



CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI
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Very dear Brothers and Sisters of the OCDS,

It is with joy that I send you the text of the new numbers of the Constitutions on *Fraternal Communion* and *Saint Joseph*, approved by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of apostolic life on 7 January 2014 (Prot. n. C 228-¹/2003). The OCD General Definitory, at its September meeting, had revised the text in the light of the suggestions received and sent it to the Congregation for approval.

As with for the Constitutions of 2003, the text approved is in Spanish. The new numbers form an integral part of the Constitutions, and are inserted in their respective places, while however maintaining the same numbering. The Provincial Councils now need to review the provincial Statutes, in accordance with the new guidelines.

My wish is for every Community to grow in fraternal communion after the image of the perfect communion of the Most Holy Trinity. In fact the Trinitarian mystery "reminds us that we have been created in the image of that divine communion, and so we cannot achieve fulfilment or salvation purely by our own efforts" (Francis *Evangelii gaudium* 178). Only by "a radiant and attractive witness of fraternal communion, a communion which heals, promotes and reinforces interpersonal bonds" (id. 99. 67), in accordance with the charism of the teresian Carmel, will you have the strength to live your lay vocation and transform earthly realities in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel.

May the Lord bless you and may the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph guard you together with your families and Community.

Fraternally,



fr. Saverio Cannistrà

Fr. Saverio Cannistrà OCD
Superior General

fr. Alzimir F. Debastiani
Fr. Alzimir F. Debastiani OCD
General Delegate for the OCDS

Rome, 25 January 2014 – Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul

DECREE

The Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites, at the request of the General Secretariat for the Secular Order, after consulting with the Provinces and the Communities of same Order and with the consent of the General Definitory, presented to the Apostolic See, for approval, the text of the new chapter on “Fraternal Communion” and on “Saint Joseph”, to be inserted into the Constitutions of the Secular Order which were approved by Decree, (the same number as above), on 16 June 2003.

This Congregation for the Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life, having carefully considered everything, approves by this present Decree the text presented; the approval is given in accordance with the original Spanish text kept on file in the Congregation’s archives.

Under the watchful guidance and with the paternal intercession of Saint Joseph, may the members of the Secular Order, rooted in Christ through their baptismal consecration and united by the bonds of fraternal charity, be enabled to respond generously to their common vocation to holiness in the concrete situations of family, ecclesial, social and civil life.

Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary.

From the Vatican, 7 January, 2014

Joao Braz Card. De Aviz
Prefect

+ José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M.
Archbishop Secretary

III – B – FRATERNAL COMMUNION

24 - a) The Church, the family of God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is a mystery of communion¹. In fact, Jesus came among us to reveal to us this Trinitarian love and the vocation to participate in a communion of love with the Most Holy Trinity; this is something to which every human person created in God's image and likeness (cf. Gen1:26-27) is called. In the light of this mystery, the true identity and dignity of every human being, and specifically of every member of the Church, is revealed². Being spiritual in nature, the human person grows and matures by being in an authentic relationship with God and with others³.

Therefore, the local community of the Secular Order of the Teresian Carmel, a visible sign of the Church and of the Order⁴, is a place to live and promote personal and communal fellowship with God in Christ and in the Spirit and with other brothers and sisters (cf. Rom 8:29) in accordance with the teresian charism. The person of Christ is at the center of the Community. Members meet regularly in his name (cf. Mt 18:20), drawing inspiration from the group formed by Jesus and the twelve Apostles (cf. Mc 3,14-16.34-35)⁵ as well as the early Christian communities (cf. Acts 2:42, 4, 32-35). They seek to live in accordance with the unity requested by Jesus (Jn 17:20-23) and his commandment to love as He loves them (Jn 13:34). They promise to strive for evangelical perfection⁶ in the spirit of the evangelical counsels, of the Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12) and of the Christian virtues (cf. Col 3:12-17, Phil 2:15), and in the awareness that this reality of communion is an integral part of Carmelite spirituality.

24 - b) St. Teresa of Jesus initiated a new model of community life. Her ideal of community life is based on the certainty of faith that the Risen Jesus is in the midst of the community and that it lives under the protection of the Virgin Mary⁷. She is aware that she and her nuns are gathered together to help the Church and to collaborate in its mission. Relations are marked by the virtues of a love that is genuine, gratuitous, free and unselfish, as well as by detachment and humility. These are fundamental virtues for the spiritual life and they bring peace both internally and externally⁸.

Teresa is aware of the importance of mutual support on the road of prayer and the importance of friendship with others in the common search for God⁹. She also considers as fundamental to such friendship, culture, the human virtues, gentleness, empathy, prudence,

¹ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, 4; *Gaudium et spes*, 24; cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 19. *Ratio Institutionis OCDS*, 25. Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Congregavit in uno Christi amor*, 8-9.

² John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 8.

³ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et spes*, 23; Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 34. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, 54. Cf. n. 34.

⁴ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 40.

⁵ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Way of Perfection*, 24,5; 26,1; 27,6. *Way* (Escorial), 20,1..

⁶ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 11.

⁷ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Life*, 32,11; *Way of Perfection*, 17,7; 1,5; 3,1.

⁸ St. Teresa, *Way*, 4,4. 11; 6-7; cf. *Interior Castle*, V, 3,7-12.

⁹ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Life*, 15,5; 23,4.

discretion, simplicity, kindness, joy and availability, as we seek to "walk in truth before God and people"¹⁰.

The doctrine of St. John of the Cross points to union with God by means of the theological virtues¹¹. Based on this principle, the Saint also sees the purifying and unifying effect of the theological virtues in sisterly and brotherly relations. This is particularly so in the exercise of love for others: "Where there is no love, put love, and you will draw out love", because that is what the Lord does: by loving us, He makes us capable of loving¹².

24 - c) A person, loyal to their Christian faith, begins to be part of the Secular Order through the promise made to the Community before the Superior of the Order¹³. With the promise a person is committed to live in communion with the Church, with the Order, with the Province and especially with those who are part of the Community, loving them and encouraging them in the practice of the virtues¹⁴. In smaller communities¹⁵ it is possible to establish a true and deep relationship of human and spiritual friendship, as well as mutual support in charity and humility.

St. Teresa appreciates the assistance of another in the spiritual life: love grows where there is respectful dialogue, the purpose of which is to know oneself better so as to be pleasing to God¹⁶. Community meetings take place in a congenial atmosphere of dialogue and sharing¹⁷. Prayer, formation and a joyful atmosphere are essential for deepening friendly relationships and ensuring for everyone mutual support in the daily living-out of the Teresian Carmelite lay vocation in the family, at work and in other social situations. This requires regular and active participation in the life and meetings of the Community. Absences are only allowed for serious and just reasons, evaluated and agreed to with those in charge. The Provincial Statutes are to establish a limit on unjustifiable absences, beyond which, an individual will be considered inactive and liable for dismissal from the Community.

24 - d) The collective and individual responsibility of the Community for formation¹⁸ requires that each individual member commit to fraternal communion, in the belief that a spirituality of communion¹⁹ plays an essential role in the deepening of the spiritual life and formation process of the members. The Eucharistic, life lived in faith²⁰, and attentiveness to the Word of God²¹ help create and sustain communion.

The local authority of the Community fulfills its service in faith, love and humility (cf. Mt

¹⁰ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Mansions*, VI, 10,6; cf. *Way* 40,3; 41,7.

¹¹ Cf. St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, II, 6, 1:1; *Precautions*, 5.

¹² St. John of the Cross, *Letter* 26 to M. Maria of the Incarnation, 6 July 1591; cf. *Letter* 30, to a religious of Segovia; *Ascent*, III, 23,1; *Dark Night*, I, 2,1; 5,2; 7,1; 12,7-8. Cf. *Sayings*, 27.

¹³ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 12.

¹⁴ Cf. *Mansions*, VII, 4, 14-15.

¹⁵ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 58g and the Provincial Statutes on the maximum number of members in a Community.

¹⁶ Cf. St. Teresa, *Life*, 7,22; 16,7.

¹⁷ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 18.

¹⁸ *OCDS Raatio*, 28.

¹⁹ John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43.

²⁰ Francis, *Lumen fidei*, 40.

²¹ Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, 84-85. Cf. Id., *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 76. 82. 89.

20:28, Mk 10:43-45, Jn 13:14). It encourage a familial atmosphere as well as the human and spiritual growth of all the members. It promotes dialogue, personal sacrifice, forgiveness and reconciliation. It avoids all attachment to power and favoritism in the exercise of office.

Prayer for one another, mutual concern that includes instances where there is material need, contact with members who are far away, visiting the sick, the suffering, the elderly, and prayer for the deceased members, are also signs of communion.

The Secular Carmelite also realizes and expresses communion through meeting and solidarity with other communities, especially within the same Province or Circumscription, as well as through communication and collaboration with the entire Order and family of the Teresian Carmel

So, with this witness to communion in accordance with the Teresian charism, the Community of Secular Carmel cooperates with the evangelizing mission of the Church in the midst of the world²².

24 -e) A community that devoutly seeks God, will find the balance between individual rights and the good of the community as a whole. Thus the rights and needs of each of the members must be respected and safeguarded according to the laws of the Church²³, but likewise members must faithfully fulfill their duties in relation to the community, as laid down in the Constitutions.

In order to dismiss²⁴ a member for the reasons set out in the Code of Canon Law (public rejection of the Catholic faith, abandonment of ecclesiastical communion, or being under imposed or declared excommunication²⁵) or other provisions in the Provincial Statutes, the Community Council should observe the following procedure: 1) verify the certainty of the facts; 2) warn the member in writing, or, before two witnesses; 3) allow a reasonable time for repentance. If after all this there is no change, it is permitted, after consulting the Provincial, to proceed with the dismissal. In all cases, the member retains the right to appeal to the competent ecclesiastical authority²⁶.

In the case where a member, after a serious evaluation and discernment with the Community Council, comes to the decision to voluntarily leave the Community, the request is to be made in writing to the competent authority of the Community, to whom they are committed by reason of their promises²⁷. The Provincial is to be informed of all of this.

²² Vatican Council II, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 13. 19. John Paul II, *Christifideles laici*, 31-32; Cf. Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 20.

²³ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 208-223; 224-231.

²⁴ Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, can. 308; Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 47-e.

²⁵ *Code of Canon Law*, can. 316§1.

²⁶ *Id.*, can. 316§2. Cf. can. 312§2

²⁷ Cf. *OCDS Constitutions*, 12.

31 - a) In the Teresian Carmel love of Mary, Mother and Queen, is united with love of her spouse Saint Joseph. The Father also gave him, "a just man " (Mt 1:19), guardianship of his Son Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Incarnation.

Following the example of St. Teresa, members can find in St. Joseph a role model for a life of humble adoration and prayerful communion with Jesus, as well as a master of prayer²⁸ and silence . Patron of the interior life, he is an example of faith and of being "constantly attentive to God, open to the signs of God's presence and receptive to God's plans"²⁹. Being a chaste and faithful spouse, he is the model of a father solicitous in care of the family, and of a responsible laborer who considers his work as an "expression of love"³⁰.

In communion with the Church and the Order, who venerate him as their "provident Protector"³¹, members of the Secular Order find in Saint Joseph an incomparable protector to whom they can entrust the hopes, the struggles and the work of every day³².

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58 - j) the practices of mortification and expressions of devotion to the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph and our Carmelite Saints.

²⁸ Cf. St. Teresa of Jesus, *Life*, 6,6-8; 33,12. Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptor Custos*, 25. 27.

²⁹ Francis, *Homily for the inauguration of his Pontificate*, 19 March 2013.

³⁰ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 22-23.

³¹ *Constitutions of the OCD Friars*, 52; cf. *Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelites*, 59.

³² "St. Joseph is the model of those humble ones that Christianity raises up to great destinies;... he is the proof that in order to be a good and genuine follower of Christ, there is no need for great things – it is enough to have the common, simple and human virtues, but they need to be true and authentic." (Paul VI *Insegnamenti* VII, 1969, cited in John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos*, 24).