

Welcoming Inquirers

Updated February 2018

These ideas are only by way of suggestion.

Councils, please adapt to local circumstances as you find useful.

Pre-screening

The local Council decides how persons are approved to visit the community. Try not to make it difficult to come and see what Carmel is about. Some pre-screening is important, so that there are not disappointments later on. Many communities do a basic pre-screening by phone and save the rest for face-to-face at the first visit. Most communities have an information brochure to give to inquirers.

Questions to ask include

- What brings the person to Carmel?
- Is the person a Catholic in good standing?
- Marital status? Be sure if married they are married in the Church. Not living with a “partner.” Divorced persons without annulments are not excluded if they are living chastely.
- Member of another spirituality group? Okay for now, but the person will need to leave the other group before admission to Formation I (clothing).

Explain who we are and what we do. (Some of this can be saved for the first meeting.)

- The initial visits are “come and see” to explore what it’s all about.
- We are a part of a religious order. How the secular branch fits into the Order.
- Mental prayer, liturgy of the hours, daily mass if practical, study, community life, growth in virtue, the apostolate.
- The gradual nature of formation.

Invite questions. Printed materials for the person to read and reflect on later are useful.

The first visit

- Be welcoming and friendly, show that you are glad they came.
- Introduce the person to the Community at the beginning of the meeting.
- Assign an “angel” to each inquirer. (an angel explains what is going on and answers questions as they arise)
- Inquirers do not normally sit in on the small group formation classes because the sharing is often very personal.
- Most Communities have someone talk with inquirers during the small group formation period, answering questions and doing a bit more pre-screening. This is a good time to touch on the process of formation and discernments.
- The local Council decides whether or not inquirers may attend the business meeting. Most feel that this should be members-only so they can discuss issues freely.
- Be sure to thank the person for coming.

It’s friendly to follow up with the person in a few days or a week. Do they have any questions? Do they want to come to the next meeting?

Discernment in the early months

Are they:

- Enjoying their initial experience of Carmel?
- Interested in learning more?
- Friendly and open?

Most communities have inquirers come to several meetings before considering them for membership, but it's not a hard and fast rule. The local Council discerns whether to invite the person to begin aspirancy. Look for potential, not perfection. Discernment tips may be found on the provincial website under Best Practices. <http://www.thereocds.org/best-practices-2/discernment/>