

Flos Carmeli

Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse
Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites

Fall 2023

Volume XXXIII No. 4

From the President's Desk

By Maxine Latiolais, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Carmel,

The season of Autumn has begun, and we enter the month of October. October usually brings us two very special solemnities to celebrate: St. Thérèse (our patron saint) and St. Teresa of Jesus. This year both solemnities fall on Sundays. The Sunday liturgies take precedence. However, when these solemnities fall on a Sunday, we could add the extra reading from the breviary in honor of our Saints. As our OCDS Statutes state, we normally fast before these feast days. We should still fast on the day before (Saturday).

The Provincial Council (PC) is looking for a Congress Coordinator for the 2027 Oklahoma Congress. We are looking for someone who is organized and good at recruiting others to help. We would like to give the coordinator plenty of time to plan the event and to recruit help from among the communities. If you are feeling called to this important position, please contact Denise Graham, PC Congress Liaison, email nellie_joey@yahoo.com or phone 936-525-0476

The PC has come up with a special plan for prayers for vocations to the Discalced Order of Carmel. The prayer plan is called 7/365 where each day of the month certain communities are assigned to offer special prayers on that specific date. For an explanation of how this works, please see the article about this prayer plan on Pages 6-7 of this Flos.

In the Summer Flos, there was an article entitled “*New Councils. Just how are things going?*” addressed to Local Councils. If any Local Council is struggling with leadership or needing any guidance, please know that the PC is willing to offer videoconferencing to conduct focused leadership training if needed.

In a letter from the Superior General Fr. Miguel Calle dated August 15, 2023, he addresses us with great joy and reminds us that we celebrate “Twenty Years of Grace.” The celebration is twenty years since the inception of our OCDS Constitutions. In his letter he states:

“Today we want to remember an important event in our Carmelite family. Twenty years ago, on June 16th 2003, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated life and

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From the President's Desk

By Maxine Latiolais, OCDS—President of the Provincial Council

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Societies of apostolic life, approved the text of the Constitutions of the Secular Order, after having meticulously revised them, and declared: "May the new text of the Constitutions of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites be a really effective means, so that its members can reinvigorate more and more their baptismal consecration in the concrete situations of family, social, civilian and ecclesial life." Thru this decree, our Holy Mother the Church expressed that the vocation of the Secular Carmelite is truly a path towards sanctity. The Constitutions of the Secular Order expresses the elements that comprehend the vocation. They help the Secular Carmelite to understand and live in all its fulness his vocation to love and serve the Church and our world."

You can find a summary of his letter on Pages 20-21 and the entirety of his letter at this weblink: [Fr. General Letter to OCDS, Aug. 15, 2023.](#)

In case you missed this, it bears repeating:

Hold the Date for Provincial Workshops!

Provincial Workshops with Plenary Council meeting: May 17 & 18, 2024. According to the Provincial Statutes the PC is to host a Plenary Council every triennium. Attempts were made to secure a venue this year in 2023 but there were none available during a weekend. Finally, after much searching, a venue has been secured in Wichita, Kansas. More details will be offered later. We realize that many communities have their meeting date on the third weekend of the month, so make plans now with your 2024 calendar to allow attendance at the Provincial Workshop/Plenary Council meeting. The Plenary Council meeting is the time to bring issues to the attention of the entire province. It is also a wonderful opportunity to connect with other communities and discuss common concerns.

Mary, Mother and Beauty of Carmel, intercede for us!

Yours in Carmel,

Maxine Latiolais, OCDS

**President, Provincial Council
for the OCDS Oklahoma Semi-Province
Council Members:**

*Barbara Basgall, OCDS, Karen Burton, OCDS, Denise Graham, OCDS,
and Lea Hawkins, OCDS*

**Report from the Provincial Delegate—
Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD
Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Carmel,

On the Promise and Vows, Part III

This is the third and final article on the understanding of the Promise and Vows of the Secular Order member.

This has less to do with the legislation and more to do with the importance of discernment in the process of making a promise, a definitive promise, and/or vows.

It is of utmost importance that the Local Council take discernment as a serious obligation they take before God and the Order.

Making a promise is not akin to “graduating;” it is a serious step in the discernment of the individual member and the local council. Just because a person has “done their time” in formation does not mean that they are ready to pledge to a deeper level of commitment. Remember that this is a discernment in vocation. It is one thing to be attracted to the spirituality of the Order; it is another thing to feel called to live it as the central expression of the journey towards God in Christ.

In the discernment process, it is two parties that are discerning: the member and the Order (represented by the Local Council). The Local Council is tasked by the community to administer, form, and discern. This is what is entrusted to the Council and why it is important that the community understand this is what is being entrusted to the Council. The Council is the legitimate authority in the discernment process – that is why it is important that council members be approachable and understanding. They should discern with loving concern and be willing to ask the hard questions, and if there are any doubts, that these doubts be expressed to the candidate/member to help them in their own journey of discernment.

Many of the problems that occur in communities stem from a lack of discernment. Of course, there are a multiplicity of factors that all contribute to the discernment process: human weakness, inability to verbalize, human bias, and prejudice –are all contributing factors, but the seriousness of the member’s conversion to follow Christ should minimize these negative qualities.

Areas of discernment

The areas that are important to examine in the candidate/member as they journey with us are the following:

Human formation: Grace builds on nature. Is the nature capable of receiving and cooperating with the grace that is being offered? If there are incapacities on this level, then the rest of the journey will

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†
Memorare

Remember,
O most gracious Virgin Mary, that
never was it known that anyone
who fled to thy protection,
implored thy help, or sought
thine intercession was left
unaided.

Inspired by this confidence,
I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins,
my mother; to thee do I come,
before thee I stand, sinful and
sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word
Incarnate, despise not my
petitions, but in thy mercy hear
and answer me. Amen.

Report from the Provincial Delegate— Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

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be a continual struggle. Remember that part of our vocation is the call to community, and this is an area that must be examined closely.

Christian formation: One assumes that the person has a basic Christian approach to life and that they are approaching the Secular Order as a further expression of this commitment. The lack of a healthy charity is not compatible with our call to communal life.

Catholic formation: the understanding of the Catholic faith is one that is continuously growing. Is the person committed not only to the Catholic faith but also to their own growth in understanding this faith? Is the person teachable? Are they formable in the faith? Are they rigid and unbending in their understanding?

Carmelite formation: Does the spirituality of the Order feel “comfortable,” that is, does it express their understanding of what the Christian journey is called to be? As in the above areas of Christian and Catholic formation – is it more than an intellectual exercise? Is it more than knowing “chapter and verse?”

I would strongly encourage all members to slowly read and pray over this document from the Order on the Promise so as to come to a better understanding of what we are committing ourselves to and the obligations that this commitment brings.

Celebration

The steps in formation are steps in discernment, keeping in mind the celebrations should be sober in their expression, that is, in a gradation of celebration. The ultimate expression of joy and celebration is when the member of the community has discerned and has been approved to make their Definitive Promise.

As is instructed in the rubrics for the different rites, when one is clothed (receives the Scapular), it should be at a simple celebration of the Word, usually during the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours at either Morning or Evening prayer.

III. The Rites for Admission and for the Promise and the Vows

6. The rite takes place in the context of a Liturgy of the Word.

The instruction later states that the rite *may* take place during a Eucharistic celebration. Taking into consideration the Second Vatican Council’s instruction in the celebration of the Liturgy and of a progressive celebration – that is, that there be a gradation in the solemnity of the way in which the Liturgy is celebrated – the admission into formation should be celebrated at the monthly meeting of the community and during its celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. The celebration of First Promise, then, should be made during the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours or the monthly Eucharistic celebration of the community. The celebration of the Definitive Promise should then be a greater joy and celebration. It is one of the highest celebrations within the community.

The celebration of the vows, which is a private vow, should not be celebrated in the same way as the celebration of the Definitive Promise. The vows, because they are private, are not to be considered equal to or greater a celebration as would be the celebration for the Definitive Promise. “These vows

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**Report from the Provincial Delegate—
Father Stephen Sánchez, OCD
Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse**

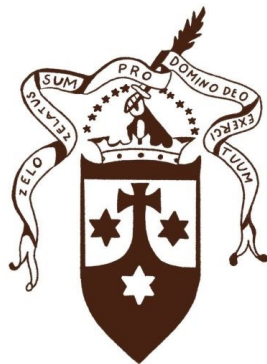
(Continued from page 4)

are strictly personal and do not create a separate category of membership” (Const. # 39), and because they are personal and do not create a separate category, those who have discerned to take these personal vows are not to be categorized or listed as distinct from the other members of the community.

Consulting with Fr. Christophe-Marie Baudouin, our General Definitor, he suggested that the profession of vows should be a private, somber celebration where the community is present because it is within this community that the member has discerned a deeper private oblation of the self. It is NOT to be a big celebration with family members and extended family members present. It is NOT a profession of PUBLIC vows, as are religious vows, but rather a private commitment.

In Him,

Fr. Stephen Sánchez, OCD



Report from the Provincial Council— 7/365 Prayers offered to God *Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse*

As Carmelites, it is expected of us to pray daily for vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and the Church. Specifically, we should be praying for our Order, our Province, our Communities, our Local Council, and most earnestly for our Friars, Nuns, and Seculars. Since intercessory prayer is our trademark, so to speak, it may seem strange that we are asking each member of the Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Therese to unify our prayers for vocations to our Order in this Province.

The unification proposed is that every day of the month one community **will be praying for an increase in vocations for the Friars, Nuns, and Seculars in our Province** through such prayers as one hour of adoration, rosaries, offering of Mass, and any other prayers the members of the community can offer.

Pope Francis said of contemplative religious, “Their prayer is oxygen for all the members of the body of Christ.” The Church is living, and we need the oxygen of contemplative prayers to survive. If we lose our Friars, our Province and the Order will not survive.

We have thirty-five communities, study groups, and groups in discernment as designated below:

Communities

1. Alexandria, LA
2. Atlanta, GA
3. Austin, TX
4. Baton Rouge, LA
5. Birmingham, Al
6. Cedar Rapids, IA
7. Conyers, GA
8. Covington, LA
9. Dallas, TX
10. Georgetown, TX
11. Gulf Coast, MS
12. Houston, TX #1
13. Houston, TX #2
14. Houston, TX #4
15. Jackson, MS
16. Knoxville, TN
17. Lafayette, LA #1
18. Lafayette, LA #2
19. Lawrenceville, GA
20. Little Rock, AR

21. McAllen, TX
22. Mobile, AL
23. New Iberia, LA
24. New Orleans, LA
25. Oklahoma City, OK
26. St. Louis, MO
27. San Antonio, TX
28. Sioux City, IA

Study Groups

29. Houston, TX #3
30. Lincoln-Omaha, NE
31. Savannah, GA
32. Topeka, KS
33. Tulsa, OK

Groups in Discernment (GID)

34. Cameron County, TX
35. Bismarck, ND

Each community will take the day of the month that corresponds to the number of their community listed above. Alexandria, Louisiana’s members will pray on the first of every month. If you are a member of Savannah, Georgia you will pray on the 31st day of each month and the months that do not have 31 days, you will pray on the 1st of each month along with Alexandria. Topeka will pray on the 2nd of each month, along with Atlanta, Georgia. Tulsa prays on the 3rd of each month, Cameron County on the 4th of each month and Bismarck on the 5th of each month.

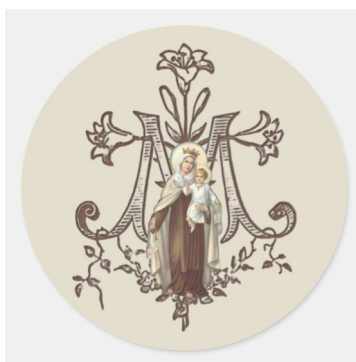
Report from the Provincial Council— 7/365 Prayers offered to God Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse

(Continued from page 6)

This is not meant to be difficult, so do not make it difficult. If at least one member can make it to adoration - great! If you cannot make it, you can do adoration from YouTube or in your heart, or another member could say a rosary for this intention. You do not need any kind of sign-up sheet, just remind the members to say prayers on this specific day for this specific intention and if only one member can do a holy hour this is still great. Please emphasize to your community to continue their individual daily prayers for our friars, nuns, and seculars. If you have any questions call or email Barbara Basgall at 405-826-3860 leave a message or email at babscarmel@gmail.com.

Prayer for Vocations for our Province

Saint Therese, the Heavenly Father's Little Flower, your heart was so consumed with the desire to win souls for Your Lover that you willingly offered yourself as His "victim of love." As the patron saint of our Province, we beg you to not turn your back on us but through your intercession and the intercession of the Blessed Mother Mary, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, I pray that the Lord may touch the hearts of men and women and fill them with the same desire that moved you, Little Flower, to give yourself to Him as His spouse. Protect your Province, the Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Therese, and ask our Heavenly Father to fill its coffers full of good and holy friars, nuns, and seculars. May God bless our friars, nuns, and seculars to be holy men and women full of love and zeal for the work of our Lord with the spirit of St. Elijah. May your life lived in obedience, chastity, and poverty as a Carmelite, inspire those who are called by the Lord to the consecrated life to courageously say "Yes" and encourage them to live out this divine calling in their lives. Amen.



**Report from the Provincial Council—
Bookmark for 7/365 Prayers offered to God
Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse**



**Vocation Prayer for Oklahoma
Semi-Province of St. Therese**

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News from the Province — OCDS Community of Triumph of the Cross, Georgetown, Texas

Submitted by Marianne Gonzales, OCDS

The OCDS Community of Triumph of the Cross of Georgetown, Texas, celebrated professions on January 14, 2023. Anita Eubanks made her First Promise, and Geri Lynn renewed her Promise in the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites. Fr. Kyle Nesrsta, Parochial Vicar at St. William Catholic Church in Round Rock, presided over the ceremony, which was held during a Mass at Santa Rosa de Lima Catholic Church in Andice, Texas.

After Mass, Father Kyle spoke on the Rule of St. Albert and various Meditations from the *Divine Intimacy* book, with an emphasis on obedience and diligence. Father Kyle also spoke on the Examination of Conscience and handed out an Examen based on Ignatian spirituality. He used the Seven Deadly Sins and outlined the opposing virtues we should practice, countering the tendencies we may have to commit these sins.



Left to Right: Anita Eubanks, Geri Lynn, and Father Kyle Nesrsta

News from the Province — OCDS Community of the Transfiguration, Knoxville, Tennessee

Submitted by Mark Calvert, OCDS

On the Solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, July 16, 2023, two members of the Knoxville, Tennessee, OCDS Community of the Transfiguration were clothed in the Scapular of the Order, while four members of the Community made their profession at the chapel at the Chancery of the Diocese of Knoxville.



From left to right: Kathleen MacDonald, Mary Leitnaker, Valerie Ponce (Formation Director), and Fr. Andrew Crabtree



From left to right: Fr. Andrew Crabtree, Valerie Ponce (Formation Director), Kathy Bracic (Definitive Promise), Rosemary Calvert, David Whittaker, and John Kobza (First Promise)

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of St. Therese, The Little Flower
Lawrenceville, Georgia**
Submitted by Jan Nerone, OCDS

A First Promise Mass was celebrated on September 9, 2023, for Joyce Hanley and Annie Grace Bassage, by the OCDS Community of St. Therese, The Little Flower, in Lawrenceville, Georgia. The Rituals were presided by Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Kevin Hargaden, at St. Marguerite d'Youville Catholic Church in Lawrenceville, Georgia.



Joyce Hanley



Annie Grace Bassage



Annie Grace Bassage , Fr. Kevin Hargaden, and Joyce Hanley

News from the Province — OCDS Community of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified, McAllen, Texas

Submitted by Iris Rodriguez, OCDS

On August 13, 2023, Brother Vladimir Guadalupe presented a conference titled “Vocation” to the OCDS Community of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified, McAllen, Texas at Sacred Heart Parish in Edinburg, Texas. The community enjoyed visiting with Bro. Vladimir and will pray for him as he continues his studies.



Brother Vladimir Guadalupe



Back Row: Council Member Cathy Magness, Brother Vladimir and Council Member Joe Connors

Front Row: President Clarice Jones, Formation Director Diamantina Herrera, and Council Member Linda Garcia



Back Row: Melissa Anzaldua, Patricia Flores, Council Member Cathy Magness, Brother Vladimir, and Council Member Joe Connors

Front Row: Lucy Hernandez, President Clarice Jones, Formation Director Diamantina Herrera, Council Member Linda Garcia, Dolores Munoz, and Pamela Velazquez

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified,
McAllen, Texas**

Submitted by Iris Rodriguez, OCDS

On September 10, 2023, the OCDS Community of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified in McAllen, Texas, held a Ritual Ceremony at Sacred Heart Parish in Edinburg, Texas, where two Aspirants received the Scapular of the Order, and four members made their Definitive Promises.



Formation Director Diamantina Herrera, Melissa Anzaldua, Cristina Espinoza, Deacon Johnny Gonzalez, Dolores Munoz, Pamela Velazquez, and President Clarice Jones



Formation Director Diamantina Herrera, Patricia Flores, Lucy Hernandez, and President Clarice Jones

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**News from the Province — OCDS Community of St. Mariam of Jesus Crucified,
McAllen, Texas**

Submitted by Iris Rodriguez, OCDS

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Back Row: Pamela Velazquez, Patricia Flores, Councilor Cathy Magness, Councilor Joseph Connors,
Melissa Anzaldua, and Dolores Munoz

Front Row: Lucy Hernandez, Councilor Linda Garcia, Formation Director Diamantina Herrera,
Deacon Johnny Gonzalez, President Clarice Jones, and Cristina Espinoza

**News from the Province — OCDS Community of the Holy Spirit,
Mobile, Alabama**

Submitted by Nancy Volovecky, OCDS

The OCDS Community of the Holy Spirit, Mobile, Alabama, celebrated Our Lady of Mount Carmel's Feast a day early at the monthly meeting on July 15. After Morning Prayer and Holy Mass, everyone enjoyed food, flowers, a special cake in honor of our Blessed Mother, and each other "wasting time" together.



Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse
Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the Brown Scapular
By Adriana Fadden, OCDS and Brenda Nicholson, OCDS
OCDS Community of the Transfiguration, Knoxville, Tennessee

The Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel has been a sign of fraternity, love, service, and faith for many centuries. It has a deep and special history in the Church. At the same time, the meaning and power of the Brown Scapular have frequently been misunderstood.

Originally, the scapular was a type of clothing that monks wore over their habit while working. It consisted of a large piece of cloth over the front and back of the habit, a type of apron, to keep the habit clean. It was joined over the shoulders with a strip of cloth. Over the passage of time, it became a symbol of the cross and the yoke of Christ.

In the Middle Ages, many people wanted to be associated with various Religious Orders, such as the Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites, and others. Associations began to emerge, and lay persons were given signs of their participation in the spirituality of the Order, such as a cloak, a cord, or a scapular. The Carmelites adapted a small scapular for the lay faithful to wear as a sign of their way of life and commitment to Carmelite Spirituality.

Every year on July 16th, the Church celebrates the many blessings that our Lady has bestowed on the Carmelite Family. The reason the Feast Day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel is on July 16th is because it was on July 16, 1251, that Our Lady gave the Brown Scapular to St. Simon Stock. At the time he was the Prior General of the Carmelite Order, Simon Stock would constantly implore Our Lady to give the Order a special privilege. According to Carmelite Tradition and blessed by the Church, his prayers were answered. Our Lady of Mount Carmel appeared to him in a vision as holding the Brown Scapular in her hand, saying, “This is a privilege for you and the Order: whoever dies clothed in this Scapular will not suffer eternal fire.” The Order understands this promise to mean that whoever wears the Brown Scapular, remaining faithful until death in their commitment to the way of life associated with its devotion, will be granted the grace of final perseverance.

Unfortunately, a false doctrine called the Sabbatine Privilege emerged in the 14th century, which has confused many people. Allegedly, Pope John XXII received a visit from Mary, who promised that whoever faithfully wears the Brown Scapular will be saved at the time of death. Subsequently, the Sabbatine Privilege emerged in which people began to believe that the Virgin would deliver from Purgatory, on the first Saturday after death, the Carmelites and people associated with them who observed chastity according to their state, recited specific prayers and wore the habit of Carmel. However, according to historical research, it was discovered that the account of Pope John XXII’s vision did not take place. In the year 1613, the Holy See determined that the decree establishing the Sabbatine Privilege was unfounded, and the Carmelite Order was instructed to stop mentioning the Privilege. However, even today, the Sabbatine Privilege is found in most published pamphlets written about the Brown Scapular and is widely promulgated on the internet. This false teaching has unfortunately led some people to treat the Scapular as a magical charm of protection. Therefore, it is important for you to understand the true value of the Brown Scapular and to know that simply wearing the Brown Scapular or reciting specific prayers is NOT an automatic guarantee of salvation.

The Brown Scapular is considered by the Church to be a sacramental object. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the Sacraments are “efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us” (CCC 1131). Sacramentals, on the other hand, “are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the Sacraments. They signify effects, particularly

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Oklahoma Semi-Province of St. Thérèse
Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the Brown Scapular
By Adriana Fadden, OCDS and Brenda Nicholson, OCDS
OCDS Community of the Transfiguration, Knoxville, Tennessee

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of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church.” (CCC 1667).
“Sacramentals do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the Sacraments do, but by the Church’s prayer they prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it.” (CCC 1670)

Faith is both a gift we receive from the Holy Spirit and a theological virtue we practice, which opens us to perceive Divine Truths. Signs are natural realities that are perceived with our bodily senses and point to super-natural realities. We perceive signs with the faculties of our soul through faith, which enlightens our intellect to see and know God through the signs that we see with our eyes. This is why faith is necessary to believe in the power of Sacraments and the grace that flows forth from them for the benefit of the whole Church.

So, let’s take the Blessed Sacrament, the Eucharist, as our example to help us understand this better. The Eucharist meets the definition of a Sacrament because it was instituted by Jesus Christ at the Last Supper. It is a sign because the bread we perceive with our eyes when we look at the Eucharist points to the super-natural reality of the true and substantial presence under the appearance of Jesus as the Bread of Life. As a Sacrament, the Eucharist is an “efficacious sign of grace...by which Divine Life is dispensed to us.” The power of the Holy Spirit works through the words of consecration spoken *in persona Christi* (in the person of Christ) by the Priest celebrating Mass to change ordinary bread and wine into the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus. Grace is the means by which we share in the Divine Life of the Trinity. So, when we receive Jesus in the Eucharist, the Holy Spirit pours out a superabundance of grace into our souls, which effectively heals us from the wounds of sin, nourishes our souls, and strengthens our spirit so that we might live more firmly rooted in Christ and share more deeply in the Divine Life of the Trinity.

However, the effect that God’s grace has on us depends on our disposition at the time we receive the Sacrament through which grace is dispensed. Therefore, we must prepare ourselves to receive the grace God desires to give us through the Sacraments we receive. For example, before we receive the Eucharist, we must confess our sins and not be in a state of mortal sin so that we are worthy to receive the Eucharist. Then, we must have a disposition of openness and receptivity to the graces God desires to give us through the Sacrament. Most importantly, we must approach the Sacrament with an act of faith. A faith fortified by the faith of the saints upon which the Church is built. A faith that trusts in the Truth preserved and proclaimed by the Church, even when this Mystery is beyond our understanding. A faith that allows us to say “Amen” with a sincere heart when the Eucharist is held up and proclaimed to be “The Body of Christ.”

Sacramentals, like the Brown Scapular, are an aid that works through the prayers of the Church. They help prepare us to receive God’s grace through the Sacraments. They also help us to cooperate with God’s grace in order to affirmatively respond to God’s call to “be holy.” (1 Pet 1:16). The Brown Scapular is a sacramental and does all these things, but it is also more than this. “The Scapular is a sign of our special adoption by the Mother of God. The first and the greatest privilege it brings is that it envelops us in the special love of our Blessed Mother. It makes us ‘hers’ in a very special way.” (Fr. Joachim Smet, O. Carm). The Church has approved and encouraged devotion to the Brown Scapular, thus

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affirming our belief that by wearing the Scapular while living a devout life according to Carmelite Spirituality, Mary will assist us in life and in death with her continuous intercession, merciful prayers, and special protection. When we wear the Brown Scapular, the words of the Second Vatican Council seem to speak specifically to us. “By her maternal love, Mary cares for the brothers and sisters of her Son, who still make their earthly journey surrounded by dangers and difficulties until they are led to their happy fatherland.”

It is necessary for a Priest or Deacon to bestow the Brown Scapular on an individual by way of a blessing. It is not the Scapular that is blessed, but the individual who receives the blessing. Therefore, if the Scapular gets worn out and needs to be replaced, another blessing is not performed. After a person receives the Brown Scapular, they can be enrolled in the Confraternity of the Brown Scapular. Yet, it is not necessary for the wearer to be enrolled in this organization. Any person wearing the Brown Scapular can participate in the graces of this sacramental and practice Carmelite Spirituality. Persons who have received the blessing and wear the Brown Scapular are associated with the Carmelite Order but are not considered members of the Order.

The approved catechesis by the Carmelite Order states, “The scapular is the sign of the love of Mary, icon of the goodness and mercy of the Most Blessed Trinity. This love is the fruit of the grace of God poured into the hearts of the faithful who, in turn, commit themselves to it.” (The Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catechesis and Ritual). Therefore, a person should not decide to wear the Brown Scapular unless they also have a strong devotion to Our Lady and are willing to commit themselves to a way of life. This way of life includes following Jesus as his disciple and taking Mary as their model of perfect discipleship. They should strive to enter more deeply into a life of prayer, imitating Mary, who “kept the word of God in her heart.” (Luke 2:51). They should be willing to do voluntary penances in order to participate more deeply in the Paschal Mystery of Christ with Mary, whose soul was pierced by a sword. They should also strive to show the Love of God by their lives through corporal and spiritual works of mercy, following Mary’s example of allowing the Love of God to shine forth through her to all she cares for.

Now, let me turn to the association that Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the Brown Scapular has with Fatima. On October 13th, 1917, while the crowd was witnessing the miracle of the sun, the three visionaries at Fatima were graced with three successive visions in the sky. Lucia described first seeing “St. Joseph with the Child Jesus and Our Lady robed in white with a blue mantle, beside the sun. St. Joseph and the Child Jesus appeared to bless the world, for they traced the Sign of the Cross with their hands.” Next appeared “Our Lord and Our Lady; it seemed to me,” she said, “that it was Our Lady of Dolours (Our Lady of Sorrows). Our Lord appeared to bless the world in the same manner as St. Joseph had done.” When this apparition vanished, she “saw Our Lady once more, this time resembling Our Lady of Mount Carmel.” Reflecting on the meaning of this vision, Lucia later affirmed, that “the Scapular and the Rosary are inseparable. The Scapular is a sign of consecration to Our Lady.” (National Catholic Register)

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Lucia was the oldest of the three children at Fatima, whom Our Lady appeared to, and she was the only visionary to survive into adulthood. She subsequently entered the Discalced Carmelite Order and took the name Maria Lucia of Jesus and of the Immaculate Heart. In the 1940s, while conversing with three Carmelite priests, Sister Lucia recalled the apparition and said, “Our Lady wished that the devotion of the Brown Scapular be propagated” and that Our Lady “holding the Scapular in her hands during her last public apparition was to urge us to wear it.” (Fatima Center at www.fatima.org). Sister Lucia reaffirmed this in an interview with Father Howard Rafferty on October 15, 1950, when she said, “Our Lady held the Scapular in her hands because she wants us all to wear it.”

Lastly, Saint Pope John Paul II wore the Brown Scapular devoutly for most of his life. He took to heart the message of Fatima and encouraged the faithful to daily, pray the Rosary, wear the Brown Scapular, and Consecrate themselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I would like to leave you with excerpts from his letter to the Carmelite family written on March 26, 2001. “The 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.” “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. Those who wear the Scapular are thus brought into the land of Carmel so that they may ‘eat the fruits and its good things’ (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.” “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 honor 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 spiritual and corporal works of mercy.”



“Twenty Years of Grace”

A Summary of “A Letter to the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order”

by Fr. Miguel Márquez Calle, OCD, Superior General

Submitted By Lea Hawkins, OCDS

On August 15th, 2023, the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites, Fr. Miguel Marquez Calle, OCD, Rome, addressed the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites marking the Twentieth Anniversary of the approval of the *Constitutions of the Secular Order* on June 16th, 2003, by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (now a Dicastery). His message is of joy and hope to all Secular Carmelites, in these “present days,” to join him in celebrating the document that defines the identity of men and women worldwide who have conformed themselves to “a path towards sanctity in search of the union with God.” He identifies the Carmelite Charism as one that “grows in richness and continuous updating through the experience of new sons and daughters that... welcome the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to live, with freshness, the passion, the risk, and the grace that inspired our founders.” Exhorting all members to “listen to one another,” that the charism shared by her members may be “alive” and nourishing to their identity and witness as Carmelite Seculars. He asserts that OCDS Constitutions are more than legislative work. It is a decree through which our Holy Mother Church recognizes a Secular Carmelite Vocation as “truly a path towards sanctity.” Divided into seven parts, the Constitutions formulate the necessary elements encompassing the Vocation, namely:

1. Identity, Values, and Commitment.
 2. The following of Jesus Christ in the Lay Teresian Carmel.
 3. Witnesses of the Experience of God and the Fraternal Communion.
 4. In the Service of God’s Project.
 5. With Mary, Mother of Jesus.
 6. Formation in the Carmelite School.
 7. Organizations and Government.
-
1. As Secular Carmelites who find their identity in the Teresian and Carmelite spirituality, Fr. Calle urges all to find their inspiration in the lives and examples of the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, St. Teresa of Jesus, St. John of the Cross, and the Prophet Elijah, in dedication to a common goal of sharing prayer, love, and support for one another, daily, in all areas of life.
 2. For Secular Carmelites, following Jesus Christ as the “center of our life and of Christian experience” is demanding yet fruitful in transforming the lives of ordinary men and women who trust in Him into Disciples who bear witness to the living Christ by sharing their “experience of God” with others. In referring to “a fire that burns” and “a living fountain,” he states, “he who is not burned in this fire and doesn’t drink from this fountain every day betrays his heritage.”
 3. Actions and words reveal the depth of transformation into Christ. Formed by prayer and contemplation, void of ideological viewpoints, the Secular Carmelite bears witness to a “friendship with Jesus Christ” in proclaiming that God is love and becomes a visible sign of the Church and Carmel “in the Spirit” with other brothers and sisters” (C 24a).
 4. “The vocation of the Secular Carmelite is truly ecclesiastical” (C 26), with a missionary component for serving “to transform the world from within it like evangelical yeast” (2003, 56-57). Fr. Calle exhorts Seculars not to be afraid “to make suggestions and to listen, to take risks and to acknowledge what needs to be corrected and to grow! We do not preach of ourselves!”

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5. From its inception, the Carmelite Order has existed under the protection of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel...originally as “Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mt. Carmel,” who accompanies the Secular Carmelite as a “model of faithfulness in listening to the Lord and in service to Him and to others” (C4). The first icon of the Blessed Virgin to inspire the earliest Carmelites was “The Virgin of the Visitation,” expressing devotion to Our Lady as she visited her cousin Elizabeth, carrying the Son of God in her womb. Fr. Calle encourages all Seculars to “rediscover” the presence of Our Lady in our lives to strengthen our faith and help to rekindle a strong Marian experience.
6. Formation in Carmelite Spirituality necessarily requires integrating three essential areas of life: human, spiritual, and psychological. As Constitution #32 states, “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.” With Teresa of Jesus as a role model, Secular Carmelites are called to be aware and acknowledge, as one not having all the truths, to observe and remove any attitudes of self-sufficiency or beliefs and actions that don’t correspond to the Teresian Spirit...always acknowledging there is much more to learn, and that Formation never ends.
7. Understanding that Secular Carmelites exist in 95 countries worldwide, the goal of feeling unified with one another requires basic tenets of communion. “It is inherent to a religious family and to the religious and evangelical spirit not to covet for positions and not to strive at all costs to have positions of power. It is not an appropriate attitude of the Carmelites to think that I am the only person fit for governing the community.” Care must be taken to eradicate all that does not “nourish the dynamics of communion,” which comes from an authentic experience of God and acknowledging healthy freedom to be.

As Discalced Seculars, each Carmelite, infused with the Carmelite Charism, is called to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to live a life of prayer and apostolic service to the world, thus summoning to Carmel many men and women to commit their lives to “walk from good to better” (Foundations 29,32), God is glorified by their lives and the Order is enriched.

In his closing remarks, Father General states, “Thanks to all of those who worked in the elaboration of the Constitutions, all those who live it day by day, and those who will come in the future. I pray for each community. Let us begin today from good towards better, giving thanks for the precious heritage received,” and sends a fraternal hug and blessing to all.

Parting Words

Flos Carmeli provides information for the Secular members of the Order of Discalced Carmelites in the Oklahoma Semi-Province, which has jurisdiction over OCDS members living in the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Texas.

Oklahoma Semi-Province members wishing to submit articles for publication in the *Flos Carmeli* or for subscription information, please contact Lea Hawkins, Provincial Council *Flos Carmeli* coordinator, at flos.submit@gmail.com

The submission due dates for articles are:

Winter—January 1

Spring—April 1

Summer—July 1

Fall—October 1

Any OCDS member submitting an article must include their name, community name and location in the article.

"Humility, detachment and love for one another...", the three pillars of the Teresian way of prayer, continue to be our inspiration to create authentic praying communities. That our communities might smell of fresh air, trust, and creative dialogue.

Carmel does not want, above all, to be a school of legal or moral 'perfection,' but a school of communion, in which perfection is lived as an integration, with that Teresian joy that made its nuns want to be holy, by the fire of love that they carried within and that their mother Teresa, with her sisterly love infected them.

Miguel Márquez Calle, OCD

Superior General, Discalced Carmelite Order
Only One Family: Walking together (excerpt)
Letter to the Secular Carmel (OCDS), 29 July 2022

Getting the *Flos Carmeli* to members

*Community presidents, please remember that the Province no longer mails out copies of the *Flos Carmeli* to communities. It is the community's responsibility to get a copy to each of your members, either via email or by print. This includes all isolate, aged, or infirm members. Thank you!*

Provincial Council:

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