

**ONGOING FORMATION** is for all those who have made the Definitive Promise. It is fundamental to the vocation.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The goal of ongoing formation is to achieve the integration of experience of God with the experience of life: to be contemplatives in prayer and to fulfill their own mission (*OCDS Constitutions 17*).

Ongoing formation is primarily the responsibility of the definitively professed member together with the entire community. At this stage, much of our formation comes from assisting with the formation of newer members. The Council, however, retains its responsibility for the formation of all its members, including those who have made Vows (*OCDS Constitutions 46 & OCDS Constitutions 39*).

### **A. Human formation**

- Continue to grow in community life through regular participation in the monthly meeting and giving service (*OCDS Constitutions 34 & 56*).

### **B. Christian formation**

- Through the living of the Promise, carry the cross of accepting God's will revealed in the mission that He has confided to each person (*OCDS Constitutions 10*).
- Continued self-initiated pursuit of resources to support and enrich the life of prayer; internalization of the Gospel, manifested by fruits of the Holy Spirit. (*OCDS Constitutions 33 & 34*).

### **C. Carmelite formation**

- Living the Promise to follow Jesus, by pursuing personal holiness in order to serve the Church in faithfulness to the Teresian Carmelite charism. This

requires the integration of all previous formation with the fundamental elements of the vocation. (*OCDS Constitutions* 6, 9, & 13-16)

- Witnessing to the experience of God (*OCDS Constitutions* 17-24)
- The freedom of the children of God with respect to the possibility of making Vows, which is governed by *OCDS Constitutions* 39, 47a, 58f, & *Provincial Statutes*.

#### **D. Formation for the Apostolate**

- Deepening the understanding and appreciation of the Teresian Carmelite charism (*OCDS Constitutions* 1, 7, 9, & 11);
- Giving service to the local OCDS community, to the apostolate of the Order, and to the Church (*OCDS Constitutions* 25-28).

### **CURRICULUM**

With the community at large:

- *OCDS Constitutions* and *Provincial Statutes*
- Scripture study
- Saints of the Order

Ongoing formation is so fundamental to the vocation that our *OCDS Constitutions* presume it (*OCDS Constitutions* 34). There is no established curriculum. Instead, these suggestions identify areas of concern to those whose vocations have matured. Through communal ongoing formation, the Holy Spirit will continue to expand our hearts and grant new graces.

- Live the promise (*OCDS Constitutions* 11)

Motivated by charity for the community, we cultivate a deeper level of genuine caring for one another, doing this naturally and consciously, with sensitivity for the other's boundaries. This is really loving one another as Jesus loves.

Ongoing formation sessions become a time for sharing and encouraging one another for a strong and healthy community, without neglecting education. The fruits of our practice of prayer lead us to ever more balanced lives, individually and in our Carmelite and other communities.

- Nourish prayer through the practice of individual and community prayer and spiritual reading recommended in *OCDS Constitutions* 19.

Without other constraints, we are freer to delve more deeply into Carmelite subjects, both familiar and new, as the Holy Spirit moves us – to sample, to study and to meditate – continually turning to fundamental texts in freely chosen studies. Moving among works by and about Carmelites, scripture themes and Church documents, and taking full advantage of online resources, provides both balance for group study and more opportunities to develop leadership within the community.

- Continue to grow in community life through regular participation in the monthly meeting and giving service (*OCDS Constitutions* 34 & 56)

There is strong focus on building community. Recognizing that our responsibility is not just to ourselves and the other professed members, but to the entire community, and especially to those who are new to the vocation, we develop latent potential for leadership by creating opportunities for service and by encouraging one another to take advantage of them in facilitating a group activity or study. When approached by other members, we carefully and prayerfully consider whether our promise of obedience might require us to accept nomination to an office on the Council, trusting that God will provide the necessary grace to fulfill its responsibilities.

- Take part in the apostolate, which is inseparable from true prayer and renews the desire for prayer, contemplation, and the liturgical and sacramental life (*OCDS Constitutions* 25-28)

Communities should take care not to engage in activities during the formation time that are not directed toward nurturing the secular Carmelite vocation. For example, it would be inappropriate to devote formation time to fundraising

activities for our friars or nuns. Developing formation tools and offering a day of recollection for a parish are two examples of activities that could comprise both ongoing formation and apostolate.

- The *OCDS Constitutions* and *Provincial Statutes* govern the making of the Vows of chastity and obedience for life. (*OCDS Constitutions* 39 and 58f.) Formal preparation for Vows begins at the free initiation of the individual.

The candidate for Vows must be fully informed of both the serious obligations and the rich graces associated with the vows:

- Initial discernment and formation for this call will include the assistance of one’s own confessor or spiritual director, the council of the community, and the Spiritual Assistant to the community.
- The Vows are strictly voluntary. The Promise makes one a full member of Carmel and the Vows do not change that status.
- “While the Promise was made before God to the Superiors and members of the Order, the Vows are made directly to God, for vows are acts of religious worship. Thus, the Vows add the merit of the virtue of religion to the observance of chastity and obedience. They constitute a more complete self-offering and therefore entail a greater moral responsibility. The binding force of these Vows, freely made, renders more visible the bond of love and commitment that exists between Christ and His Bride the Church.” (*Instruction of the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites*, par. 7, *OCDS Legislative Documents for the California-Arizona Province of St. Joseph*, p. 79.)
- Criteria to aid discernment
  - The candidate must be faithful in living the promise.

- The candidate's life must be suitably ordered, with any major irregularities resolved so that there are no blockages to grace.
  - The candidate must have a healthy, balanced integration of the experience of God with the experience of daily life. There should be evidence of greater charity, detachment, and humility.
- An individually guided preparatory retreat and a general confession are highly recommended.
- Resources for preparation for Vows

Essential:

- *Instruction of the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites*, October 15, 1990, par. 7 –12, found in *Legislative Documents for the OCDS of the California-Arizona Province of St. Joseph*
- *Vows in the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites*, by Fr. Michael Buckley, OCD, found on page 93A-1 of these *Guidelines*

Recommended:

- *Where the Spirit Breathes*, by Fr. Marie-Eugene, OCD
- *The Sanctifier*, by Most Rev. Luis M. Martinez
- *The Theological Virtues in the Spiritual Life*, by Fr. Anastasio Ballestreros, OCD