (cc. 685; 700; 712§1).⁵

The *Rule* speaks of *vows of obedience* (Chap. VIII) and of *chastity* (Chap. IX). The vow of *obedience* is taken to the superiors of the Order in which the *Rule* has been established. The vow of *chastity* implies an obligation to live chastely according to the state in which one finds oneself, when one makes the promise, but it does not prevent the person from changing their state in life. These vows always follow a year of “novitiate” and are renewed devotionally during the Feast of the Holy Cross (14th September) and at Epiphany.⁶

It is interesting to consider No 31 of the *Rule* with regard to the vows, which denotes a difference from the vows taken by the religious:

“The vows of obedience and chastity, according to the *Rule* of the Third Order, have not the same binding force as Religious vows and expire upon leaving the Order; they are intended to bring the Tertiary to a perfect observance of the holy Law of God and of Our Holy Mother the Church, and while elevating to a higher degree the practice of Christian virtue and increasing its value and merit, they do but give a more sacred sanction to the duty incumbent on all the Faithful of humble submission to lawful authority and of preserving in whatever state of life purity of soul and body”.

4 The *Rule* is to be found in the *Manuale del Terz’Ordine Secolare della Beata Vergine Maria del Monte Carmelo e della Santa Madre Teresa di Gesù* (=Manual) Milano, Casa editrice S. Lega Eucaristica, 1921. From the Manual, the following are included 1- the letter from the General Superior, Fr Luca de María Santísima (13th April 1921); 2- Decree of definitive approbation and confirmation of the *Rule* by Pope Benedict XV (Prot. N. 2058¹-19. C. 20) – dated 6th March 1921; 3- La Regola del Terz’Ordine Secolare della Beata Vergine Maria del Monte Carmelo e della Santa Madre Teresa di Gesù; 4- *Rituale o Cerimoniale del Terz’Ordine Secolare della Beata Vergine Maria del Monte Carmelo e della Santa Madre Teresa di Gesù*; 5- Appendix: *Sommario delle Indulgenze, dei Privilegi ed indulti del Terz’Ordine secolare della Beata Vergine Maria del Monte Carmelo e della Santa Madre Teresa di Gesù*; 6- Various formulations: through registration, decisions made by the Chapter, through records of the meeting and witness of the clothing and Profession. In another edition of the Manual made in Rome, 1943, following the *Rule*, there is an *Appendice per gli Aspiranti al Terz’Ordine Carmelitano Teresiano*: these consist of some directives for the election and formation of Aspirants to the Third Order, based on the *Instrucciones* of the Friars, nn 297-299; it was approved in the year 1927 by the Definitory General of the Order.

5 Cf. Juan José Echeberria, p. 29, *Asunción de los Consejos evangélicos en las Asociaciones de fieles y movimientos eclesiales; investigación teológico-canónica*. Gregorian University Press. Rome 1998.

6 Cf. *Manuale del Terz’Ordine Secolare della Beata Vergine Maria del Monte Carmelo e della Santa madre Teresa de Gesù*. Rome, Tip. Bracony, 1943, n. 29-30. The formula for profession in N° 29 says: “Io N. N. faccio la mia professione, e prometto a Dio, alla Santissima Vergine del Monte Carmelo, alla nostra Santa madre Teresa, ed ai Superiori dell’Ordine, obbedienza e castità, secondo la Regola del Terz’Ordine, la quale voglio osservare con la maggiore perfezione che mi sarà possibile, fino alla morte”.

Furthermore, in the *Ritual or Ceremonial* of the Third Order, published in the *Manual*, there is no separate rite for Vows from that of the promise as will be the case in the Ritual of 1990.⁷

1.2. The Rule of life (1979)

The *Rule* of 1921 was in force until the year 1970, when it was developed *ad experimentum* the *Rule of Life*. This would be definitively approved by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes on 10th May, 1979 (Prot. N.C 20-/79). It sought to bring the doctrine and contents up-to-date in order to understand the identity and mission of the laity in the Church, in accordance with the doctrine of Vatican Council II. At the same time it sought to adapt the charism of the Teresian Carmel to the state of the lay way of life, rather than as an imitation of religious life.

The first change was in the name: from *Third Order*, it became the *Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites*, more in keeping with ancient tradition and as suggested by many of the fraternities. Another important change was to do with the commitment of lay people in the Order, since in place of vows, they would make promises⁸ (art. 11-14), with a new form of temporal commitment lasting three years - and not for the rest of one's life, as said in the formula for the vows of the previous Rule - at the end of which the secular could take them definitively.

The vows appeared in art. 15-16, as an option for those who freely sought to take them, at least one year following the definitive promises. They carry the same content and interpretation as the promises, with the clarification that "vows increase the merit of the virtue of religion in the practice of chastity and obedience and represent a more complete offering of oneself and carry with it greater moral responsibility" (Art. 15).

1.3. The Constitutions (2003)

The next step in legislation for the Secular Order was the drawing up of the *Constitutions* in the years 2000-2003, as a consequence of the advance in thinking and recognition of the vocation of the laity within the Order, encouraged by ecclesial events at the time.

The Synod of Bishops of October 1987 was on the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church. In the following year, the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles laici* (ChL) sought to emphasise and summarise the teachings of Vatican Council II on the laity twenty years on. A few years later, the synod of 1994 took place on consecrated life. One of the themes of interest to us is the new light it shed in relation to the theme of working together with the laity in the mission of the religious. With the publication of the apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (VC),

⁷ In another edition of the Manual in the Italian edition of 1963 and published by the General Secretary of the Third Order in Rome, in addition to the documents of the previous edition, there is also a *Catechism of the Third Order*, drawn up with 158 questions and answers. Questions 57-69 refer to the vows, which seek to explain the substance of the vows and give suggestions as to how to live them, avoiding sinning against them, etc.

⁸ We have no information about the process of change of the designation of vows to promises in the *Rule of Life*, 1979. LG 44 speaks of the vows or other sacred bonds, which can be an oath, oblation, etc.

there is explicit mention of the laity who participate in the spirituality of religious institutions. The document states that:

“As a result of new situations, many Institutes have come to the conclusion that *their charism can be shared with the laity*. The laity are therefore invited to share more intensely in the spirituality and mission of these Institutes. We may say that, in the light of certain historical experiences such as those of the Secular or Third Orders, a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.

These new experiences of communion and cooperation should be encouraged for various reasons. They can in fact give rise to the spread of a fruitful spirituality beyond the confines of the Institute, which will then be in a position to ensure the continuity in the Church of the services typical of the Institute. Another positive consequence will be to facilitate more intense cooperation between consecrated persons and the laity in view of the Institute’s mission. Moved by the examples of holiness of the consecrated members, lay men and women will experience at first hand the spirit of the evangelical counsels, and will thus be encouraged to live and bear witness to the spirit of the Beatitudes, in order to transform the world according to God’s design” (cf. VC 54-55; cf. 98).

These ecclesial events immediately stimulated the celebration of Secular Order international Congresses, the first in 1996 in Rome and then Mexico in 2000. As a consequence, it was considered necessary to revise and modernize the *Rule of Life* of 1979, taking into account the directives of the ecclesiastical Magisterium. The developmental work took place between 2000 and 2003, the year in which they were approved by the Congregation for the Institutions of Consecrated Life and Societies for Apostolic Life of the Holy See (16th June; Prot. N C 228-1/2003).

In the present *Constitutions of the OCDS*, Chapter 2 deals with the promise, which is about the following of Jesus in the lay Carmel and vows in Chapter 7 in art. 39, which deals with “Organization and government” in the Secular Carmel. The promise is a commitment to the Order and the Community in the quest for perfection in charity according to the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and the Beatitudes. Since the vows are made of one’s freewill and the time and circumstances in which to carry them out, the definitive promises are determined by the Provincial Statutes (cf. *Const OCDS* 58 e). At the same time, they require the agreement of the Council of the Community and the permission of the Provincial. Here there is a clear distinction in the form of commitment and the following of Christ begun in baptism is now highlighted and lived out according to the charism of the Teresian Carmel.

With this brief examination of the documents of the Order, we have seen the form of commitment the laity has with the Order, which changes from vows to promise and from the promise to vows of chastity and obedience for those who freely seek it.

Further on, we will deepen our understanding of the promise in the light of the documents of the Magisterium and the Constitutions of the OCDS. It is a theme which needs to be deepened and that which is presented here is a small contribution to the understanding of this theme, since there have not been many reflections on this.

2. The promise and the vows: living the spirit of the evangelical counsels in lay life

Central to the doctrine of Vatican Council II (1962-1965), with regard to the Church, is the understanding of the Church as *mystery of communion* of the whole people of God.⁹ All members from all states of life in the Church: lay people, religious and clerics/priests all form the People of God, they possess equal dignity, founded in Baptism and play a complementary role¹⁰ in the exercise of the mission of the Church.¹¹ At the same time, all participate in a common vocation to sanctity, which consists in the perfection of charity, according to each person's state in life.¹²

For each state of life, it is necessary to live out the evangelical counsels, according to the statement in the VC:

“In fact, all those reborn in Christ are called to live out, with the strength which is the Spirit's gift, the chastity appropriate to their state of life, obedience to God and to the Church, and a reasonable detachment from material possessions: for all are called to holiness, which consists in the perfection of love. But Baptism in itself does not include the call to celibacy or virginity, the renunciation of possessions or obedience to a superior, in the form proper to the evangelical counsels. The profession of the evangelical counsels thus presupposes a particular gift of God not given to everyone, as Jesus himself emphasizes with respect to voluntary celibacy (cf. *Mt* 19:10-12)” (VC 30).

The specific mission of the laity in the Church, “The *laity*, by virtue of the secular character of their vocation, reflect the mystery of the Incarnate Word particularly insofar as he is the Alpha and the Omega of the world, the foundation and measure of the value of all created things” (VC 16b). The laity is to

“... seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity. Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer” (LG 31; cf. *ChL* 14-15).

In order to fulfill this mission, the Church recognizes the liberty of the baptized people to form and participate in associations of faithful, as a mutual aid in the development of a particular apostolate in the name of the Church. This is the case of the Third Orders or Seculars: they participate in the charism of a religious institution; their aim is to dedicate themselves to the

9 Cf. *ChL* 18-19.

10 LG (*Lumen Gentium*) 17; 33; *ChL* 20; 55.

11 Cf. *id.* 23; VC 31.

12 LG Chap. V, especially 39.42

apostolate and to seek Christian perfection under the direction of the same Institute, in accordance with its own Statutes.¹³

In the Order of the Discalced Carmelite Seculars (OCDS), the *Constitutions* determine the degree of commitment with the Order of the Discalced Carmelite, as expressed in n. 11:

“Following Jesus as members of the Secular Order is expressed by the promise to strive for evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and through the beatitudes. By means of this promise the member’s baptismal commitment is strengthened for the service of God’s plan in the world. This promise is a pledge to pursue personal holiness, which necessarily carries with it a commitment to serving the Church in faithfulness to the Teresian Carmelite charism. The promise is taken before the members of the community, representing the whole Church and in the presence of the Delegate of the Superior of the Order” (*Constitutions OCDS* 11).

But, what does it mean to make a promise? This is what we will endeavor to deepen in the next section.

2.1. A general outline of the promises

In order to understand the theme of the promise which is made in the Secular Carmel, let us begin with that which is said in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) with regard to promises in general:

“In many circumstances, the Christian is called to make *promises* to God. Baptism and Confirmation, Matrimony and Holy Orders always entail promises. Out of personal devotion, the Christian may also promise to God this action, that prayer, this almsgiving, that pilgrimage, and so forth” (CCC 2101).

From the Bible, it is evident that “God has approved the pact and promise so that He himself is bound by it in such a way that, without even expecting fidelity from his ally, He will fulfill his promises even if his ally does not fulfill his” (Scharbert). God keeps his promises, because He is faithful to himself and through them seeks to create a new heart (Jer 31:33) with all those for whom his promise is destined, as in the case of Abraham in the Old Testament. The same applies to the new covenant, for the action of the Holy Spirit guarantees the realization of the promise, which needs to be embraced through the observance of the new law which is Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16,19); an observance or attachment which is a vivifying spirit which sets all free (cf. Gal 4, 5:1). In this sense, attachment to Jesus in his Spirit means attachment to God’s promise, to full liberty and to love. Thus, the promise, seen from either side, whether from God’s part which He promises or whether trusting in man’s part, the fidelity of both sides show the two poles of God’s justice, which seeks the salvation of mankind.¹⁴

From this dynamic perspective, the promise constitutes the deepening of one’s own liberty in the experience of love in the following of Christ, in the same way that a dynamic path opens up to the future and ventures forward in faith and hope. It implies the capacity for love, to be able

¹³ Cf. CDC can. 303; cf. L 29; VC 54-55.

¹⁴ Cf.: Rom 1:17; 3:5.21-25; 10:3.

to open oneself up in a responsible way, determinedly and realistically in pursuit of the evangelical values.

At the same time, it requires an *openness of oneself* to others, available to that which could be useful or pleasing to the beneficiary of the promise (the Community, the Church, the Order): “To make a promise is one of the key terms in the language of love. To make a promise means to pledge all one’s strength and weakness, proclaiming oneself both certain of the future and sure of oneself. At the same time, it means arousing adherence of heart and generosity of faith in one’s companion”. Thus, fidelity is “the condition of reliability, a key condition in social relationships and also in the relationship between God and man. The promise demands openness and also seeks trust, hope and therefore love”.¹⁵

In summing up, the central value of the promise is the fidelity of God and his Covenant on the one hand and man’s conscience, liberty, deliberation, which in turn are conditions validating a promise on the other. This brings the person to loving openness to God and to others.

2.2. The meaning of the promise in the Secular Order

Bearing in mind the afore-going reflections, we will now seek out the meaning of the promise in the OCDS.

In the same way, but not to the same degree as the promises made in the Sacraments, through which the Christian is consecrated, belongs to God definitively and receives the appropriate grace according to of the Sacrament in order to live and exercise the mission according to the Sacrament one receives, the promise which the Secular Carmelite makes to the Superior of the Order and to the Community, demands sincerity,¹⁶ fidelity and a firm resolve.

The promise is made in a liturgical context (Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours and Celebration of the Word). This signifies that the purpose of the liturgy is kept in mind: worship of God and the sanctification of the assembly (cf. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 10). Personal will to the Community/Authority of the Order in the “following of Christ” and “to strive for evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and through the beatitudes” (Const. OCDS 11). Here, the moment is clothed with a similar character as that of the promises which are made during the celebration of the Sacraments, where the person who is responding to God’s call enkindled by charity.

The promise is the evidence of the will to grow in the perfection of the love of Christ and of one’s brethren, which was already assumed in Baptism. It is also a humble recognition of the need of the presence and assistance of the Other-other, in order to live out the evangelical counsels and to live in following and with the progressive configuration in Christ in greater fidelity. The promise makes us face up to our weakness and limitations in fighting against the great temptations, which lie in wait for us: having - poverty, being able to - obedience, pleasure

¹⁵ To examine that which follows in greater detail see: L. Padovese, *Promesa y juramento*, in:

http://www.mercaba.org/DicTM/TM_promesa_y_juramento.htm (accessed 5th December 2015).

¹⁶ The promise made as a verbal expression of the interior will of the person, implies living with the truth as the eighth commandment demands: “Truth or truthfulness is the virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and guarding against duplicity, dissimulation, and hypocrisy” (CCC 2505).

- chastity. Thus, the promise should be a source of liberation, liberating us from that which prevents us from reaching the fullness of being, the fullness of living in dignity, and the fullness of Love. Only thus, can we understand that the promise is a strengthening of the “baptismal commitment at the service of God’s plan in the world”, a “garment of personal sanctity” which should be carried to a “commitment to serving the Church in fidelity to the Teresian-Carmelite charism”.

For this reason, if “the fidelity of the promise made to God is a manifestation of respect to the divine Majesty and out of love to the God who is faithful” (CCC 2101), equally, we could say that fidelity to the promise made in the Community is a manifestation of love and respect to the brothers and sisters of the same Community and Order.

All this is expressed in the formula for the making of the promise:

“I [], inspired by the Holy Spirit, in response to God’s call, sincerely promise to the Superiors of the Order of the Teresian Carmel and to you my brothers and sisters, to tend toward evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, obedience, and of the Beatitudes, according to the Constitutions of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, for [3 years/rest of my life]. I confidently entrust this, my Promise, to the Virgin Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel”.¹⁷

Thus the crucial aspect with regard to the promise taken in the Secular Carmel is the following of Christ and participation in the mission as a response to the first love, the living out of the *spirit of the evangelical counsels* and *the Beatitudes* as a result in the Community. The Community is thereby the test, aid and the place where these will be translated into a living and prayerful relationship with Christ, as well as concrete actions with one’s brothers and sisters, in family life and at work (cf. ChL 30). Consequently and in accordance with one’s individual state in life, situation and possibilities, each one “heightens and enriches the baptismal commitment” and married people will encourage “those called to married life, both as spouses and as parents” (Const. 12). It demands a constant renewal due to the appropriate dynamic of the following of Christ.

As a consequence, the promise in the OCDS demands commitment and personal endeavor in order “to acquire the necessary training to know the reasons, the content and purpose of the evangelical lifestyle they are undertaking” (id.). Eternal life is the goal of the Christian life and is a dynamic journey, with a call to grow and mature unceasingly and to yield fruit in every stage of the person’s life. In order for this to happen, each one must take their responsibility and produce fruit in order not to be cut down and cast away like the sterile branch compared with the vine and its branches in the Gospel (cf. Jn 15:5-6; ChL 57).

2.3. The vows

The vows are a phenomenon present in all religions. According to Canon Law, public vows are characteristic of Consecrated and eremitical¹⁸ Life. The vow includes the promise, as it is defined in the Code of Canon Law, in can. 1191, which is quoted in n. 2102 of the CCC:

¹⁷ *Ritual OCDS* 1990, 42 A. In the original: “... according to the *Rule of Life*...”.

¹⁸ The vows are public, when the evangelical counsels are accepted by the legitimate superior in the name of the Church (can. 1192, 1). Cf. CIC can. 207, §2; 573, §2; 587, §1; 603, §2; 607, §2; 654.

“A *vow* is a deliberate and free promise made to God concerning a possible and better good which must be fulfilled by reason of the virtue of religion” (CIC can. 1191, § 1). “A vow is an act of *devotion* in which the Christian dedicates himself to God or promises him some good work. By fulfilling his vows he renders to God what has been promised and consecrated to Him. The *Acts of the Apostles* shows us St. Paul concerned to fulfill the vows he had made (cf. Acts 18:18; 21:23-24)” (CCC 2102).

The promise, as we saw previously, “is not made directly to God, but to a person or institution (Church, Institute). It is not an obligation due to religion but by virtue of fidelity and means an oblation of the person”.¹⁹ On the other hand, the vow is part of the *virtue of religion* and transforms the promise into an act of worship or religion and is understood as a giving of oneself, according to the theological virtue of charity.²⁰ This brings us to “love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God” (CCC 1822).

Furthermore, justice toward God is called the virtue of religion. This consists in always having a firm and constant will to give one’s due to God (CCC 1807), whether in adoration (CCC 2096-97), prayer, (CCC 2018), sacrifice (CCC 2099-2100), the promises and vows (CCC 2101-2103).

On this account, the vow, as an act of the virtue of religion, is a response to an interior call from God and is an act of reverence and worship to God, which entails the commitment of the whole life of the person, who undertakes it and implies fidelity to that which has been promised. Non-observance has the consequence of being a sin. Thus, the virtue of humility, together with a spirit of trusting prayer in the grace of God and the fraternal aid of the Community, are essential for a faithful response to this very call.

For the vow to be legitimate, *deliberation* is necessary. This is one of those human acts, by which the exercise of freedom is united with the ability to know, reflect and to love; to undertake all that is implied by the vow. On this account, the CIC says that “all who possess suitable use of reason are capable of making a vow” (CIC can.1191§2). Deliberation also calls for *freedom*, that is the absence of coercion, whether internal or external, the imposition of another, even if it is out of reverential fear.²¹

At the same time, the vow is made in the quest for *a possible and better good*, one which it is possible to achieve and which the one who promises has the capacity to accomplish in the future and better than that which is lived out in the present.

The *Constitutions* of the OCDS speak of vows in Chap. 7, which deals with *organization and government* in the Secular Order. It is the election of the legislator to give greater emphasis to the following of Christ made by means of the promise, since, according to the Council, public vows are typical of Consecrated Life. The text expresses it thus:

“All of Christ’s faithful have the right to make vows.²² With the consent of the Council of the community and the permission of the Provincial, a member of the Secular Order may make vows of obedience and chastity in the presence of the community. These vows are strictly

19 Juan José Echebarría, *La asunción de los consejos...*, id. p. 199.

20 Id., p. 113.

21 As for example a promise made to a significant person on one’s deathbed, pursuing or embarking on a career in which the person himself does not feel that he has of his own free will elected to do it.

22 *Ritual*, Instruction, 9; 30-49

personal and do not create a separate category of membership. They suppose a greater commitment of fidelity to the evangelical life but do not transform those who make them into juridically recognized consecrated people as in Institutes of consecrated life. Those who make vows in the Secular Order continue to be lay persons in all juridical effects” (*Constitutions OCDS* 39).

Fr. Pedro Zubieta makes the following comment about this point:

“The Constitutions, taking up the tradition of the Secular Order of Carmel, foresaw the possibility that secular Carmelites who might wish to, should be able to take the vows of obedience and chastity. It concerns private vows which the text qualifies as being ‘strictly personal’ and which do not create, within the community, a different category of belonging to the same; although they are made in the presence of the community and with the previous agreement of the Council. The vows taken imply a ‘greater commitment to faithfulness in evangelical life’, but do not change those who have taken them into people recognized juridically in the same way as those in the Institutes of Consecrated Life. Those who take the vows in the Secular Order continue to be lay people juridically.

In all other matters, the scope or substance of the vows of obedience and chastity is the same as in respect of the promise. The difference as we have explained, is in the quality of the bond”.²³

The quality of the bond comes from the fact that the vow is now *made to God*. In the ambit of the virtue of religion, the vow commits the entire life of the person in an act of worship or religion, as an act of love, according to the theological virtue of charity, source of life, whether as a promise or as a vow.

Thus, chastity as a vow is a call to live out the virtue of chastity according to one’s state as a bachelor, spouse or widow. Obedience means submitting one’s will to that of the Superior of the Order and of the Community Council in the capacity in which they represent the will of God, as that which is prescribed by the *Constitutions* of the OCDS. With regards poverty, if it is not part of the vow, one should nonetheless be vigilant, and one is called to live in sobriety and solidarity with regard to the use of material goods. Furthermore, it is good to be constantly reminded, that all dimensions of the Christian life are united in a living out of the evangelical counsels in the following of Christ.

When all is said and done, vows in the Secular Order demand a mature decision, freely taken on the part of the person who feels called to make them and in consultation with a spiritual director and the Council of the Community. It should not be taken for vainglory. Prudence (cf. Prov 20, 25), discernment and a firm decision are above all necessary in order to compel oneself to live in a continual quest for a possible good, which is better than the contrary. The authority of the Community, for their part, seek respect for the person, look for discernment in the light of faith, together with a serious awareness of the ability of the person to live and give witness through the vows, questioning whether it will foster growth, whether there is a sound human basis, if the person is freely seeking, etc.

²³ Pedro Zubieta, *Orden seglar del Carmelo Teresiano, Regla Constituciones y comentario*. Roma 2003. pp 94-95.

3. Living the spirit of the evangelical counsels and the Beatitudes

Understanding of the evangelical counsels and the Beatitudes is essential in the process of a mature and dynamic growth in the life of divine grace. They form the evangelical content of the promise in following Jesus.

Before all else, the *objective and significance of taking on the evangelical counsels*²⁴, with a promise, is based on the fact that it represents a free response to a call to an “intimate relationship between Christ, teacher and his disciple”. “Christian life becomes a loving response to the invitations made by Christ to human liberty, in the attitude of the disciple open to incarnate wisdom, in a dimension of joyful trust and surrender”. The vocation to following Jesus is personal a one. It is an “invitation, without distinction to put God above all things and to accomplish his will. It takes form in different spheres according to their personal mission and individual circumstances; to follow Jesus, whether in the fidelity of an indissoluble marriage or as a celibate person for the kingdom, or giving all to the poor, or offering half of one’s goods (Mk 10:21; 19:8), abandoning everything to be with him or staying in one’s own environment (Mt 19:27; Lk 8:38-39)”.

The counsels do not tend to impose or to level, but to persuade, convince, test individually and to commit through a freely taken decision; since they wish “to make them win through by means of entry into the kingdom of God; they promise joy, bliss and eternal life. They are a call to perceive that they do not limit individual rights and definitely lead to freedom”.²⁵

Thus, the profound anthropological significance is a guarantee that “the decision to follow the counsels, far from involving an impoverishment of truly human values, leads instead to their transformation. The evangelical counsels should not be considered as a denial of the values inherent in sexuality, in the legitimate desire to possess material goods or to make decisions for oneself. Insofar as these inclinations are based on nature, they are good in themselves” (VC 87).

It is certain that in order to reach maturity in the Christian life, according to the counsels, it becomes necessary for there to be an “assimilation of the counsels of the Lord by means of humble listening, reflection, decision making and verification of experience”; all this “transforms the Christian into a wise man, spiritually mature and with the ability to help

24 Cf.: S. de Fiore, *Consejos evangélicos* in, http://www.mercaba.org/DicES/C/consejos_evangelicos.htm. Accessed 7th December 2015; cf.: Juan José Echeberria, *Asunción de los Consejos evangélicos en las Asociaciones de fieles y movimientos eclesiales; investigación teológico-canónica*. Gregorian University Press. Rome 1998, p. 74-75: “Lo esencial de la práctica de los consejos evangélicos es por lo tanto seguir a Cristo más de cerca, ser partícipes del misterio pascual más cercano y más radical, en anticipación respecto a los otros para los cuales esto tendrá lugar al menos en la hora de la muerte”... “Para todos los bautizados, en conformidad con sus diversas condiciones de vida, se da una exigencia real de pobreza, pero no hasta la liberación de los bienes terrenos; de castidad no pero hasta la renuncia al matrimonio; de obediencia, pero no hasta el despojo de la propia voluntad respecto a aquellos que tienen el lugar de Dios... Por tanto los laicos están invitados a vivir los consejos evangélicos de un modo concreto aunque diferente de la vida consagrada, pero sin que esto signifique una vivencia irreal o accesorio de su compromiso. La radicalidad evangélica, que exige un amor total al Señor y la perfección de la caridad, se dirige a todos los cristianos y esta se lleva a cabo a través de las diversas vocaciones cristianas que se integran recíprocamente y juntas realizan la *sequela Christi* en la Iglesia universal”.

25 Juan J. Echebarría, *Asunción...* p. 75. Cf. Ghirlanda, *Cit. en, lb...* p. 76-77.

others with advice”.²⁶ On the other hand, the CCC reminds us that “the evangelical counsels are inseparable from the commandments” (CCC 2053).

Thus, we will seek in first place to see the doctrine of the CCC with regard to each counsel in order subsequently to examine the content in the *Constitutions*.

3.1. The spirit of the counsel of chastity

Within the scope of the sixth Commandment (cf. CCC 2331 and ff) the CCC states the following with regard to chastity:

“Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man’s belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman. The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person (2338-2345) and the integrality of the gift” (2346-2347) (CCC 2337).

Every baptized person is called to live in chastity (CCC 2348) depending on their state in life whether in virginity or as a consecrated celibate and “others in the way which is determined by moral law, whether married or celibate” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) declaration in *Persona humana* 11). “Married people are called to live conjugal chastity; others practice chastity in continence” (CCC 2349). This practice of chastity confronts us “with relation to the other” for one’s own benefit, that is, necessitating a reflection on that which the other person signifies and represents, the place which he occupies in the relationship, the implied respect, the purity of the intentions which bind me with the other and above all of not being “treated as an object” of the person, since the other is not a disposable object for consumption or for the indulgence of needs or insufficiency, but a subject of love, gratitude and gratuity. Only by being aware, can we understand offences against chastity (lust, masturbation, fornication, pornography, prostitution and violation), as well as the topic of homosexuality, dealt with in nn. 2351-2359 of the Catechism. Conjugal chastity appears in 2360-2391 of the Catechism for further examination.

Here, we recall that in the context of marriage and “in the Christian view, chastity by no means signifies rejection of human sexuality or lack of esteem for it: rather it signifies spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness, and able to advance it towards its full realization”.²⁷ Chastity is the virtue which regulates the correct manner in which to live out sexuality as a man or woman, according to the precepts of Christian love.

²⁶ S. de Fiores, art cit.

²⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 33. For his part, the moral theologian, B. Häring describes it as follows: “Christian charity: perfect dominion, exercised by divine charity over sex and eros, or over sexuality and psychosomatic eroticism, out of holy respect for redeemed creation and a resolute will in struggle and renunciation. Christian charity is founded in absolute love. The Apostle says this when he states that it is “fruit of the spirit” (Gal 5:22), of “the Spirit of divine love”, in, http://www.mercaba.org/Haring/II/261-336_matrimonio.htm.

All these topics form part of general moral doctrine on chastity and are proposals in order to live out the promise which the Secular takes, according to the situation in which he finds himself: whether single, married or widowed.

The *Constitutions* of the OCDS describe the content of the promise to live out the promise in following Christ in the spirit of the evangelical counsel of chastity:

“The promise of chastity reinforces the commitment to love God above all else, and to love others with the love God has for them²⁸ In this promise the Secular Carmelite seeks the freedom to love God and neighbor unselfishly²⁹ giving witness to the divine intimacy promised by the beatitude “blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). The promise of chastity is a commitment to Christian love in its personal and social dimensions in order to create authentic community in the world. By this promise the Secular Carmelite also expresses the conscious desire to respect each person as required by God’s law and one’s state of life, as a single person or married or widowed. This promise does not prevent a change in state of life” (n.13).

We will now highlight a few essential elements in specifically living out the counsel of chastity.

— *Love of God and neighbor according to the beatitude of the pure in heart (Mt 5:8).*

According to the Bible³⁰, the happiness of the pure in spirit is related to the main seat of our thoughts (cf. Mt 9:4; 24:28), understanding (cf. Mt 13:15), recognition of values (cf. Mt 6:21), aspirations and activities (cf. Mt 15:19), in our behavior in relation to others (cf. Mt 11:29; 18:35), and of our relationship with God (cf. Mt 15:8; 22:37). This means that the center of the intellect, will and emotion of the individual is the origin and point of reference and unity of the relationship with God and with others. In Mt. 5:8 it is stated that those are happy who maintain their heart in unison with God and his Word, free of tendencies and impulses contrary to the will of God (cf. Ez 20:13-16). According to Ps. 24, God is approached by “those who have clean hands and pure hearts”, united with the desire for the presence of God, a desire which will be sated in the eschatological vision (cf. Mt 5:8). For this reason, the one who has a “pure heart” has the capacity for fraternal love (cf. 1 Tm 1:5), since it is the source of charity (cf. 1 Pet 1:22).

— *Liberty and lack of self-interest in love*

In the New Testament³¹, freedom is understood in relation to “the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Rom 8:21); there is freedom “where the Spirit of the Lord is” (2 Cor 3:17). The concept refers to “the freedom we have in Christ Jesus” (Gal 2:4; 5:1). When St. James speaks of the “law of freedom” (1:25 and 2:12), he is referring to the vital order in which man lives in accord with the will of God; it is about living in accordance with the Gospel or the person of Jesus: “the truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32), and this “truth” brings the person to live and to serve through love, following His example, moved by Him and not for egotistical reasons due to sin: “now that you have been freed (NB: emancipated) from sin” (Rom 6:18, 22). Taken in this

28 Cf. Ascent, III 23, 1.

29 Counsels, 1 and 6.

30 Cf. *Beatitudini*, from *Dizionario di Mistica*. <http://www.clerus.org>, accessed 17th December 2015.

31 J. Blunk, *Libertad*, in *Diccionario teológico del Nuevo Testamento II* (Salamanca: Sígueme 1990) p. 434-435.

sense, Christian love is by its nature gratuitous and seeks the good of the other because it is a mutual good, without ulterior motives.³²

Gaudium et Spes (GS) speaks of the *greatness freedom* (Nº 17) and describes it as “only in this can man direct himself toward goodness”. This “is an exceptional sign of the divine image within man”; it forms part of the dignity of man, which “demands that he act according to a knowing and free choice that is personally motivated and prompted from within, not under blind internal impulse nor by mere external pressure”. It continues by saying that man will achieve this dignity when, freed entirely from being held captive to passions and by seeking the support of the grace of God, he inclines to this end with the free election of what is good and finds appropriate means through effective and skillful action.³³

— *Respect for each person according to their state in life*

“Purity of mind and body helps develop true self-respect and at the same time makes one able to respect others, because one sees them as persons to reverence, as they are created in the image of God and through grace are children of God, re-created by Christ who “called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 P 2:9)”.³⁴ It is about a sense of consideration and recognition of the intrinsic value of every person, accepting them and treating them with love and according to their capacity for understanding and intrinsic dignity. The golden rule in Mt 7:12 is the measure of respect: to treat others as one would like them to treat oneself (cf. CCC 1929-1933).

— *Commitment to creating a community*

The theme is developed in Chap. 3 B of the *Constitutions* on fraternal Communion. This is underpinned by the need to take into account the relationship dimension of the human being, who is by nature sociable (cf. GS 4, 25; Apostolicam actuositatem (AA, 18), created in the image and likeness of God Trinity. On account of this, personal salvation passes through solidarity with the other, recognized as another I.³⁵ In the Teresian context, the community is an aid and support in the search for God, as is explained in N. 24 b of the *Constitutions*.

3.2. The commitment of the promise to live out the spirit of the evangelical counsel of poverty

Having a spirit of poverty means having the humility to follow the example of Jesus, who “though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor” (cf. 2 Cor 8:9), and who came to serve not to be served. But it is also meant to be a sign of hope for those who live in situations of oppression. Voluntary humility of the human spirit and renunciation are called “poverty of spirit” by the Word: the apostle gives us the example of the poverty of God, when he says: ‘for your sakes he became poor’ (2 Cor 8:9) (St. Gregory of Nyssa, beat, 1).

32 Cf. Benedicto XVI, *Deus caritas est*; esp. nn. 1; 6; 16-18; 33; 39;

33 The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* deals with freedom in nn. 199-200.

34 The Pontifical Council for the family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 17.

35 Cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine...* nn 31-37; 149-151. The statement in GS 12 is key: “For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential”. Cf GS 25.

The Catechism deals with poverty of the heart in the context of the tenth commandment, especially in nn. 2544-2547. The motivation is the example of Jesus, who exhorts them to “direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect charity by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches” (Lk 14:33) for Him and for the Gospel (cf. Mk 8:35). A short while before his passion, He showed them the example of the poor widow in Jerusalem, who, despite her extreme poverty, gave all she had to live on (cf. Lk 21:4). “The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory in order to enter the Kingdom of heaven”. Thus, *Lumen Gentium* (LG) exhorts all Christians to “have a care that they guide aright their own deepest sentiments of soul. Let neither the use of the things of this world nor attachment to riches, which is against the spirit of evangelical poverty, hinder them in their quest for perfect love” (LG 42). Surrender to the providence of the Father frees us from concern for tomorrow (cf. Mt 6:25-34), and trust in God disposes the person to the beatitude of the poor: they shall see God (cf. CCC 2545-2546).

The *Constitutions* of the OCDS take up the content of the promise of poverty thus:

“By the promise of poverty the Secular Carmelite expresses the desire to live in accordance with the Gospel and its values. In evangelical poverty there is a wealth of generosity, self-denial, and interior liberty and a dependence on Him who “Though rich, yet for our sake, became poor” (2 Cor 8:9), and who “emptied Himself” (Ph 2:7), to be at the service of His brothers and sisters. The promise of poverty seeks an evangelical use of the goods of this world and of personal talents, as well as the exercise of personal responsibilities in society, in family, and work, confidently placing all in the hands of God. It also implies a commitment to the cause of justice so that the world itself responds to God’s plan. In combination with these, evangelical poverty recognizes personal limitations and surrenders them to God with confidence in His goodness and fidelity” (n. 14).

Now, let us highlight some of the essential aspects of poverty.

— *Wealth of generosity and denial of self is to be found in evangelical poverty*

Poverty and generosity always presuppose availability (of self, time, things...). one need only look at the example and invitation of Jesus: “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it” (Mt 16:24-25) and “if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile” (Mt 5:40-41), then “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). From this viewpoint, “self-denial” is the sacrifice which one makes of one’s will, affections or one’s own interests in order to dispose oneself to the service of God or of one’s neighbor. This entails asceticism, a struggle against egoism, indifference and individualism.

— *Placing oneself at the service of one’s brothers and sisters*

The Christian dimension of service³⁶ (*Diakoneo*) acquires its significance from the person of Jesus and his Gospel (Mk 10:45). It becomes the characteristic by which to designate the activity of love for one’s brother and neighbor (which proceeds from God), the realization of communion (*koinonia*) and solidarity.

³⁶ K. Hess, *Servicio*, in *Dic. Teológico del NT*. Vol. IV, p. 214.

The service of Jesus to man and to his disciples was a demonstration of the love of God and of true humanity, a humanity beloved of God. “I am among you as one who serves” (Lk 22:27; cf. also Jn 13:1-15) and “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mt 20:28). The example of Jesus (Jn 13:15) brings with it an exhortation to the disciples: “the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves” (Lk 22:26; cf. Mt 20:26 par; 23:11). The gift which each one has received must be put at the service of the others (1 P 4:10). He who feeds the hungry, gives shelter to the homeless, clothes the naked, visits the sick or the prisoner (Mt 25:35 s) “serves” (v. 44) by doing so Jesus himself: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (v. 40). The exhortation to serve is imperative, since it derives from the sacrifice of Jesus who came “...to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28). In accordance with the meaning of this text, 1 Jn 3:16 puts forward the consequence, that we too should give up our lives for our brothers (cf. 1 Jn 3:16).

— *seek the evangelical use of the goods of this world and of personal talents*

The principle is that “all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown” (GS 12), and in this sense the Secular should be aware of the universal destination of created goods, since, “in using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others. On the other hand, the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one’s family belongs to everyone”.³⁷ Personal talents are intended for the good of the Community (cf. 1 Cor 12).

— *The exercise of one’s responsibilities in society, the family and at work*

“The *lay faithful’s duty to society primarily* begins in marriage and in the family” (ChL 40), without forgetting mindful participation in politics, in order to encourage human and gospel values (cf. ChL 42; cf. CDSI 83-84). “In the context of the transformations taking place in the world of economy and work which are a cause of concern, the lay faithful have the responsibility of being in the forefront in working out a solution to the very serious problems of growing unemployment; to fight for the most opportune overcoming of numerous injustices that come from organizations of work which lack a proper goal; to make the workplace become a community of persons respected in their uniqueness and in their right to participation; to develop new solidarity among those that participate in a common work; to raise up new forms of entrepreneurship and to look again at systems of commerce, finance and exchange of technology”. To such an end the lay faithful must accomplish their work with professional competence, with human honesty, and with a Christian spirit, and especially as a way of their own sanctification, according to the explicit invitation of the Council: “By work an individual ordinarily provides for self and family, is joined in fellowship to others, and renders them service; and is enabled to exercise genuine charity and be a partner in the work of bringing divine creation to perfection. Moreover, we know that through work offered to God an individual is associated with the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, whose labor with his hands at Nazareth greatly ennobled the dignity of work (GS 67)” (ChL 43).

³⁷ GS 69; cf. *Compendium of the Social doctrine of the Church* (CDSI) 171-196; cf. *Caritas in veritatem* 9, 27 & 35.

— *placing oneself with trust in the hands of God*

Jesus teaches us to base our very existence in God and in seeking his kingdom (Mt 6:33), not to fear persecution (Mt 10:28-31). He teaches us to found our very existence in God and the seeking of his kingdom (Mt 6:33), not to fear persecution (Mt 10:28-31), not to seek security in material goods which perish, since God cares for his creatures (Lk 12:22-34). The apex of this trust in providence is taught us in the Our Father. The whole of Jesus' teaching is directed to revealing that man lives under the loving, providential gaze of the Father, who is close to him. Neither does evil escape divine providence, but is at the service of the plan of salvation. The certainty which guides Christian existence is that all happens for good with those who love God (Rom 8:28).

— *commitment in favor of justice in the world*

Justice, according to its classical definition "is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor" (CCC 1807)³⁸. Pope Francis, in turn, warns and recalls that "spiritual conversion, the intensity of the love of God and neighbor, zeal for justice and peace, the Gospel meaning of the poor and of poverty, are required of everyone" (cf. Francis, EG 201). As a result, justice forms an important part of the growth of fundamental, human values in the mission of giving witness to the Gospel through them, as the Council already stated: "[the laity] should also hold in high esteem professional skill, family and civic spirit, and the virtues relating to social customs, namely, honesty, justice, sincerity, kindness, and courage, without which no true Christian life can exist" (AA 4).

— *exercise of hope which recognizes personal limitations and surrenders in confidence to the goodness and fidelity of God*

Hope has its roots in man's very being, since he is a being open to the future, to infinity and eternity. In the domain of the Christian religious, the theological virtue of hope has its basis in the promise of God, whose lordship is revealed gradually until its definitive consummation in Christ's death and resurrection (cf. Acts 13:32-33).

In this sense, faith-hope are united, since faith reveals the path to an authentic life and hope makes us journey along it until we reach "the measure of the full stature of Christ" (Eph 4:13). At this point, it is necessary to make one's life an act of absolute trust in God, who saves through the death and resurrection of Christ. To trust means to love the one whom we trust, but authentic love is translated into concrete works. Thus, faith-hope are united in bringing us to transform the world in the service of mankind, since authentic hope always generates life and transformation wherever it exists.

Benedict XVI wrote a beautiful page about this: "Faith, hope and charity go together. Hope is practiced through the virtue of patience, which continues to do good even in the face of apparent failure, and through the virtue of humility, which accepts God's mystery and trusts him even at times of darkness. Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our sakes and gives us the victorious certainty that it is really true: God is love! It thus transforms our impatience and our doubts into the sure hope that God holds the world in his hands and that, as the

³⁸ On this topic, cf. CDSI 82; 167; 201-203; 292; 303; 306; 340; 366, etc.

dramatic imagery of the end of the Book of Revelation points out, in spite of all darkness he ultimately triumphs in glory. Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practice it because we are created in the image of God. To experience love and in this way to cause the light of God to enter into the world - this is the invitation I would like to extend with the present Encyclical” (*Deus caritas est* 39).

3.3. The commitment of the promise to live out the spirit of the evangelical counsel of obedience

The *Letter to the Hebrews* tells us that Christ “*learned obedience*” (Heb 5:8). Thus, the model, par excellence, for all Christian obedience is the obedience of Jesus to the will of the Father, in each and every situation of his life, from the temptations to the cross, thus He also carries out the obedience by which He – a man among men – remains faithful to his own earthly existence and through it, to himself, giving in this particular way, proof of his obedience to the Father: “and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him” (Heb 5:7-9).

Jesus himself invites us to do “*the will of my Father in heaven*” (Mt 7:21). The “Our Father” (Mt 6:10) and the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane (26:42) speak of the will of the Father. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount we read: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only one who does the will of my Father in heaven” (Mt 7:21). The condition for admission is clearly formulated: obedience to the will of the Father. What does this mean?

It is not enough to invoke the name of the Lord. “Christ” must be translated into life and to this end, words alone are not enough. The decisive gauge in this transformation is obedience to the will of the Father, manifested in the Sermon on the Mount. This indicates the alternative of the will of the Father to current praxis; it introduces a new and liberating path: one is not to return evil for evil, it is possible to turn the other cheek, it is possible to conquer evil with good (5:38-42); the enemy does not carry on being the enemy necessarily: it is possible to discover in him, the man over whom God makes the sun to rise (5:43-48).

The will of God can be summarized in the commandment to love, for this is the focal point. Love is the lens through which the law is to be interpreted. The law and the prophets depend on it. Thus, Abraham’s examples of obedience in faith are important (CCC 2570) and that of the Virgin Mary (CCC 148-149).

With regards to obedience in the ambit of the Church, the faithful “show themselves to be established in a respectful adhesion to the Superior, but at the same time try to transcend it in order to be bound immediately to the Father in the Spirit of Christ; each recognizes authority as a grace to lead to the plan of God and which he then carries out. At the same time, it leads to commitment and nurturing of life, which is thereby less alienated from God’s wishes. He has faith that the Lord is present in the hierarchy, but also knows that the face of God in Christ is ineffable. He trusts in obedience as a path to acquire Christian freedom, but at the same time,

he has to commit himself to going beyond the person of the superior so as not to fall into servility".³⁹ "You shall worship the Lord your God" (*Mt* 4:10). Adoring God, praying to him, offering him the worship that belongs to him, fulfilling the promises and vows made to him are acts of the virtue of religion which fall under obedience to the first commandment" (CC 2135).

Let us look now at the text of the *Constitutions* which refer to obedience:

"The promise of obedience is a pledge to live open to the will of God, "in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28) imitating Christ who accepted the Father's will and was "obedient unto death, death on a cross" (Phil 2:8). The promise of obedience is an exercise of faith leading to the search for God's will in the events and challenges in society and our own personal life. For this reason, the Secular Carmelite freely cooperates with those who have responsibility for guiding the community and the Order in discerning and accepting God's ways: the Community's Council, the Provincial and the General" (Nº 15).

The essential themes which can be highlighted are as follows:

— *living one's life open to the will of God*

"To seek the will of God means to seek a friendly and benevolent will, which desires our fulfilment, that desires, above all, a free response in love to his love, in order to make of us instruments of divine love. It is along this *via amoris* that the flower of listening and obedience blooms" (CIVCSVA, *The service of authority and obedience*, 4). Listening to God in his Word and following Jesus give meaning to human mediations with regard to obedience and the laws which they represent (Magisterium of the Church). Thus, an attitude of faith is important in these mediations and at the same time vigilance so as not to follow only that which one feels interiorly, but to face up to authority; obedience to the will of God demands constant vigilance so as not to allow oneself to be carried along by passive or convenient exterior obedience and not follow the interior impulse to not obey when an order or decision of the Community is not to one's liking.

Only experience of the love of the living God can make one become constantly open to his will, to seek to know it and to understand that which is most pleasing to him in order to translate it into actions: "The love-story between God and man consists in the very fact that this communion of will increases in a communion of thought and sentiment, and thus our will and God's will increasingly coincide: God's will is no longer for me an alien will, something imposed on me from without by the commandments, but it is now my own will, based on the realization that God is in fact more deeply present to me than I am to myself" (*Deus caritas est* 17).

— *exercise of faith which leads one to seek the will of God in daily personal and social events*

As an exercise of faith, in the light of the *secular person*, all situations in daily life provide occasions for doing the will of God "in every event", and to "see Christ in everyone whether he be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgments about the true meaning and value of temporal things both in themselves and in their relation to man's final goal" (AA 4). In this sense, these very occasions provide opportunities for permanent formation, namely to be "free

39 T. Goffi, *Obediencia* in <http://www.mercaba.org/DicES/O/obediencia.htm>. Accessed on 18th December 2015.

to learn during one's whole life, at every stage and at every moment, in every human ambit and context, with everyone, in every culture, allowing oneself to be instructed in truth and beauty, which are to be found within one's reach".⁴⁰

For St. Teresa, who was particularly committed to obedience (cf. F 18,13), she describes how she used to recall the example of Jesus: "And in matters touching on obedience He doesn't want the soul who truly loves Him to take any other path than the one He did: *obediens usque ad mortem*" - obedient unto death (F 5,3). "It's necessary to be on one's guard and careful in the performance of good works by having frequent interior recourse to God, even though these works are done in obedience and charity" (F 5,17), since "obedience gives strength" (F prol. 2).

— *unfettered cooperation in discernment and acceptance of God's ways with the authority of the Order: the local Council, the Provincial and the Fr. General*

Unfettered cooperation in discernment⁴¹ demands that one take an active role – never passive or submissive – in the process of decision making and obedient acceptance. This always needs to be done in the light of the Spirit, with the spirit of faith, prayer and listening to the will of God. The aim is for a greater giving of oneself in love, following Christ more closely, even when it results in suffering, but without ever attacking the dignity of the person. It is important that obedience be the fruit of dialogue, illuminating the conscience and done in charity. It should in turn be a manifestation of interior freedom, so that, despite disagreeing in the face of a particular situation, one may have the capacity to welcome in all humility that which is proposed, aware always that it will be for a greater good.

The criteria for fraternal communion in the Church and the Community, of peace and light, together with the fruits of the same Spirit⁴² in the life of the believer are criteria which must be taken into account. At the present time, community discernment acquires special significance.

3.4. The commitment in the promise of living out the spirit of the Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are central to the New Testament.⁴³ They comprise an attitude to life rather than virtues, which emphasize the fleeting nature of the world. The Kingdom of God is represented in the person of Jesus, in his preaching and works. They take up the promises made to the chosen people since Abraham. The Beatitudes fulfill the promises by enjoining them no longer merely in respect of the possession of land, but of the Kingdom of heaven. They depict the "countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity". At the same time, "they express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints" (cf. CCC 1716-1717).

⁴⁰ *Caminar desde Cristo*, 15.

⁴¹ Cf. A. Barruffo, *Discernimiento*, in <http://www.mercaba.org/DicES/D/discernimiento.htm>

⁴² Cf Gal 5,14-22; Ef 5,8-10; Rm 7,4-5.19-20.

⁴³ Cf. for that which follows see: U Becker, *Bienaventurado*, in *Diccionario teológico del Nuevo testamento*, Vol. I (Sígueme Salamanca, 1990) 183-184.

They are proposals for joy (cf. CCC 1718) which begin in the 'now' of this world, but which lead to an end which transcends it. Thus, the "poor in spirit", "those who suffer", "the non-violent", "those who hunger and thirst for justice" only represent different aspects of the same attitude in confronting the world, which is approaching its end or perhaps, the attitude of one who endures and who is ever waiting. It is not a highlighting of a set of virtues, rather a proclamation of joy, which has the same sound as "blessed" from the first half of each beatitude and which reflect the motivation expressed in the second half. What has been seen and heard is put into action (Lk 14:14; Jn 13:17) by those who maintain vigilance and trust (Lk 12:37 s; Mt 24:24; Jas 1:12; Ap 16:15 and *passim*). Despite the differences of each Beatitude, it must be stated that with respect to the future perspective, they cannot be understood from a sense of consolation or of later retribution. They always deal with an affirmation of a future which brings with it a radical transformation of the present. The *Beatitudes* are the "the only path that leads to the eternal beatitude for which the human heart longs" (CCC 1697).

This is all expressed in article 16 of the *Constitutions*, where at the same time, the living out of the day-to-day nature of the Beatitudes calls the Secular to give witness to Christ:

"The Beatitudes are a plan of action for life and a way to enter into relationship with the world, neighbors and co-workers, families and friends. By promising to live the beatitudes in daily life, Secular Carmelites seek to give evangelical witness as members of the Church and the Order, and by this witness invite the world to follow Christ: "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6)" (Const. OCDS 16).

In the search to live out the spirit of the Beatitudes, the theological aspect of the faithful is key to union with Christ, lived out in daily actions, a continuous exercise of faith, hope and charity. It is that which AA, advances under the subheading *Secular Spirituality with reference to the Apostolate* (4). We have the perfect example of this in the Virgin Mary, "who while leading the life common to all here on earth, one filled with family concerns and labors, was always intimately united with her Son and in an entirely unique way cooperated in the work of the Savior".

"Let us go forward together, Lord..."

In every Christian, baptism and confirmation imply consecration of the person to God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. It is a commitment to configure oneself in Christ throughout one's life and to work with him in the construction of the Kingdom, in one of the states of life in the Church, whether as a lay person, priest or in consecrated life.

The evolution of understanding of the lay vocation in the secular Order has come about as a consequence of Vatican Council II and of the Synod of Bishops of 1987 and 1995. For the Teresian Carmel, this has entailed a permanent discernment of the mission of the laity in the Order and their call to live the baptismal commitment according to their own charism.

Placing the emphasis on the following of Christ, the promise and vows are possible graces to the fidelity of God in the first place, since He is faithful to his promises and in consequence, the secular responds reciprocally to his faithfulness. Hence the promises in the secular Order are also a commitment of faithfulness to the Order and the Community, since the promise is made

before members of the Community as representatives of the Church. The Order and the Community, for their part help the member to live out their commitment taken in the promise and vows in faithfulness through the spirituality, sharing of formation and offering fraternal life as a support on the personal path in the following of Jesus and the exercise of their own mission, according to the spirit of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and those of the Beatitudes. As a result, it is necessary to be an active member in the life of the Community.

If a member feels called to take the vows in the secular Carmel, this implies a deeper oblation of oneself to that already undertaken in the promises, but not isolating oneself from others, but following Jesus according to one's state in life. The vows carry weightier moral responsibility and the awareness of making one's life a spiritual worship which is pleasing to God, "Do not be conformed to this world" (cf. Rm 12:1-2). It also brings with it humility before the gift which has been bestowed in the spirit of service and a more intense vigilance in response to God's appeal: to be a servant in the construction of the Kingdom, already begun by Jesus, in the Church and in communion with the Order, living in oblation to Jesus Christ (*Rule of St. Albert, 2*), who is "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6).

Fr. Alzinir Francisco Debastiani OCD

Rome, 6th January 2016

Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord

Appendix P: Session 11, Gerald Alford, OCDS, on the Evangelical Counsels

Chastity: This Only One Kind of Love I Promise to Be Truly Poor Existential Obedience

Chastity: This Only One Kind of Love

To be transformed into Jesus is to live fully the theological virtues, and to live by and experience the happiness of the Beatitudes. In a previous conference, we reflected upon our Promise as lay Carmelites to be obedient as Christ was, and made our reflection on obedience in relation to the virtue of Faith and to the Beatitude of meekness. In a subsequent conference, we reflected upon our commitment to the evangelical counsel of Poverty as a way of imitating Christ. We related this commitment to the virtue of Hope which directs our eyes to God alone, so that possessing little, we look forward to possessing all: all that we need in the herepresent to carry us onward into the ALL of the Hereafter.

Now we will reflect upon the evangelical counsel of Chastity, and do so in relation to the theological virtue of Charity. My Promise to live chastely is based on my belief and hope that in striving to love as Christ did, I will be blessed with purity of heart by which alone I can see God as the SOUL of my and my neighbor's soul. In God and in God's love we find a basis for a truly satisfying relationship. In the love of my brother / sister, my spouse / my friend I find the measure of my love of God, and make God present to me and my loved one.

"It is the love of my lover, my brother/sister, or my child that sees God in me, and makes God credible in me. And it is my love for my lover, my child, my brother/sister that enables me to show God to him or her in himself or herself." (Thomas Merton)

God is Love. Divine Charity is God's Life. Creation is the effusion, emanation, outpouring of God's Love; its manifestation. God created all out of Love.

The essence of the intimacy of the soul with God is in the exercise of the Theological virtues, and especially in the exercise of Charity, called by spiritual theologians, the queen and formative principle of all virtues, the bond of perfection that unites and harmonizes the virtues and the Holy Spirit's Gifts in the divine unity of Love. Our love of neighbor is a manifestation of our intimate love relationship with God. It is the effect of that love; an outpouring, an effluence. In the intimacy of our relationship with God, loves wells up and pours out towards others. The love of others springs from this outpouring.

The Bible is through and through the story of God's unending love for men and women and of their vocation to love God in return, and to love each other, and their fellow-men. God made man and woman in order that they might love. And in their love, be a sign of His Love, as we shall see.

Jesus told those to whom he preached that he came to fulfill the law and to point to its focus. When he was asked:

“Master, what is the greatest of the commandments?”

Jesus replied that the first and the greatest commandment, which gave the whole of the law its final focus, is to love God with one’s whole being, and the second, He said, was like unto the first: to love one’s neighbor as oneself. That focus of Charity is the basis for Chastity.

All true love must be ultimately focused in God, and if it is, then it will be chaste.

Our love for another will be chaste when it is based on the reality of the other being created in the image of God; when our love of the other is dedicated to that other’s well-being. The “other’s well-being”, by the way, is the motivation for fraternal correction. When we truly love another chastely, the Spirit is able to use us as an instrument toward transforming the other into that image of Christ the Father is calling the other to be. Becoming what God desires us to be is indeed well being.

Chastity is the counsel specifically governing human sexuality. Human sexuality is a legitimate power given to us by God primarily for the sake of creating community and as a means of ourselves being in relation to others, in friendships or, more exclusively, the particular love relationship of marriage. Like any power it must be used as its creator wills it to be used, that is, toward its proper end. As such, it must be, like all powers, regulated and directed. This is the work of the virtues.

More specifically, the virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of temperance, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason, and so bring them under control. However, Charity is the form of all the virtues. Under its influence, the self-mastery of temperance is prevented from being repressive, and chastity becomes more a love-gift of self than a withholding of self. Imbued with charity, chastity becomes the joyous affirmation of someone who knows how to be truly self-giving in a relationship, whether of friendship, or of married love. The chaste lover is not self-centered, not involved in selfish relationships with other people. Chastity aids and abets mature relationships. It promotes a purity of mind and body which helps develop true self-respect and at the same time makes one capable of respecting others, because it makes one see in them persons to reverence, insofar as they are created in the image of God and through grace are children of God, re-created by Christ who called them “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

St. Paul tells us that all laws, including laws regulating the Christian’s sexual life and sexual relationships must be governed by this great commandment of charity. In Romans, he writes:

All the commandments: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and so on, are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbor as yourself. (Romans 13:9)

Using more positive terms, St. Paul provides us with a wonderful working definition of chaste love in I Corinthians, chapter 13. That love, St. Paul specifies, is patient and kind; it is never jealous; it is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offense and is not resentful. Chaste love takes no pleasure in other people’s sins, but delights in the truth. It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

Chaste love in other words is love with no strings attached. It is unconditional love, love which is a gift. It is in fact, true love, for true love can only be a gift. "Were one to offer all he owns to purchase love, he would be roundly mocked." (The Song of Songs)

Chaste love is love which overcomes a smothering need to possess, and which goes beyond passion. "Deep waters cannot quench love, nor floods sweep it away." (Song of Songs)

Love, Thomas Merton writes, "... is a certain special way of being alive."

Chastity, we might say, is a certain special way of loving. It leads to a simplification of love by purifying our way of loving of all selfish motivations which tend to complicate being in love. This can result in an intensification of love and thereby an enhancement of life.

To designate Chastity as a certain special way of loving is to equate it with God's way of loving. When we love chastely, we are loving divinely. We are loving as God loves us: without measure, without conditions. Nothing we can do can separate us from God in His love for us, can stop God from loving us, because God is love. It is His nature to love. Meister Eckhart, the 14th C. Dominican priest and mystic, expressed this wonderfully in one of his sermons:

God loves. 'What a mystery!' What is God's love? His nature and His being: that is His love. Whoever would take away God's love for us would take away His essence, because His Being is dependent upon His love for us.... What a mystery that is! God loves me with His whole Being – His Being depends on it – God loves me as if his being and his becoming depend on it. God knows only one kind of love and with exactly that same love with which the Father loves His only begotten son, with the same love He loves us.

This is the essence of chastity: this only one kind of love that God knows. It is a detached love, a love innocent, a love unspoiled, a love free of the debauchery and wantonness inherent in the kind of love motivated by self interest, self-seeking and all forms of self-centeredness. It is a love which gives itself in hope of possession, but which does not impose possession as a condition of its giving. This is the kind of love which Jesus revealed to us in his humanity. He loved as he experienced himself being loved by the Father, and he called his followers to love each other as he loved them.

What an ideal! If we are as truthful as someone like Therese, we have to admit that it is impossible for us to love in this way. Therese admitted that her sisters' faults, failings, natural characteristics experienced as being so often in conflict with her own, continually threatened to block her efforts to so love. So, she discovered that in order to follow the Christian commandment of love, she must love her sisters, her neighbors, as Christ loved them, with His love.

When we make our Promise of Chastity, we are promising to strive to love all chastely as Christ does. We are promising to strive to love all creation with purity of heart: our spouses, our children, our friends, our enemies, our work, all of material creation, and above all, God.

Our Rule tells us that the promise of chastity binds us to the practice of this virtue according to our state in life, and that in no way does this promise call for a change in the practices proper to our particular state in life: whether married, unmarried, widowed or celibate by vow. Whatever our state in life, we are called to exercise the virtue of chastity in our relationships with others.

We have to recognize that the practice of chastity is not a denial of our sexuality. It is not a repression of our sexuality. It is to provide direction to our sexuality. It brings sexual love with its energy into focus, that focus we mentioned which is the focus of charity: to love God with our whole being, and that means with all our powers and energies, including our sexual energy. In one of the stanzas of the Spiritual Canticle, St. John of the Cross writes:

....all my energy in His service

....my every act is love.

In his commentary on this verse, the saint explains that by “all my energy,” he is referring to the sensory part of ourselves. He writes:

... By directing the activity of the interior and exterior senses toward God, [the soul’s] use of the body is now conformed to His Will. Spiritual Canticle, 28, 4

In regard to this conformity of will, we note that our Rule specifies that the promise of chastity “... expresses a conscious intention to respect the law of God in a way proper to the unmarried, married or widowed state, as the case may....”

Our state in life is our vocation – our call from God to seek him within the freedom and demand inherent in that state. If God calls a person to be totally and exclusively his own physically as well as spiritually by vow, public or private, then that is the highest state in life for that person and his or her way of perfection. It is for that person the way which imitates the essence of Christ’s way: His way was to do the will of the Father. Likewise, if God calls a couple to be his own through the medium of union with one another in a love which strives to become one, in a marriage of flesh and spirit, then that is the highest state in that couple’s regard and is the way by which they will reach perfection.

I do not think we need to elaborate on this point. Vatican II clearly states that whether we are called to a relative or absolute practice of chastity, “... all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank and status are called to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of Charity.” De Ecclesia

When we make our promise of chastity as individuals living in the world in the married, unmarried or widowed state, or as professed celibates, we are witnessing to this teaching of the Church that all are called to the perfection of charity. For that perfection of charity is a charity that springs from a pure heart, a heart purified by the consuming fire of God’s love. God’s love consumes us but does not destroy us. It allows us our individuality and indeed brings us to the perfection of our individuality. God loves us without violating that freedom of will He gave us which makes us like unto Himself. He loves with no strings attached, unconditionally.

No matter how deficient or half-hearted our efforts or even our desires to respond to that love may be, God continues to love us with His whole being. He loves us chastely and calls us to love Him and others in Him in a like manner. There is no room for lust in our love for God. Our love for Him must go beyond limited concepts and images of who He is and beyond the sense experiences of His gifts. Empowered by God’s grace and surrendering to the attraction of His love, we must allow ourselves to be drawn into that focus of love and live there, as Elizabeth of the Trinity exhorts. That focus of love is intimacy with God, and we spiral towards it as we

conform our wills with His in and through all our relationships. Just as we 'shall see God' only if we have purity of heart, so we will come to appreciate the dignity of others only if we relate to them with chaste love. We become unchaste in our relationships, marital or otherwise, when we violate the freedom of others by striving to manipulate them for self-benefit, when we allow sensual desires to have primacy so that we use our relationships with others primarily to gratify our own desires and self-interests.

To be chaste, we must ever trust in the primacy of God and order all our material and human relationships as a manifestation of that trust. We must not violate the integrity, freedom and uniqueness of those persons God provides us to be our friends and/ or spouses by using them for self-gratification. Likewise, a chaste regard for the right use of those material things God gives us must be sought. We love and use material creation chastely when we relate to it as God intended, that is, by using material things to sustain and enrich our lives and to assist us in fulfilling the ultimate purpose of our existence – the praise and glorification of God.

There is a sacramental quality to chaste love in that its presence in a relationship is an efficacious sign of intimate union, because such a love effects such a union. In human relationships, such a union is sacramental in a real and full sense only in Christian marriage because only a monogamous commitment can provide the condition for its growth and development. The inherent beauty of married love lies in this signification. Male and female God created humanity, Genesis tells us. When a man and woman join together to truly complement one another, they become one body. Sexual love is an energy which impels the two into this one fusion – not a coupling, but a union of being, physical and spiritual, with a creative potential of creating community, as the eternal love fusion inherent in the Divine Relationships of the Trinity is creative.

How beautiful and holy sexual love becomes when seen in this light. So holy and beautiful that St. Paul points to married love as the sign of Christ's love for the Church. So holy and beautiful that sexual love is used as an expression of the highest intimacy – the soul's union with God.

In conclusion: our Rule of Life calls us to observe the virtue of chastity in accordance with our state in life and to observe it with the conscious intention of practicing it according to God's will for our respective states. Another element noted in our Rule concerning the observance of Chastity is the one we have been emphasizing. It is that our promise binds us to practice this virtue in order "... to bear especial witness, as befits those called to intimacy with God, to the beatitude: Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." Fr. Michael Griffin in his commentary on the promises points out that the order in which the promises are made is new. Previously, the promises were made in the order of obedience, chastity and poverty. Vatican II insisted on the order in which the promises were to be taken should be: chastity, poverty and obedience. This is actually a return to an ancient tradition in the Church. Its return is meant to stress that first of all we are to strive to give ourselves to God totally with undivided love, and then we will want to live as the poor Christ and will be willing to be obedient as He was in carrying out the Will of the Father, even unto death.

I Promise To Be Truly Poor

In the Gospel of St. Mark (Mark 10: 21, 22), we read the story of the rich young man who asked Jesus for a formula of perfection: What must I do to be perfect?

Jesus' initial answer to obey the commandments did not satisfy him.

The rich young man was obviously a good young man. He emphatically stated that he had followed the commandments from youth. The truthfulness of his claim seemed confirmed by Jesus' response: the gospel account tells us that Jesus looked upon him and loved him. This rich young man obviously had incorporated the commandments in his life which made him pleasing to God. However, this alone did not satisfy him; he wanted something more; a greater perfection.

Isn't this the situation of most of us in seeking admission into formation in the Secular Order of Carmel? We want to go beyond the Third Mansion. We are saying it is not enough for us to simply obey and keep the commandments, to avoid sin and being what most people regard as good Catholics. We feel a desire for a deeper union with God; for an intimate relationship with Him. After two and a half years of consideration and formation, we decide that this way of Carmel is the way of following Jesus into greater perfection, and so we make at first a temporary and then a final commitment to tend to perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels and of the beatitudes according to the Rule of Life given us by our Carmelite order.

In considering at the counsel of Poverty, we regard that rich young man to see what proved to be the obstacle which kept him from walking with Jesus into deeper union with the Father in the Spirit.

When Jesus told the young man that in order to achieve the greater perfection he was seeking he should sell all that he had and then follow Him, the young man walked away sad for he had many possessions. What proved to be the obstacle to that young man in following Jesus, at least at that time, was a spirit of possessiveness about what he owned. He lacked the spirit of poverty necessary to respond to Jesus' call.

The call to poverty we answer as secular Carmelites is not the radical poverty which is practiced by those called to the religious life. As Secular Order members we are not making a promise of poverty as a religious makes a vow of poverty. When a religious makes a vow of poverty he/she makes a solemn commitment to voluntarily give up the right to ownership to anything. The religious may have use of temporal goods as the Order provides, but can not claim them to be for his/her exclusive use absolutely. Obviously, as people living in the world we can not necessarily make that kind of commitment. Some individuals can and do, but it can not be a requirement otherwise it might very easily violate the nature of our vocation as Carmelite seculars in so far as our Rule is to subserve the secular state of life of its members, not change it. See p. 88 of Fr. Griffin's commentary as to why Seculars do not make a Vow of poverty.

Nevertheless, we are promising to follow Christ in our state of life in the world according to the spirit of poverty required by Christ in order to be perfect, that is, to be through and through His, to belong thoroughly to God and have God Alone as our sole possession. So the question we continually have to ask ourselves in following Christ in this spirit of Poverty prescribed by the

Good News, the Gospel, is this: what is our relationship to the goods of this world which we now have in our possession? We continually need to test our spirit in regard to material possessions, and continually be on guard against an inordinate acquisitive and possessive spirit.

In Chapters 1 and 2 of St. Teresa's WAY OF PERFECTION, we find Holy Mother giving reasons for reforming the Order and providing a definition of the Carmelite Vocation. In Chapter 2, she takes up the question of poverty. In doing so, she emphasized the importance of being poor in spirit. She noted:

...although I had professed poverty, I was not only without poverty of spirit, but my spirit was devoid of all restraint. Poverty is good and contains within itself all the good things in the world. It is a great domain – I mean that he who cares nothing for the good things of the world has dominion over them all...and what do...honors [of kings and lords] mean to me if I have realized that the chief honor of a poor man consists in his being truly poor. (41-42)

Obviously, for Teresa, to be truly poor means to be POOR IN SPIRIT.

As Carmelites we commit ourselves to live a life of perfection according to the evangelical counsels and the beatitudes. Being poor in spirit, of course, is the first BEATITUDE. This beatitude is one of those referred to by spiritual writers as an "antidote beatitude." An antidote is something one takes to counteract a poison of some kind. Being poor in spirit is the antidote against the poison of possessiveness. Looking back at that rich young man in the Gospel, we said that the obstacle which prevented him from following Jesus was his attachment to his possessions – his possessiveness. By possessiveness of course we mean a grasping, a holding on to something, whether it be a material good or a spiritual good as if we possess it by right, by dominion, by an ownership. This is contrary to St. Paul's realization, later emphasized by Therese among others, that ultimately everything is gift. When we view everything as implicitly or explicitly a gift, then we have the perspective which fosters the spirit of poverty.

When we are poor in spirit, we have this attitude of detachment toward possessions of any kind, material or spiritual. For you see, having possessions is not the real problem. What is the problem is how possessive we are about what we have. I think that is the heart of St. John of the Cross' teaching about detachment which is not always understood or appreciated.

In ASCENT, Book I, Chapter 3, St. John is describing how detachment is like a night to the soul and he says:

we are not treating here of the lack of things, since this [the mere lack of things] implies no detachment on the part of the soul if it has a desire for them; but we are treating of detachment from them with respect to taste and desire, for it is this [detachment from desire] that leaves the soul free and void of them although it may have them.

Remember what Teresa said – "...he who cares nothing [that is, controls his desire] for the good things of the world has dominion over them all." True freedom does not necessarily mean being without things, but having control over our desire for these things. We are not free by the mere fact of material poverty. It is not enough to simply give up possessions, if after the renunciation of the superfluous, the comforts and the conveniences of life, we still remain attached to them by affection.

For as St. John reminds us again in Chapter 3:

It is not the things of this world that either occupy the soul or cause it harm, since they enter it not, but rather the will and desire for them, for it is these that dwell within it.

After the rich young man walked away sad, because he had many possessions, Jesus commented: How hard it is for the RICH to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The rich, those who possess a great deal, have difficulty not because of what they have; they have difficulty because it is so difficult for them not to be inordinately possessive about what they have. Those who are materially or physically poor can have the same problem: they may not possess much, but they may desire much.

When Jesus told his disciples, for example, that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved. He certainly did not mean that a person rich in worldly goods could not be saved. His point was that salvation or the possession of divine life could not be had at all, by rich or poor. To be saved, to share in God's life is impossible for man, period. God alone can save us and give us a share in his very life.

EVERYTHING IS A GIFT.

So you see what is at stake in being truly poor is our attitude toward possession itself and the perspective in which we view the material and spiritual goods we have. We can be materially rich or poor by circumstance or by luck, but we can only be truly poor, poor in spirit, by will, by desire, by intention and really only by Grace.

To be truly poor in spirit means to live according to the truth of who we really are. To develop this sense of reality which is the basis of a true spirit of poverty, we need that Gift of the Holy Spirit which is Knowledge. This Gift enables us to know God and know ourselves in TRUTH. Such knowledge provides us with the true perspective and sense of reality. It is the science of the saints. When we truly know who God is and who we are in relation to God, how can we help but be left with a spirit and attitude of poverty. How truly poor we are even at our best and most beautiful in comparison to One who is so infinitely and supremely perfect. As Jesus tells us, even when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say: we are useless servants; we have done only what we ought to have done.

In the realization of our poverty, the virtue which sustains us is the theological virtue of hope. How can we, poor creatures that we are, attain to the God Whom we believe to be so pure and good, so infinitely perfect and supreme! The realization of who He is and who we are could only lead to despair if we were not empowered by the virtue of Hope which enables us to have trust and confidence in attaining to the perfection of our calling as children of God in and through the merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

When Jesus pointed out to the disciples how difficult it was for a rich man to be saved, they rightly replied in exasperation: then who indeed can be saved. And Jesus' answer was: NO ONE – no matter how rich they were in earthly power or heavenly power, that is virtue, no one has the power to save him- or herself and gain the kingdom on his or her own.

We speak of the Carmelite way of following Jesus as an apophatic way, the *via negativa*. We mean that it is the way to God through negation, stripping away of delusions / illusions about

God in preparation for the truth or self-revelation God makes of Himself to us; the illumination of our minds and hearts by the Spirit. It is the way of NADA, “nothing.” St. John of the Cross advises us: “In order to possess everything (TODA), desire to possess nothing.” (Ascent I, 13, 11) You see, the NADA of John of the Cross is not a sterile emptiness, but a preparation for the TODA. God replaces our ideas, our concepts, our images we have of Him, always doomed to be imperfect and untruthful even at their best, with Himself, in so far as He desires to reveal Himself to us. We seek to be poor, to be empty, not for the sake of emptiness, but so that we can be filled with God.

The spirit of poverty requires then a complete, humble realization of our dependency upon God. Above all we must be empty of any confidence in ourselves relative to spiritual progress. God does not lead us into a higher spiritual life, nor deeper intimacy with Himself until we lose all vestiges of confidence, even the most subtle, in our own strength, initiatives, knowledge or virtues.

The direction to the spirit of poverty is the direction God took in becoming man: kenosis: self-emptying. We read a number of times in the Divine Office that passage from St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians, chapter 2, which we read at Evening Prayer I yesterday:

Though he was in the form of God,
Jesus did not deem equality with God
something to be grasped at.
Rather, he emptied himself
and took the form of a slave,
being born in the likeness of man.

If we wish to be united to God, we must do exactly what the Word did to become united to man. Just as Jesus was willing to let go of his divine status (not his divine nature) in order to become man, so we must be willing to let go of any status we may acquire as man in order to become like God. Because we are in reality so poor, that is, so dependent upon God in the order of the supernatural and its end, intimate union with God, we can only desire to strive for such an attitude of poverty. However, in cultivating such a desire to follow Jesus on this path of humility toward nothingness, we take hope in the teaching of Drs. John of the Cross and Therese who taught that we would not have such a desire if God did not plan to fulfill it. This assumes that it is truly a desire and not just wishful thinking or daydreaming. We pray for an efficacious desire characterized by perseverance in striving “to seek not the best of temporal things, but the worst...” and a striving, for God’s sake, “to desire to enter into complete detachment and emptiness and poverty with respect to everything that is in this world.” (Ascent I, 13.6)

The spirit of poverty involves such an emptying of all ego claims to status and loss of confidence in our own power. Such emptiness must be in regard to both material and spiritual acquisitions. We always must be willing to let go of what we consider to be pleasing to God for the sake of being truly pleasing to Him as He desires us to be.

The Carmelite way of poverty is the way of “no-gain”. When a novice sighed about her lack of virtue and progress in the spiritual life, and bemoaned how much yet she had to gain, Therese answered: “No, rather so much yet to lose!”

In practicing poverty what do we need to lose? That is the question! Certainly, we must strive to lose the spirit of acquisition. We want to be empty so that we can be filled with God. Make “room in our inn” for God! What more do we need to lose? We must lose too a spirit of possessiveness about even those things we need to have in order to live simply in our particular state of life in the world. We must strive for a sense of simplicity by acquiring only what we need, and by losing any sense of possessiveness about even those goods.

What an ideal! And as in the case of all ideals, we must view this one with the spirit of poverty, recognizing that all we can do is “endeavor to be inclined always towards” fulfilling such an aspiration. An important part of the way to this perfection of spiritual poverty is the “way of imperfection.” It is our failures and deficiencies which make us realize how truly poor we are and dependent upon God. God truly then becomes our sufficiency as St. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians: 3, 5. When we are emptied of confidence in ourselves and filled with trust and confidence in God, then we are disposed for total conversion. St. Teresa confessed in her LIFE (chapter 8) that what prevented her from overcoming the last obstacles was really a remnant of confidence which she still had in herself. She wrote: “I must have failed to put my whole confidence in His Majesty and to have a complete distrust of myself.”

After we have done all that we have been commanded, as that rich, young man could say, and then have left everything behind in terms of acquisition and possessiveness to follow Jesus; after we have done all this and can say with sincerity: I am a useless, an unprofitable servant; then we are on the WAY. The final word, after our admission of poverty and unprofitableness, must be: O God, I place all my trust and confidence in you. And not only say it, but live it.

Our confidence in God can never be excessive or exaggerated. Blind, unlimited hope in God is what will sustain within us a genuine spirit of poverty. It is so pleasing to God that St. John of the Cross teaches: “The more the soul hopes, the more it attains.” (Ascent III, 7,2) And Dr. Therese, who lived her life according to this spirit of poverty based on hope practiced as boundless trust and confidence in God, made this thought of St. John her own and wrote: “We can never have too much confidence in the good God who is so powerful and so merciful. We obtain from Him as much as we hope for.”

As a final word, we go back to the response of Jesus to the rich, young man in answer for his request for a formula for following Him perfectly –

Jesus told him that perfection consisted in selling all he owned, giving the profits to the poor and then come and follow Him.

Our model in a way of understanding what this might mean for ourselves is Therese. Over the years in her spiritual journey, her life was a process of “selling all that she had” As a religious, materially speaking, she did this in a more radical way than most of us can do in our state of life as secular Carmelites. But she was a model to us in living out the spirit of poverty to its fullest and in a real way adhering to what Christ asked: that we not only sell all that we have, but we give to the poor what we earned from this selling. Therese came to the point where she prayed

to be dispossessed of any and all merits she may have earned by her practice of virtue, and to have all these merits given to the “poor,” those souls in need. She wanted to come to God completely stripped, with empty hands, without any merits accrued for herself, but all merits used for the sake of sinners.

Our personal sanctification as Carmelites is not a dead-end street; if it is, then it truly is a way which ends in death to true sanctification. Initially, we may need to make our sanctification paramount, but the closer we come to God and the more we participate in God’s life, the more effusive we become in our concern about others. We truly thirst with Christ for souls: their salvation and sanctification. And so we become like Therese willing to appear before God with empty hands, having given away what “we may have acquired” through our ascetical and virtuous practices for the sake of others.

To reach such an attitude of poverty is something worth hoping and praying for.

Holy mother, Teresa, holy father, John, inspire us. Dr. Therese, teach us. Our Carmelite brothers and sisters in Glory, pray for us.

Existential Obedience

I would like to present obedience in a very elemental way, largely from the heart, without reference to the usual distinctions made in defining it: the dissection of it into its component parts, the noting of its specific differences from other virtues, and its relationships to other virtues in the theological scheme of things. I want to regard obedience as it relates to living our life in union with and after the example of Christ; seeing obedience as a dynamic of our existence as creatures and children of God.

The common denominator of anything said about obedience is this fact of Christian reality: obedience was the leitmotiv, the basic, underlying theme of Jesus as Son of God.

“Here I am to do your will, O God.”

The Word was made flesh in obedience to God’s plan, and Jesus as the incarnate word lived his life in obedience to the unfolding of that plan as revealed by the Spirit of God. Obedience provided the very sustenance of Jesus’ life. He declared that the Father’s Will was his very food and drink. He also described obedience to the Father as the criteria by which he qualified our love for Him: if you love me, keep my commandments.

From the example of Jesus during his existence on earth we can discern this: obedience is always an individual’s response to God’s Will. To be obedient as Jesus, I must choose to conform or be uniform with what God desires of me. Another more basic way of saying the same thing is that obedience is my response to the truth and its demands manifested moment by moment in the fulfillment of my nature as created by God in order to live out the unique life He has provided for me by His Will. The contemplative poet and priest, Ernesto Cardenal wrote: “As the Body of Christ is hidden beneath the appearances of bread and wine, so God’s Will is hidden beneath the appearances, the bread and wine, of day-to-day happenings.”

More specifically, this existential obedience directs my will to making those choices which will conform my life to that image of the Son the Father desires me to be. I let go of my own desires for holiness in obedience to becoming holy as God desires me to be.

My obedience involves being attentive to the “revelations” about the reality and mystery of this my life which are manifested to me through the circumstances, opportunities, demands, and consequences of my choices, especially the choice known as “my state in life.” Very often the most telling of these “revelations” are the disclosures provided by my weaknesses, failures and way of imperfections. For the truth is always subject to being disguised by the illusions I develop about myself sustained by pride and false witness of the world about me. Nothing can shatter such illusions better than the revelation of how weak, wrong, ego-seeking and sinful I can be in my choices and actions.

Discernment and self-knowledge then are important elements in coming to this, “my” truth. However, the truth will not set me free until I acknowledge it as it is and surrender my will to its implications. Obedience which is this response of surrender to and acceptance of the reality of myself and my life as willed for me by God is essential for the experience of true freedom. Such conformity to what God in His Providence wills for me normally is discovered by the exercise of my reason enlightened by Faith. Much of who I am is a mystery and can be apprehended only in Faith. My effort to understand what Faith enables me to perceive is sustained by Hope in God who alone can provide the means by which I can be obedient to what I perceive as God’s will for me. Motivation and strength for obedience to what God desires of me in fulfilling “my destiny” comes from Charity. The Love of Christ urges me on, impels me to the truth, and strengthens me in my resolve to become who/what the Father desires. Only in so far as the will is strengthened by this love can it overcome its propensity to obey the dictates of ego interests and the “flesh” rather than the urgings of God’s Spirit.

If I had lived before Christ, my obedience would be to the truth of who I was as a creature of God governed by what is known as the natural law, basically expressed in the Decalogue. However, as a baptized Christian I must be obedient to the truth contained in the reality that I am not only a creature of God, but God’s son or daughter as well. This filial relationship with God was established by my brother Jesus who calls me to follow Him as the Way, the Truth and the Light of my life.

Furthermore, my Carmelite vocation is my choice to follow Christ according to the example and teaching of Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross. The Carmelite Rule of Life has become a part of “my truth.” which I must obey. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, I discern and then proclaim, that I am responding to God’s call and make a commitment “to tend toward evangelical perfection in the spirit of the evangelical counsels and the Beatitudes.” One of the evangelical counsels of course is obedience, and one of the “be”- attitudes which must characterize my obedience is meekness or docility. Obedience inspired by and directed by the Holy Spirit is docile. To be docile is not to be a door mat but a child of God. I acknowledge and accept my total dependence upon God, particularly in the order of Grace and relative to salvation and sanctification. Docility is characteristic of such childlike obedience. No matter how old I am, how rich, powerful, sophisticated and smart I become – when it comes to myself and who I

truly am in relationship with God, I am essentially His creature, and, by redemption and pure gift, His child. My greatest distinction is to have God as my Father.

What should matter to us in being obedient to God's Will is not abstract ideals, but profound love and surrender to the concrete "judgments of God." God judgments are our life and our light, inexhaustible sources of purity and strength. As baptized Christians we surrender our will in obedience to the judgments of God as revealed in the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, and the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church. As Baptized, our obedience is characterized by filial love since we become God's children through Baptism. When we are professed as Carmelites we surrender to the judgment of God that he is calling us to live out our Baptismal covenant by following the Rule of Life given to us by the Order. We make our Carmelite promises to God of course, but practically speaking to the Superiors of the Order, to the Rule of Life provided by the Order and to each other. These are generally the instruments God employs in revealing His Will to us. These "instruments." we accept as the means by which the concrete Judgments of God are revealed, manifesting how we are to become holy as He desires us to be.

We can look to Therese for an example of this kind of obedience.

In writing the story of her life under obedience, Therese explained: "Our Lord has made it clear to me that all he wanted of me was plain obedience."

The substantial force behind and sustaining Therese's obedience was the truth. Therese said toward the end of her life: "... I can nourish myself on nothing but the truth."

"I never acted like Pilate who refused to listen to the truth," she wrote, "I've always said to God: O my God, I really want to listen to You; I beg You to answer me when I humbly say: What is truth? Make me see things as they really are. Let nothing cause me to be deceived."

Her obedience was a surrender to the truth of her reality. She learned to listen to God in the circumstances and demands of her life as it unfolded in the light of this truth. Her obedience was to what was required of her by her vocation. She was attentive to the ordinary day by day demands made of her through her rule and the dictates of her superior. "We must pay attention to regular observance," she admonished. Therese lamented those in her community "who do nothing or next to nothing, saying: I am not obliged to do that, after all.... How few there are who do everything in the best way possible! And still these [who are obedient] are the most happy...." She observed: "... it gives God much pain when we rationalize much."

Selective obedience is game playing with the truth. "I made the resolution," Therese said, "never to consider whether the things commanded me appeared useful or not.... it is love alone that counts. Forget about whether something is needed or useful; see it (the demand, rule, obligation, etc.) as a whim of Jesus." Indeed, because of our Carmelite Promise we should be striving toward an obedience that goes beyond merely following the commandments. Ours should be an obedience to the very "whims" of Jesus, to His desires for us. To know these desires we must not only hear and listen to the Word, but, like Mary, ponder His words and actions. Also, we must be attentive as she was to his revelations unfolding in our life, as already explained.

Therese revealed in her last conversations: “I formed the habit of obeying each one (referring to requests, demands made by her sisters) as though it was God who was manifesting his will to me.” Recall that we make our Promises not only to God, the superiors of the Order, but to each other. The needs of others in community can be a matter of obedience. I am present in community, for example, not only because it is required by the Rule, but because a brother or sister in my community may need my example and support. In being there, I am being obedient to that need. We should strive to be so sensitive in our obedience that we endeavor to obey not only the letter of the law, but primarily its spirit. The spirit of the law, Jesus taught and demonstrated, was/is Charity. That is why, as already mentioned, he designated obedience as the proof of our love for God.

An essential attitude for obedience is humility and, as we know, humility is truth. Part of the simple humble truth is, as we said, the realization of our dependency upon God, and in the order of Grace, our filial relationship with God. Part of that truth too is that we have natural and acquired temporal and worldly talents. It is the simple truth, not to be denied, in word or in action, that I may be intelligent, knowledgeable, skilled manually, artistically, verbally, physically etc. If I deny such talents and gifts in living out my life, I am being disobedient to the truth of Who God wants me to be. As long as we realize with St. Paul and Therese that everything is gift, and that the natural or acquired skills or talents which we possess are to be used for the glory of God and in the service of others, then we remain in the truth. St. Therese warned against using “false currency” in the practice of virtue. Certainly, false humility is a counterfeit coin in the spiritual exchange of the Christian life.

Finally, in the birth of Jesus, the Way and the Truth became incarnate. God really and truly came to share our life and His Life with us. In so doing God exemplifies for us the M.O. (modus operandi) we are to follow relative to our commitments to Him. The promise to obedience that we make can remain an abstraction. If I am to practice this evangelical counsel “divinely,” I must incarnate it in “my” life. I must reflect upon its meaning in terms of who I am in my particular day by day life situation. The matter for obedience may not be that unique. The Rule and prescriptions of my community’s council generally will more than likely be the same for me as everyone else about me. However, the form, or the “how” of my practice of obedience may provide unique opportunity for expression. By form of obedience, I mean the way I individually respond to prescriptions of authority. Certain requirements may be temperamentally easier or more difficult for me personally. A particular requirement regarded as a demand of insignificant consequence for one person, may be most difficult for me. I may experience repugnance or reluctance to obey a particular prescription, and so be tempted not to do what is required in order not to be “hypocritical” in practice. However, what counts is faithfulness to my commitment, my intention, and the consistency of my choice. I may find attendance at meeting, for example, generally a burden temperamentally and, perhaps, more often than not, irrelevant to my needs. Even so, I choose to attend meetings regularly as a concrete expression of my obedience, as a sign of my faithfulness to my commitment, as a defense against a possible form of subtle pride which insinuates that I am above others, as a practice of charity sustained by the hope that my presence which may seem useless to me may be in fact a valuable witness to others. The form of practice means too that my practice of a rule such as attendance is not just resignation, but involves a real effort to make my conformity viable. In

attending meetings (to follow through on our example), I strive to be attentive to what is going on, to be active in my participation in discussions, and to be responsive to material communal needs presented by volunteering to serve.

In summary: existential obedience is my response to God's will as revealed to me in the here and now, moment to moment, "demands" of my state in life which includes the opportunities and consequences of my choice to follow Christ according to the Carmelite Rule of Life and example and teachings of Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross. It involves a response of NO to all that God's Spirit reveals to me as obstacles to fulfilling God's will for me as His unique son or daughter, but above all, it is a response of YES in imitation of Jesus who St. Paul describes as being always a YES to the Father. This obedience reaches perfection when it is followed through even unto death – death on the cross. For us usually this means death to the Ego which tends to be in conflict, or at cross-purposes with the truth of our identity in God which we may call the Self. When we face this cross, this conflict, in its truth, and submit our wills to its anguish as Christ did, then by that obedience is the conflict profoundly resolved and we are liberated into a share in the Resurrected life of Christ Jesus. Normally this "final" conversion is a gradual process resolved finally at death and perhaps through what is referred to as purgatory. For some it is resolved in life and finalized through the passover of death. In any case, be obedient to the truth of who you are and the truth shall set you free.

If you are the work of God wait patiently for the hand of your artist who makes all things at an opportune time.... Give to Him a pure and supple heart and watch over the form which the artist shapes in you ... lest, in hardness, you lose the traces of his fingers. By guarding this conformity you will ascend to perfection.... To do this is proper to the kindness of God; to have it done is proper to human nature. If, therefore, you hand over to Him what is yours, namely, faith in Him and submission, you will see his skill and be a perfect work of God.

St. Iranaeus (Adversus Haereses, IV, XXXIX.2.col.1110)

O God,
as docile and as tractable to your artistic spirit
as media is to the artist who uses it,
so that the design the artist has in mind may be brought to completion;
so obedient may I,
to you, my Creative Father,
BE.

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