

## Discalced Carmelites – Constitutions (Part I : OUR LIFE §1-§103)

### Chapter 1

#### Our Ideal

##### I. The roots of our vocation

1. The Discalced Brothers of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel belong to a religious family endowed with its own special charism in God's people, and called to fulfil a specific role in the Mystical Body of Christ.  
Each of us receives a personal call to this family. As a renewed form of an ancient Order it entails both fidelity to the spirit and traditions of Carmel and a continual striving after renewal. This is as it were the dual heritage bequeathed to us by our Holy Mother St Teresa.  
Mindful of this and docile to the voice of God, we cherish the spirit and way of life of our forerunners as we profess to be their descendants and heirs. Hence we regard the deeds of our 'holy fathers and predecessors' not as lifeless events of bygone days but as part of the providential shaping of our vocation in the living Church.
2. The beginnings of the Order, the title 'Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel' and the earliest authentic spiritual traditions, provide ample evidence of the marian and biblical character of our vocation.  
Taking Mary as the mother and patroness of the Order, we look upon her life and her sharing in the mystery of Christ as a model of religious consecration.  
Among venerable biblical figures Elijah stands out as Carmel's source of inspiration, as he contemplates the living God and burns with zeal for his glory. We look upon his prophetic charism as the prototype of our own vocation to ponder God's word and proclaim it to the world.
3. We find our earliest 'pattern of life' outlined in the Rule of St Albert. This remains basically the rule that governs our life today, urging us principally:
  - (a) to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ, serving him with a pure heart and a good conscience, looking to him alone for salvation, as we obey our superior in a spirit of faith, with our mind more on Christ than on the superior.
  - (b) to ponder unceasingly the law of the Lord in the Scriptures, and strengthen our hearts with holy thoughts, so that the word of God may be always in our hearts and on our lips, and guide us in everything we do;
  - (c) to come together daily for the celebration of the sacred liturgy;
  - (d) to put on the armour of God, as we live an intense life of faith, hope and charity, in a spirit of evangelical self-denial and a generous commitment to work, after the example of Paul the Apostle;
  - (e) to enter into a genuine sharing of life, having at heart the good of the community and the salvation of souls, sustained by the charity of fraternal correction; to hold everything in common under the guidance of a superior placed at the service of his brothers;
  - (f) above all to lead a life of unceasing prayer in silence and solitude, in accordance with the gospel admonition to watch and pray;
  - (g) to use prudent discretion in all that we do, especially when this entails more than duty requires of us.

4. This way of life, in its original eremitical form, was duly sanctioned and approved by the Church. Subsequently the Order was granted mendicant status and entrusted with the apostolic ministry but at the same time urged to remain true to its original spirit.

## II. The Teresian Charism

5. The origin of our family in Carmel and the very nature of its vocation are closely bound up with the life and charism of St Teresa, especially with the mystical graces which led her to undertake the renewal of Carmel and make prayer and contemplation its total commitment. The renewed Carmel—like the ‘little flock’ in the Gospel—was to be made up of a chosen few, totally pledged to living the Gospel and keeping the ‘primitive Rule’ in solitude, and strict poverty.
6. Further stages of St Teresa’s spiritual experience contributed to the unfolding of her project and to a clearer perception of its significance. As she was mystically led to a deeper knowledge and, as it were, ‘experience’ of the life of the Church, its trials and sufferings, the recent break-up of its unity and especially the profanation of the Eucharist and the Priesthood, she stressed more and more the apostolic spirit of the renewed Carmel. Its prayer, its withdrawal from the world, indeed the whole life of the first group of nuns were to be dedicated to the service of the Church
7. Finally the renewed Carmel’s vocation was fully and clearly defined when the Holy Mother’s growing experience of the Church focussed her attention on those who had not yet had the Gospel preached to them. Then the immense prospects of the missions dawned on her. As a result her apostolic spirit fully evolved, and she made up her mind not only to have the first group of her nuns spread out into other foundations, but to include in her project a group of friars who would share in the same spirit.
8. Her aim in founding a family of friars was to foster the fidelity and spiritual growth of her nuns through the assistance of brothers of the same spirit, and to provide the Church with a manifold service of prayer and apostolic activity.
9. In all that she did she wished to keep intact the heritage of Carmel. Its devotion to our Lady of Mount Carmel was faithfully kept and reinvigorated.  
She bequeathed to her followers her own affinity with the biblical forerunners, the great prophets and fathers of Carmel. She went back to the genuine spirit of the Rule and infused its observance with a fresh apostolic impetus.
10. The way of life she proposed to us was to be marked with a distinctive style and character. She wanted social virtues and human values to be duly fostered. She inculcated a joyous family spirit, affability in community life, nobility of soul and mutual respect. Our young religious were to be carefully trained; study and culture were to be encouraged. The ascetical practices of our communities were to be at the service of a deeper theological life, and geared to the demands of the apostolic ministry. There was to be a bond of unity between our communities and of evangelical friendship between our religious.
11. To achieve this, Providence gave the Holy Mother an associate, St John of the Cross. When she first became acquainted with him and found that the Holy Spirit had already given him the same aspirations as herself, she told him of her plan for spiritual renewal within the Order of our Lady. She led him to share in her spirit and put before him the pattern of life she had introduced for her nuns. That is the way of life, adapted according to the mind and spirit of St Teresa, which St John then set about establishing at Duruelo. Later, when St John was her spiritual director, she looked upon him as the ‘father of her soul’. He in turn proclaimed her the mother of the new Carmelite family, and ascribed to her that charism which God bestows upon founders of religious Orders.

Together they introduced a renewed lifestyle into Carmel, both among the friars and the nuns, and 'as it were, laid anew the foundations of the Order'.

12. The Holy Mother's life and mystical experience were in effect God's way of preparing for us a guide and model of life.  
In St John of the Cross, too, we have a living image of the true Carmelite. We can apply to him the words of St Paul: 'Take me for your model, as I take Christ' (cf. *1 Cor* 4:16; 11:1). The vocation of the renewed Carmel is mirrored in his life and his teaching.
13. Our ideal finds a living expression in these two Saints and is clearly portrayed in their writings. Their charism and the spiritual lifestyle they propose to us — even their intimacy with God and the experience of things divine — are not just purely personal gifts of their own, but part of the heritage and vocation of the Order.
14. This is the grace that God in his merciful goodness graciously offers to every member of the Order. It is the Carmelite charism we must learn to appreciate, to cultivate and develop according to the gifts given to each of us by the Holy Spirit.

### III. The chief elements of our vocation

15. Having considered our roots in history and our Teresian charism, we are now in a position to outline the principal elements of the way of life we profess:
  - (a) We are committed to a consecrated life of allegiance to Jesus Christ. In this we are sustained by the companionship, the example and protection of our Lady. Her life of union with Christ we regard, as it were, the prototype of ours.
  - (b) Our vocation is a grace by which we are called to a 'hidden union with God', in a form of life and fraternal sharing in which contemplation and action are blended to become a signal apostolic service of the Church.
  - (c) This call to prayer embraces our whole life. Sustained by the word of God and the sacred liturgy, we are led to live in intimate friendship with God. By growing in faith, hope and above all charity, we deepen our prayer life. With our heart thus purified we are enabled to share more closely in the life of Christ himself, and prepare the way for a more abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In this way the Teresian charism and the original spirit of Carmel become a reality in our lives as we walk in the presence of the living God.
  - (d) The very nature of our charism demands that our prayer and our whole religious life be ardently apostolic, and that we put ourselves at the service of the Church and of all mankind. This must be done in such a way that 'our apostolic activity stems from our close union with Christ'. Indeed we must aim at that most fruitful of all apostolates which derives from the 'state of union with God'.
  - (e) It is for this twofold service, contemplative and active, that we share life as brothers in the community. United by the bond of love in fraternal life, we also bear witness to the unity of the Church, faithful in this to our Holy Mother, who wanted her communities to resemble 'the college of Christ'.
  - (f) This way of life, based on the primitive Rule and the teaching of our Holy Parents, must be sustained by constant evangelical self-denial.
16. This form of life, appropriately tested and found satisfactory by the Order, has more than once been given the approval of the Church, and we have been frequently exhorted by her to keep it faithfully. The Order thus approved, has been granted 'clerical' and 'pontifical' status. It also enjoys exemption, by which it is directly and immediately subject to the Pope. In this way it is made more available for the service of the Church everywhere, and better equipped to provide for its own life and development.

17. The Holy Spirit has deigned to make the Order, thus approved, bear fruit in the life of the Church. He has given it saintly men and women who are considered masters in the ways of the spirit. He has caused other religious families to grow out of Carmel, and share in various ways in its mission and work in God's vineyard. We are closely united with them by our vocation and spirit.
18. From the beginning our Holy Parents took great pains to ensure that the charism bestowed on them should be embodied in a way of life rendered more stable by suitable legislation. That is why we too, while taking the following of Christ according to the Gospel as the supreme law of our life, keep the Rule of St Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, approved by Innocent IV, according to these Constitutions.

## Chapter 2

### The Following of Christ in the Way of Religious Consecration

19. In answer to a divine call to live the evangelical counsels, and led by the grace of the Holy Spirit, we pledge ourselves by public vows to follow Christ more closely in the way of chastity, poverty and obedience. In this way we surrender ourselves heart and soul to God whom we love above all else, and are completely dedicated to his service. Consecrated by God through the ministry of the Church, we are sent by him for the salvation of the world, somewhat as Christ himself was consecrated and sent by the Father (cf. *John* 10:36).
20. Thus the love of God, poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us at baptism, vivifies and sustains the practice of the evangelical counsels and transforms us into the image of Christ. It prepares us for highest union with God; it joins us to the mystery of the Church in a special way and empowers us to love as Christ loved, even to the point of laying down his life (cf. *Eph* 5:2).
21. Such a commitment of consecrated life postulates a fullness of the love of God and of our neighbour that goes beyond the limits of every legal and normative regulation, and calls for a total self-denial in all things as a means of growing in and giving expression to this same love. In the Church we are called to be a sign of the radical demands of the Gospel, so that we can fulfil a prophetic mission in the world.

#### 1. Consecrated Chastity

22. Consecrated chastity shares in a unique way in the mysterious union of the Church with Christ, its head, and heralds his coming. It also facilitates that freedom of an undivided heart, whereby we are enabled to give our love entirely to God and to our neighbour. We make a vow of perfect chastity in the celibate state for the sake of the kingdom of Heaven (cf. *Mt* 19:12; *1 Cor* 7:32-34). In this way our whole being, body and spirit is put at the service of God and our neighbour, and we are made, as it were, a continuation of the virginal Christ, totally dedicated to the service of his Father and his brothers.
23. As a joyous expression of the love of God, which it strengthens and whose fruitfulness it proclaims, our chastity, like that of Mary our model, should make manifest our consecration to God and our loving allegiance to Jesus Christ, adding lustre, as it were, to the fidelity of his Spouse the Church, and preparing the way for intimate union with God.
24. Consecrated chastity is a precious gift entrusted to weak human beings. However, by deepening our friendship with Jesus and Mary and putting our trust in the power of God's word, we strive with quiet confidence to be faithful. In this way our human capacity to love will grow to full maturity.

Mindful of our present condition, we never act presumptuously but humbly guard this gift of God by prayer, self-denial and custody of the heart and sense, without overlooking natural aids to health of mind and body.

In all this, our joyful involvement in a loving community and in the service of others will prove to be a great support and safeguard.

## II. Poverty

25. In order to share in Christ's poverty and in his abandonment to the loving providence of the Father, we embrace by vow the evangelical counsel of poverty which entails, besides a life which is poor in fact and in spirit, a life of labour lived in moderation and foreign to earthly riches, and a dependence on superiors in the use and disposition of goods.
26. Religious with temporary vows retain the right of ownership and the capacity to acquire property. However, before first profession they are to cede the administration of their goods to whomsoever they wish and freely dispose of their use and their revenues. Before solemn profession they must renounce their goods in a form which, as far as possible, is also valid in civil law. This renunciation takes effect from the day of profession.
27. By solemn profession we also relinquish the right of ownership and the capacity to acquire and possess property, and therefore we invalidly place acts contrary to the vow of poverty. Our communities rely for support on Providence, especially through the combined work of all the brethren.  
If need be, the Provincial Council may allow our communities to have a moderate stable revenue.
28. Whatever a religious earns by his own activity or receives as a member of the institute goes to the Order. Income from pensions, social welfare or insurance goes to the Order also, in accordance with the directives of the Norms. The same is true of all goods accruing to a solemnly-professed religious from whatever source they come.
29. Evangelical poverty demands of us a distinct life style and witness both as individuals and as communities. Like Christ we must be completely available. Sobriety and simplicity are to be evident in our life. We must be hard-working. There must be no sign of luxury in our houses. We must mix with the poor and promote their advancement. Avoiding all worldliness we must always behave as true seekers of God's kingdom. Only then will we achieve and experience the freedom and dignity of the children of God.
30. If we are to be true sons of St Teresa, our poverty must combine a humble, simple and fraternal way of life with an interior freedom that enables us to direct all our energies to the things of God, and strive after that total self-denial and spiritual poverty inculcated by St John of the Cross. Then we shall truly live by and bear witness to the heavenly hope that is in us, as we take our place with our Lady among the 'poor of the Lord', who look to God alone for everything and give themselves wholeheartedly to the service of others.
31. In obedience to the Rule we take seriously our obligation to work. Work in its various forms—study, apostolic activity and manual labour—we see as a demand of poverty and of fraternal service. As we work to earn our living, we try to avoid all undue anxiety and worry. We share what we have with others, especially with the poor, bearing witness to the Church's loving concern for them. By ridding our life of every form of injustice we further the cause of social justice everywhere.  
Thus through us creation achieves its purpose, as we work towards a better world and share in the redemptive work of Christ.
32. Our provinces and communities should share with one another in a brotherly spirit and contribute generously to the needs of the Church and the poor.



33. In a world in which affluence and extreme indigence are found side by side, often in violent confrontation, our quest for better ways of expressing the poverty of Christ should aim at making our way of life such that it be a striking witness to the real nature of evangelical poverty.
34. This common concern for fidelity to poverty should be fostered and frequently reviewed at our chapters and community meetings.

### III. Obedience

35. In order to model our life on that chosen by the Son of God in coming into the world to do the will of the Father, and which he proposed to his closest followers, we bind ourselves by vow to observe the evangelical counsel of obedience. This vow obliges us to submit our will to our superiors as God's representatives, whenever they lay down anything according to our Constitutions. By this we offer to God the total dedication of our will as a sacrifice of ourselves, and are more closely and steadfastly united with his saving Will.
36. As we submit ourselves in faith to God's will through the mediation of our superiors, we are led to serve all our brothers in Christ, just as Christ himself out of obedience to the Father came into the world to minister to his brothers and give his life for the redemption of all (cf. *Mt 20:28, John 10:14-18*).

In an attitude of faith and love toward God's will we carry out the commands of our superiors and discharge the duties assigned to us, striving to put at the disposal of obedience all our resources of mind and will, and all our gifts of nature and grace. We realise that by doing this we help to build up the Body of Christ according to God's designs.

37. The ideal of union with God held up to us by our Holy Parents consists in complete conformity of our will with God in such a way that the two are made one in the Divine Will. This impels all our religious and superiors to persevere in a personal and community effort to grow in the knowledge of God's will, so that they make their own Christ's dispositions of obedience to the Father, even to death on the cross. Then like him, they always do what is pleasing to the Father.

Here again our Lady stands out as our model. As the Lord's humble handmaid, she was never moved to act from any merely natural consideration, but was invariably under the action of the Holy Spirit.

38. By our profession of obedience we freely limit the range of our choices, and are committed to a specific way of life under the guidance of our superiors. This resolve must be continually strengthened through a sincere dialogue conducted in a spirit of faith and charity with the superiors and the community. Such dialogue however should always be mindful of the true nature of evangelical obedience that is rooted in the Paschal Mystery of Christ and, as such, must entail a real immolation of self, if we are to be sharers in Christ's saving mission.
39. In compliance with the Gospel and our Rule, superiors should exercise their authority in a spirit of service (cf. *Mt 20:26-27*). With docility to God's will they should treat their brother religious as sons of God, with due respect for their human dignity.
40. The obligation of the vow of obedience is grave when a formal precept is imposed. Only Major Superiors can impose such a precept on individual religious, for a grave reason and within the limits of their respective jurisdiction. It must be given in writing or in the presence of two witnesses.

41. As loyal sons of the Church, we faithfully follow the teaching of her magisterium and we actively and responsibly obey the decisions of her lawful authority, especially those of the Pope, to whom we are bound by our vow of obedience according to Canon Law.

#### **IV. Evangelical Self-denial**

42. In order to live in Christ as God's children and be admitted to that divine intimacy offered to the friends of Christ crucified, we strive to put into practice the teaching of our Holy Parents on penance and self-denial. Otherwise our life of union with God will be an illusion, and our apostolic efforts in vain.
43. Accordingly, we embrace generously and joyously the self-denial demanded by the practice of the evangelical counsels; we lovingly bear one another's burdens (cf. *Gal* 6:12); we are faithful and persevering in prayer, and we spend ourselves in apostolic work at the service of Christ. We cheerfully perform any task, no matter how humble or toilsome, demanded by the service of our brothers. And to complete what is wanting in the sufferings of Christ (cf. *Col* 1:24), we try to bear patiently every form of discomfort and suffering that comes our way.
44. To train ourselves for all this, community life itself must be marked with that spirit of penance we inherit from our Holy Parents. That is why, with the generous and joyous austerity characteristic of our Teresian Carmel, we are determined to be faithful to the penitential practices recommended by the Church and laid down by our Rule, and seek new forms of penance better suited to the mentality and needs of our time.
45. As a means of fostering this spirit of penance:
- our religious shall faithfully keep the general law of the Church on fast and abstinence without mitigation, while allowing for any special norms in force in a particular Church;
  - throughout the week at stated times there should be some kind of community penitential exercise, to be agreed on by the Conventual Chapter;
  - one day each week (Friday or Saturday) should have a penitential character. The vigils of special solemnities kept in the Order and the vigils of the principal liturgical celebrations of the Church should also be special days of penance. On all such days the penitential exercises should include a form of fast, to be better defined by the Conventual Chapter; what is then saved on food should go to the poor or the missions;
  - this kind of fast should be more frequent during Advent and Lent. It should also mark certain other days traditionally considered penitential by the Church.
46. At the community table, allowing for the age and special needs of individuals, frugality of fare and the virtue of temperance should characterise our eating habits. This should be borne especially in mind with regard to the use of luxuries, alcoholic beverages and the like.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Blessed Virgin Mary in Our Life**

47. By God's grace we bear the name 'Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary' and belong to a religious family dedicated to her love and service. This special bond with our Lady influences our whole approach to the pursuit of perfect charity. It pervades our communities and stamps our life of prayer and contemplation, our apostolic zeal and activity and even the kind of self-denial we practise, with a distinctly marian character.

48. The presence of our Lady pervades the whole history of the Order. This had its beginnings on Mount Carmel and got its name from a chapel dedicated to our Lady there. With the Church's approval it is committed to 'live in allegiance to Jesus Christ and to His Mother'.

Led by our Holy Parents, our Teresian Carmel treasured this commitment and strongly reaffirmed it. They acknowledge Mary as 'Lady' and 'Mother' of Carmel and propose her to us as a model of prayer and surrender of self on our pilgrimage of faith. They present her as she eagerly ponders God's word in her heart and, with complete docility to the grace of the Holy Spirit, is inseparably united with her Son in the joys and sorrows of his Paschal Mystery.

49. Our Lady, as portrayed in the Gospels, is thus put before us as the perfect embodiment of the ideal of the Order, and we are drawn to follow her closely. With the attitude of the 'poor of the Lord' we must ponder on God's word in faith and spend ourselves in a manifold service of love. Then our life will truly resemble hers and, under her guidance, we shall be made to share more fully in the mystery of Christ and his Church.

In this way our profession, which binds us in a special manner to our Lady, and which we have put in her hands, will become a reality in our life. That too is what the scapular we wear symbolises: that we belong to Mary and that we strive to be clothed with her virtues so as to mirror in the world the beauty of her holiness.

50. This presence of our Lady characterises our apostolic mission too. Our filial love for her impels us to deepen our knowledge of her by careful study of the Scriptures so that we can present her faithfully to others as a model and guide in their quest for union with Christ and his Church.
51. As we contemplate our Lady in faith we are led to promote her liturgical cult in the light of the Paschal Mystery, and to express our faith and love by various exercises of devotion in her honour.
52. God himself in his loving designs closely associated St Joseph with our Lady in the mystery of the Incarnation. This is why in our Order the cult of St Joseph is so closely linked with that of our Lady. Led by St Teresa, we lovingly venerate him as the spouse of the Virgin Mary, as the humble servant of Christ and his Mother, as a master and model of prayerful union with Christ and as provident protector of the Order.

## Chapter 4

### Communion with God

53. By our Carmelite vocation we are committed to a life of 'allegiance to Jesus Christ' as we 'ponder the law of the Lord day and night and are 'vigilant in prayer'. Faithfully following the Rule, our Holy Mother St Teresa presents prayer as the *raison d'être* of our life as Carmelites, the source and focal point of all the components of our charism. That is why the Church looks upon us as a family totally committed to prayer, a family that strives to live in depth the mystery of christian prayer and be, as it were, its living witness.
54. Through Christ our prayer is made to share in the mystery of Christ's own prayer. It is transformed into a filial converse with the living God, as with our Father, who speaks to us through his Son and raises us to share in his life by giving us his Spirit. By word and example Christ teaches us how to contemplate the Father in solitude and in activity, how to adore and praise him, how to turn to him in our needs and gratefully and wholeheartedly embrace his Will.
55. Our Holy Parents excel in the art of teaching us both by word and example how to pray, and permeate our whole life with prayer as the Gospel proposes. United in faith with the



humanity of Christ as with a loving friend, we too through the Holy Spirit enter into this filial conversation with the Father. In this way our prayer becomes a genuine expression of our relationship with God and the life spring of our service in the Church. It is through this kind of prayer that we are brought to the fullness of life, and become more deeply involved in the life and vicissitudes of the Church and of the world we live in.

We therefore strive to organise our whole life in such a way that prayer is clearly seen to be our charism, both as individuals and as communities; and we do our best to ensure that our apostolic activity is imbued with the spirit of prayer, and that prayer nourishes and sustains all our apostolic efforts.

56. This life of friendship with God has the liturgy as its sacramental source; but it must be fostered by continual personal prayer. As the richest source of our spiritual life, as the focal point of all community life and as the prayer of the community *par excellence*, the liturgy enriches our personal prayer. On the other hand, personal prayer, by deepening our participation in the mysteries we celebrate, brings the liturgical action to bear on our life.
57. In celebrating the liturgy the religious community—as the Church in microcosm—shares in the Paschal Mystery and in the priesthood of Christ. Through sacramental signs, especially through the celebration of the Eucharist, through the proclamation of the word of God and the singing of his praises, community life is consolidated and renewed, as its union with the Church is at once symbolised and realised.
58. Our Rule stresses the importance of the liturgy in our life, as do our Holy Parents both by word and example. They envisage for us a particular style of celebration, with emphasis on our spiritual involvement in an active participation. This must be dignified and simple, imbued with a theological awareness of God's living presence, and characterised by what they consider important moments of reverent silence.
59. Each community, while complying with the regulations laid down by competent ecclesiastical authority, should order its liturgical celebrations in such a way that its liturgy is not lifeless but fully shared in by all. This should be done keeping in mind the condition of the community, and in accordance with the rite it follows. Suitable provision should also be made for participation in our liturgy by the faithful.
60. All of us take part daily in the eucharistic sacrifice and banquet. This strengthens the bonds that unite us as brothers and sustains us in our apostolic efforts. In keeping with the tradition of the Order we continue throughout the day, by prayer and adoration, our communion with Christ really present in the Blessed Sacrament.
61. Each day we celebrate together in common the entire Liturgy of the Hours—Morning Prayer, Office of Readings, Midday Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer—spreading over the whole day our praise and thanksgiving and our meditation on the mysteries of salvation. By this we are united with Christ's own song of praise and glory; and on behalf of the Church and the whole human race we praise the Father with one voice and heart. Clerics in solemn vows who are not present at the community celebration must make up for it on their own.
62. We frequently approach the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation. With contrite heart we make our confession to the Church we have wounded by our sins, in order to be reconciled with her and, through her ministry, receive God's forgiveness and grow in his friendship. Through continual conversion to God we strive after purity of heart, without which it is impossible to lead a life of sustained prayer and contemplation.
63. Our christian duty to pray is not limited to participation in the liturgy. Christ's followers, besides praying together must also 'pray to the Father in secret' (cf. *Mt* 6:6), and St Paul goes as far as saying we must pray always (cf. *1 Thes* 5:7).

Our vocation as an Order is prayer, modelled on the prayer of Christ. He gave himself to contemplation in the desert and made his whole life a prayer. We too are aware of the Father's love for us. So, in an attitude of faith, hope and charity, we continually seek to cultivate a friend-to-friend relationship with him in personal prayer. That is what the Church expects of us. That is why she repeatedly urges us to spare no pains in our quest for union with God. That is the commitment that each of us considers his primary personal obligation.

64. As a means of fostering this life of prayer our Order has laid down from its earliest days that two hours be set aside each day for conversation with God in personal prayer.  
Each community should decide on the two hours best suited for this in its own particular situation. During that time the whole community must ensure that all can give themselves undisturbed to personal prayer. If for some valid reason approved of by the superior a religious should be unable to be present at community prayer, he should make up for this at some other time.
65. In our efforts to develop a life of intimacy with God we should do our best to grow in knowledge of his word. As our Rule lays down, we should all have the word of God in our heart and on our lips. We should read and meditate on the Gospels, and indeed all Sacred Scripture, so as to acquire a 'surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ' (cf. Phil 3:8).
66. If prayer is to permeate our whole life, we must try to live in God's presence by faith, hope and charity. This practice of the presence of God both fosters a life of prayer and grows out of it.
67. In order to deepen our life of prayer we must be constant in the practice of the virtues emphasised in the Gospel, especially humility, fraternal charity and self-denial in a spirit of poverty. In this way our whole life will sustain our progress in prayer.
68. In accordance with our Rule silence is to be diligently and carefully kept as a means of fostering prayer and work in solitude. Everything in our community life and work should be organised in such a way that silence is duly safeguarded. This will help to make our houses truly places of prayer that speak to people of our quest for union with God. Times of stricter silence should be decided upon by each community and faithfully observed.  
Superiors should also see to it that communications media are used in such a way that, while serving a useful purpose, they do not become detrimental to silence and prayer in the community.
69. There should be a concerted effort to devise and use the best ways and means of fostering a spirit of prayer and promoting its practice, so that our communities are seen to be truly praying communities.
70. The layout of our houses, the arrangement and poverty of the cells should provide a setting suited to the demands of our vocation and conducive to prayer.  
Cloister will be maintained as a safeguard and support for prayer and fraternal sharing, according to the norms of our law, but the area of cloister in each house should include at least the cells and adjacent places.
71. Deserts as houses dedicated exclusively to the contemplative life should be maintained and encouraged in the Order, so that those religious drawn by the Spirit may have an opportunity to give themselves exclusively to a life of prayer at the service of the Church. This will do much to enrich the spirit of prayer in the Order.

## Fraternal Sharing in the Community

72. The life we share as brothers is built on and held together by the love of Christ; so charity must be the supreme law of our community life.

With the love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. *Rom* 5:5) we must love one another as Christ taught us, and vie with each other in showing mutual respect (cf. *Rom* 12:10; *John* 15:12, 17; *Eph* 5:2).

73. Our vocation unites us as brothers in a family modelled on the community of Christ and the Apostles ('ese colegio de Cristo'). This fraternal sharing must be evident in our life of prayer together, in our apostolic work and in the loving concern we show by sharing everything we have with one another. There should be mutual acceptance in a true family relationship, with no one being made to feel excluded. The inevitable difficulties of community life should be faced up to in truth and charity, and overcome in a spirit of humility and forgiveness, so that all grow in mutual esteem and true friendship.

74. The community in which fraternal charity reigns will truly experience the presence of Christ, as he vivifies and enhances it with the gift of his Spirit. Then it will bear witness to God's all-embracing love, become a sign of universal brotherhood and a proof of the powerful influence exerted by the love, justice and peace the Gospel brings with it.

By living in faith, hope, love and self-denial the community grows into a true brotherhood. It becomes, as it were, a living condemnation of every form of injustice, and makes people conscious of the demands of the righteousness proclaimed by the Gospel.

75. The Eucharist is the symbol and source of true brotherhood, a sign of unity and a bond of charity. This is better expressed when the whole community takes part in the eucharistic celebration. Made one in Christ and led by the Holy Spirit, they also praise and implore the Father with one heart and voice, as they celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours and devote themselves to personal prayer.

76. As members of the same family, we live in our own religious houses, observing a common life, and we must not be absent from the house without the permission of the competent superior, in accordance with the Norms.

77. At the common table, which is a symbol of fraternal sharing, we gratefully partake of what Providence sends us, as we listen to the reading from Scripture and engage in friendly conversation.

78. Our community recreation is characterised by joy and simplicity. We all try to be present for this and make it joyful, and so strengthen the bonds of brotherhood.

79. Since we belong to a family specially dedicated to our Lady, we wear the habit of her Order as a sign of our consecration.

80. Community life requires that we come together at the stated times to foster our unity in prayer and work.

The timetable, to be drafted by the community chapter and approved by the Provincial Council, should take into account the particular needs of each house, so that the whole community can normally be present at community acts. The following community acts must be provided for in this timetable: the celebration of the Eucharist and of the Liturgy of the Hours, the hours of mental prayer, the times for meals and recreation, Chapter and other community meetings.

81. Since charity does not seek its own advantage but that of others (cf. *1 Cor* 13:5, *Phil* 2:4) all should pray for one another and help one another with brotherly concern. There

should be real wholehearted cooperation between the houses and the provinces. Any common projects proposed by the central authority of the Order should get our willing support; in this way we shall unite all our energies in fulfilling the Order's mission at the service of the Church and of mankind throughout the world.

82. In a true family spirit we must show great concern for the weak and sick. The aged should be adequately provided for, and every effort made to have them share as fully as possible in the life of the community and of the province.  
Mindful of Christ's words: 'I was sick and you visited me' (cf. *Mt* 25:36), all our religious especially superiors, like St Teresa should have the spiritual and material needs of the sick very much at heart. If the illness is critical, care should be taken that they receive the Anointing of the Sick and Viaticum in good time.
83. In accordance with the demands of christian charity (cf. *Rom* 12:9-13) we welcome guests, especially our own confreres, and treat them in such a manner that they are made to experience the fraternal charity of a truly christian community.
84. We live in close union with our brothers who have died in Christ. As we wait with them in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour (cf. *Tit* 2:13), we continue to offer suffrages for them both at Mass and in our personal prayer.
85. Through dialogue in chapter and at community meetings we try to foster a deeper fraternal sharing, we evaluate the way in which we live up to our contemplative and apostolic ideal, we try to be genuinely helpful to one another and, in the spirit of the Rule, offer each other the charity of fraternal correction.
86. Our commitment to a life of fraternal sharing has to be constantly renewed. We are already God's children and truly brothers. But until what we are destined to be is fully realised (cf. *John* 3:2), we shall always fall short of being perfect witnesses to the riches of divine life that we share. We must therefore strive to live up to our vocation and seek to achieve the unity that Christ prayed for (cf. *John* 17:11, 21-23). If we do this in all humility and meekness, patiently bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. *Eph* 4:14), we shall anticipate in some fashion the perfect community of our heavenly home, which will be ours when Christ comes again.

## Chapter 6

### Our Order's Apostolic Role

87. Christ, sent into the world by the Father, is the source and exemplar of every apostolic mission. We must identify with him both in our hearts and in our behaviour, so that our life itself bears witness to the Gospel and brings its joyful message to people, especially to the poor.
88. By living our profession of the evangelical counsels we grow in charity and become more vitally involved in the mystery of the Church. This impels us to share with others things spiritual and temporal, so that all may experience the freedom won for us by Christ (cf. *Gal* 5:1), and grow together in faith to full maturity in Christ.
89. Our Holy Mother St Teresa's deep experience of the mystery of the Church, coupled with her ardent zeal for the glory of God, led her to give a definitely apostolic incentive to our whole Carmelite life of prayer and self-denial. When she set about establishing a new family of friars, she also intended that they should be learned and experienced in the ways of God and be actively engaged in a manifold service of the Church by their teaching and example, with the emphasis on the latter.

True to this ideal, we try to imbue our whole life of prayer with an apostolic spirit and ensure that our apostolic activity stems from and is constantly sustained by our close union with God.

90. Through assiduous reading and study we must be well versed in the Scriptures and acquire a surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ (cf. *Phil* 3:8), so that we are able to share with others the treasures of the word of God.

We try too to discern the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of God's word. We keep up our ongoing formation and try to develop those virtuous qualities that are highly valued in human relations.

91. Each of the brethren, according to the grace given him (cf. *Rom* 12:6), should strive to build up the whole Body of Christ and to promote the welfare of the local churches. All the brethren, under the guidance of the superiors, should cooperate wholeheartedly in the work of evangelisation, not only by carrying out the tasks and duties of fraternal life with apostolic charity, but also by engaging in other appropriate ministries under the authority of the diocesan Bishop according to the norms of universal law.
92. We should be readily available whenever we are legitimately commissioned by Bishops to meet the pressing needs of the Church or of people. In doing so we should have due regard for the culture and traditions of the people to whom we minister.
93. Individual religious whose services are required for the good of the Church should give themselves generously to the apostolic work assigned to them, while maintaining close bonds with their community and superior. All our apostolic undertakings should be marked with a true Carmelite spirit; in this way our communities will themselves be continually evangelised, and exercise a truly evangelising influence.
94. The evangelisation of the world, so intimately part of the very nature of the Church, in as much as it is to be accomplished primarily through love and prayer, has always been a priority in our Order's apostolic work. Our Holy Mother St Teresa passed on to the Order the ardent missionary zeal that burned within her heart, and it was her wish that her friars should also undertake missionary activity. This missionary zeal should be faithfully fostered, all should have the missions very much at heart, and vocations to the missions should be encouraged throughout the Order.

All our communities and provinces should sustain our missionaries by their brotherly concern, by their prayers and also with financial aid; and all should contribute to the best of their ability to promoting the growth and expansion of our Order in mission lands as well.

95. It pertains to the General Chapter, or otherwise to the Definitory, to accept missions, to change or terminate them, to entrust a mission to a particular province, to give suitable instructions and take the necessary steps to promote and coordinate missionary activity in the Order.
96. Those engaged in missionary activity should keep up their commitment to a life of fraternal sharing. This will ensure both their spiritual growth as religious and the success of their missionary work.

For this purpose each mission should have a central house where our missionaries can meet and live together from time to time.

97. When charity and the needs of the Church urge it, and after taking local circumstances into consideration, we take on the care of parishes for the sake of serving the People of God. It is for the Definitory, in consultation with the Provincial Council, to accept a parish or to withdraw from an existing one, while observing the norms of universal law and respecting the terms of n.100 of these Constitutions.



98. Where parish ministry has been entrusted to us we must do our best to ensure that our parish reflects faithfully the mystery of the whole Church, and that all our pastoral work is imbued with the Teresian Carmelite spirit.
99. While providing a manifold service in the Church, we give priority to that special apostolate of the Order which, as it were, grows out of the nature of its charism. In this way we present ourselves with our true identity and are faithful to our own specific mission.
100. Our Holy Parents are acclaimed in the Church as masters and models of intimacy with God. This impels us too to characterise our role in the Church by a special apostolic involvement in promoting a deeper spiritual life among the faithful. That is how we serve the Church according to our charism, and faithfully carry on the spiritual tradition of the Order.

Great care must therefore be taken to ensure that a proper balance is maintained in our apostolic commitments, so that adequate provision is always made for the kind of witness and apostolate that our vocation as Carmelites demands of us.
101. Down the centuries our Order has fulfilled this special mission in a variety of ways, by the spoken and written word. We must continue this and update our methods so that we can more fully and successfully share with others the treasures of our rich spiritual heritage.

We should strive to be well grounded in theology and Carmelite spirituality, and to equip ourselves both as individuals and as communities for our mission of leading people to a deeper knowledge and experience of intimacy with God.
102. We must show special apostolic concern for those closest to us, especially for our brother religious during their formation years.
103. In accordance with our Holy Mother St Teresa's express wish, our apostolic mission in the Church obliges us to be available for the spiritual guidance and formation of the nuns of the Order. This should be a prime concern to all, and superiors, especially Major Superiors, should make adequate provision for this in an organised way within their respective jurisdictions.

We have a similar fraternal duty towards the members of our Secular Order, also towards those religious families who share in our life and spirit.

***This English translation of the authentic Latin version of the Constitutions is approved by the General Definitory and is published by the Conference of English-speaking Provincials.  
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***Part II (The Members of the Order, nn. 104-142), Part III (Government, nn. 143-229),  
and the Norms are not included.***