

## **Annual Check-in and Addressing Concerns**

from the Flos Carmeli – Fall 2006 “Other Discernment Tidbits from the Provincial Council”  
Updated April 2018

*This is offered by way of advice and is not considered binding as policy.*

### **Annual check-in with Candidates for the Promise**

It is recommended that Councils meet annually with each candidate for a brief check-in about their progress. This allows ample time for both the Council and the candidate to be aware of and address any concerns well before the end of the formation period and discernment for the Promise.

Discussion topics for check-ins could include:

#### **Prayer life**

- How are things in general in relation to your prayer life?
- Are you able to regularly pray morning and evening prayer? Are there any problems you're having with the liturgy of the hours?
- Are you able to regularly set aside half an hour each day for mental prayer? What obstacles are you encountering in trying to do that?
- When you do sit down for that half hour of mental prayer, what does it look like?

Interior prayer being central to Carmelite spirituality, issues with a candidate's prayer life need to be addressed sooner rather than later. For instance, if the candidate describes his/her half hour of prayer in terms of doing devotions, or doing housework while praying, the Council and the formation team need to work with that candidate on a better understanding of mental prayer and ways to develop an authentic prayer life. If the candidate is struggling with the liturgy of the hours, extra coaching would be in order.

#### **Formation classes**

- Are you enjoying the classes?
- What do you feel you are getting from them?
- Are you having any difficulties?

Again, this is to see how the candidate is doing and address any issues early on. Talk with the formator about whether the candidate comes prepared and participates appropriately.

#### **Community life**

- Are you enjoying the meetings?
- What do you especially like about them?
- Is there anything you don't really enjoy?
- How is it going with your community job?
- Are there other community jobs you would like to try?

This is the Council's opportunity to see whether the candidate feels “at home” in Carmel. Does the candidate thrive on community life?

## **Addressing Problems and Concerns with a Candidate**

### **The Council**

The Council should not wait until the discernment interview to bring up concerns. Attendance and behavioral problems are addressed as they happen. The annual check-in helps to turn up less obvious issues that may be problematic. The Council may of course meet more frequently with a candidate if there is a need.

In this way, the candidate has an opportunity to make any necessary changes, and habits do not become ingrained. Concerns should always be addressed in a charitable and just manner, and sooner rather than later. (See Best Practices – Community for articles on conflict resolution.)

### **The Formator**

(See *Role of the Formator* under Best Practices – Formation.) If a formator notices issues with a candidate, it is his/her responsibility to mention it to the Formation Director. The Formation Director can help the formator to help the candidate. If it's something major, the Formation Director should bring it to the Council.

### **The Spiritual Assistant**

Quoting from article 44 of our Constitutions: “The Spiritual Assistant to each community is usually a friar of the Order.” ... “At the different stages of formation of the candidates, he will be available to interview them. The Council may consult him about the suitability of the candidate to assume the responsibility of the vocation to the Secular Order.” ... “The Spiritual Assistant must be well-versed in Carmelite spirituality and well-informed in the Church’s teaching concerning the role of lay people in the Church.”

Whether or not the Spiritual Assistant does an interview and provides feedback to the local Council, the Council must also do their own interview because it is the Council and not the Spiritual Assistant who has the responsibility for discernment of vocations. The Constitutions do not require the approval of the Spiritual Assistant for the Council’s discernment decisions, and he does not vote on the candidate.

The Spiritual Assistant is a good resource for any concerns that might arise regarding the candidate’s good standing with the Church, especially in matters of marital status. (See *Invalid Marriage as an Impediment* on the provincial website under Best Practices – Discernments.) The Spiritual Assistant may also help the Council in talking through discernment concerns if they feel the need for some guidance in the midst of a discernment dilemma.