

“The Spiritual Assistant”

Based on the OCDS Constitutions # 44 and “Provincial Statutes” Sec. XVII

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Main Points

It is often difficult to find a good priest, much less a good Carmelite priest, who is able to serve as a Spiritual Assistant.

A deacon or a religious sister may serve as OCDS Spiritual Assistant.

How to find a good Spiritual Assistant

If you know a good priest and think he might be promising as your Spiritual Assistant, first speak with him personally about the Secular Order.

Then invite him to come to your monthly meeting and give a talk.

Afterwards, see what the reaction of the community and council is.

If you do discern to ask him to be your Spiritual Assistant, make your needs and expectations clear. Make sure you know his limitations, and that he knows yours. Give him a copy of the *OCDS Legislative Documents*, and have him read the sections which apply to the role of the Spiritual Assistant. Make sure he knows that a Spiritual Assistant is not a spiritual director, i.e., that you do not expect him to hear your members' confessions and give individual spiritual direction.

Then contact the Provincial Delegate so that he can officially appoint the Spiritual Assistant and send him a letter of appointment.

As your Spiritual Assistant begins to work with your community, the president or one of the councilors should be the main contact person with him.

According to your means, give him a generous stipend for his service, which should also cover his transportation.

St. Teresa founded Carmel to pray for the leaders of the Church. Be supportive of your Spiritual Assistant. Pray for him. Some communities occasionally have a Mass offered for their Spiritual Assistant. Work with him so that his ministry to your community will be a blessing for both you and him.

Problems that may arise

The Spiritual Assistant should not overly influence the community.

The Community should not expect too much from him. Some Spiritual Assistants can only come to monthly meetings part of the time. Fewer and fewer priests are able to offer Mass at monthly meetings. However, your Spiritual Assistant should be available for the (annual) Ceremonies Mass.

For your ceremonies (within Mass or during a Liturgy of the Word), be sure to go over the rubrics thoroughly with the priest so that the ceremony goes smoothly. (See the “Ritual for Ceremonies” in our “Provincial Statutes.”) A practice beforehand is always a good idea.

It is better not to ask your Spiritual Assistant to attend every council meeting, but the council should be able to consult with him about difficulties that arise in the community. Occasionally the council might ask him to talk with a candidate or member about a particular issue.

Having to do without a Spiritual Assistant

More communities and groups in our Province cannot find a Spiritual Assistant. Sometimes guest speakers might be invited to your meetings. Or some of your council members should volunteer to give a talk at meetings. This can be a time of grace to strengthen your members in prayer and sacrifice to eventually find a good Spiritual Assistant, and to develop speaking skills among your council members.

Listening to CD's or watching DVD's at meetings or in formation classes is not recommended.

Finding a good retreat master

It is common for communities not to be able to find a Carmelite retreat master. Sometimes communities find a Carmelite retreat master in another U.S. Province or they ask another priest or a qualified lay person to give the retreat.

Because of the shortage of retreat masters, it is wise to ask two years in advance.

Be sure to let your retreat master approve your retreat schedule well in advance.