

Carmel Clarion

Everything growing from the earth, bless the Lord



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CONTENTS

2	From the Provincial Delegate Fr. Salvatore Sciorba, O.C.D.	10	Reflection on our Constitution and Statues Grace de Luca, O.C.D.S.
3	Editor's Page Mary Rodriguez-Harrington, O.C.D.S.	11	Reflection on our Gratitude for our Constitution and Statutes Carolyn Gwadz, O.C.D.S.
4	Reflections on Fraternal Communion Claudia Sailsman, O.C.D.S.		

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OCDS Main Office
2131 Lincoln Road, NE
Washington, DC 20002-1101

Phone: 202-269-3792

Email: ocdsmainoffice@gmail.com

Editor: Mary E. Rodriguez-Harrington, O.C.D.S.
clarioneditor2015@gmail.com

Provincial

Delegate: Fr. Salvatore Sciorba, O.C.D.

Regional

Assistants: Fr. Donald Brick, O.C.D.
Fr. Paul Fohlin, O.C.D.
Br. Robert Sentman, O.C.D.

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From the Provincial Delegate

Our Holy Parents, Saints Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross, have left us in their writings a great treasure. Our Carmelite brothers and sisters, Lawrence of the Resurrection, Elizabeth of the Trinity, Teresa Benedicta of the Cross and others have contributed to this treasury. We can and should spend our lives reading and re-reading these texts. The greater our familiarity with them, the more we internalize them, the deeper will be our spiritual life. Such reading will foster our Carmelite identity. Moreover, we need not read them all at once, but can read various sections more slowly and in a more prayerful way. Such reading is essential for our formation, both initial and on-going.

The Ratio states that the purpose of formation is: "to prepare the person to live the charism and spirituality of Carmel in its following of Christ and in service to its mission." This means that we must mentor those who come to us, helping them internalize Carmelite values and guiding them in living them out. We must as well discern with them their call to our way of life. Therefore, while the classes, instruction and readings are essential, it is important to remember that we are forming individuals to live Carmelite spirituality according to their state in life. Instruction, guidance, encouragement and example are all necessary.

Formation, however, is not an academic program. Those who feel called are not here to earn an advanced degree. Undue emphasis on readings, homework, lesson plans, etc., may discourage suitable candidates. Many are interested in Carmelite spirituality; not all are called to profess promises and become members of our family. While the work of the formation directors and teachers is indispensable, the whole community has a role in forming new members by their fidelity to our vocation.

The Ratio reminds us that the essential elements of formation are human, Christian, and Carmelite. This suggests that our programs must take into consideration the whole person with his/her gifts and particular approach to learning. Our programs of formation must help the person grow in these three areas and not merely impart information. May the Holy Spirit guide us all in this transforming process.

Fr. Salvatore, O.C.D.

SOON AFTER WE BEGIN OUR JOURNEY IN CARMEL we realize that there is much to learn about the spiritual tradition throughout its long history. The learning process leads us to understand that there is so much to *unpack*. An image that helps illustrate this *unpacking* is the nesting dolls; the Russian Matryoshka dolls—nestled within themselves.

Just as each beautifully painted and decorated doll contains more dolls within itself, so do the rich Carmelite teachings contain more beautiful teachings—with deep value—in each individual teaching. These deep values are not seen superficially, but discovered as one studies and learns to see the connections of each teaching nestled inside a teaching, which itself, is also connected to another teaching that contains more teachings within itself. Carmel offers a collection of major gems revealed in our search.

It takes years to fully comprehend the essential teachings and values that St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross taught and left us in their writings and letters. In addition, our documents—The Rule of St. Albert, The Constitutions, The Statutes, and so on—help keep communities in line with the Order. These documents are connected to St. Teresa's and St. John's doctrine; nestled inside the fundamental values of their teachings.

One possible concern to be aware of is the tendency of some to impose their way of conducting affairs according to their background. Therefore, the challenge becomes to be receptive to letting our Carmelite spirituality inform our lives and not the other way around, that is, projecting our approach on the community.

In our culture, we need to leave outside the door of Carmel the training from our schools, the orientation of a higher education, our job

experience, the models that we were taught in the government, the military, in academia, in administration, in technology, as these systems interfere with the Carmelite way.

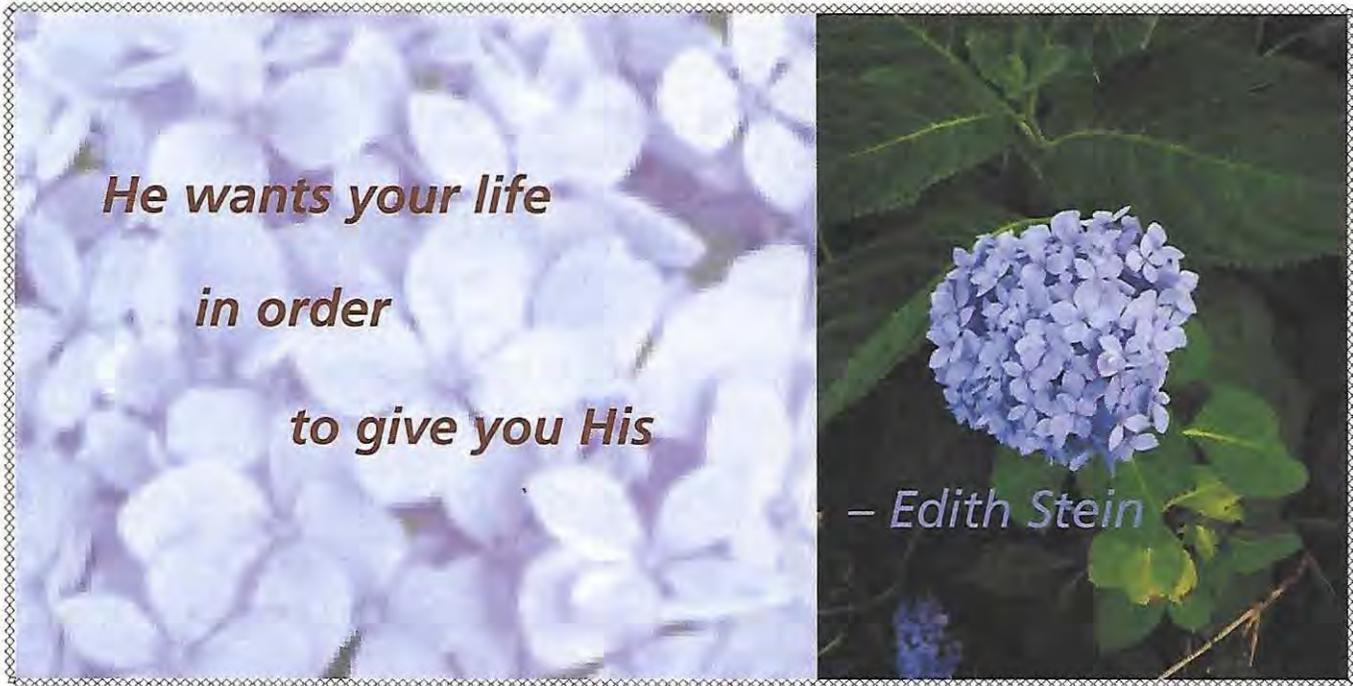
We must remember, as often as it is necessary, that our decision to commit to Carmel, is primarily the learning of a new way—a different way to live—to develop a new lifestyle. To the degree that we allow Carmel to teach us this new way (through the nestled teachings and values), to that degree we will be changed into Carmelites living closely to the teachings of our Holy Parents. We must try not to impose our ways to change Carmel. Rather, we should let Carmel change us. Otherwise, we cannot be truly at the service of the Order and will not allow the work of the Holy Spirit to prevail.

Our Carmelite saints made the extraordinary connections between the nestled teachings. They brought new revelations about Carmel as they allowed the Holy Spirit to lead them where they least expected their lives would take them. As they gave life to the teachings, a particular pathway ultimately led them to sainthood. St. Thérèse, for example, exemplifies the little way and the merciful love of God.

We Secular Carmelites have a great opportunity to witness in *little ways* all the time, as long as we remain faithful to the nestled teachings encountered in our personal reading, and in our community studies and formation.

Mary Edith Rodriguez-Harrington, O.C.D.S.
Editor





*He wants your life
in order
to give you His*

– Edith Stein

I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE A FEW REFLECTIONS on the subject of *fraternal communion* in our Constitutions.

The new section begins with the biblical and doctrinal basis for community. As baptized Catholics we are sealed by the triune God, who is that perfect, loving community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We fulfill our true purpose in life in loving relation to God and to one another like the disciples, who formed a life of communion and community around Jesus.

The promises we make in Carmel are a commitment to live and *serve* in community. For us as seculars, this *living* takes place when we gather each month for our communal worship, fellowship, meeting, and formation. We also stay connected to the community God has given us, through daily prayer and thought during the rest of the month.

While striving to live and serve our community we are being perfected in love—that is, Love

who is Trinity. We embody more fully and reflect the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Our holy parents would say that in community we live in the midst of the Risen Lord and his mother, Mary. Coming together as community has a specific goal. As we interact with our brothers and sisters in community, we grow in humility, detachment, and love, just as we do in our interior life. In community we help each other to develop spiritually. St. Teresa always felt that the members of her community should be friends, helping each other get to heaven. Others spoke of St. John as having a fatherly love for others. Both these saints would say that the community should be a home for all.

Modern day author Jean Vanier in *Community and Growth* speaks at length about community. Community is a home, he says, it is a safe place for everyone, a place where people are valued and cared for and loved. He adds that it is the

Continued on page 9



Carmel Clarion Communications

The Carmel Clarion Collection is the main resource for CDs on Carmelite Spirituality in the United States. More than 200 titles are available for listening on a CD player or digitally uploading to media players and various MP3 devices.

Since 2006 Carmel Clarion Communications has distributed live recordings about Carmelite Spirituality by the most prominent speakers of the Discalced Carmelite Order and other friends of Carmel. Drawing from the writings and teachings of the Carmelite Saints – Teresa of Jesus (Avila), John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, etc. All of our speakers shed light on the inward journey towards union with God.

In addition to live conferences, Carmel Clarion Communications offers The Carmelite Digital Library, which is the full digital text of all the works by St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross. Once installed on your computer, it provides the Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD and Otilio Rodríguez, OCD translation cross-referenced to the Douay Rheims Bible, the Peers translation, and the Spanish Edition. All text is searchable either within one of the Saints' writings, or across both. (See the back of this brochure for more details).

Visit our website at www.carmelclarion.com for a complete CD listing and to place your order!

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John Sullivan, OCD

John Welch, O. Carm.

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responsibility of each member to make our OCDS community a home.

The community is not a social club or clique or self-help program. We share our lives for a specific focus and goal. We are here to build up the Body of Christ by way of community. In community we witness to each other's faith walk, that in turn inspires each other to bear witness in the other areas of our lives: at work, school, and home; wherever we travel in life.

Life in community is evangelization because we are sharing our faith and are a living witnesses to each other. We strive to work out conflicts through a dialogue of truth, love, in a spirit of humility. We are warned about attachment to power—there is no place for ambition in community. Again, we are all called to servant leadership.

Important in our formation is that we come to esteem others as companions along the way. We must learn to find Jesus in the faces and voices of our brothers and sisters in community. Philippians 2:34 reminds us to "humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others." When we encounter our brothers and sisters in community and dialogue with them we grow in the knowledge of God, we become more sensitive to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Fr. Alzinir Debastiani, our General Delegate, put a challenge to all of us, it is the challenge of Pope Francis in his Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel*.

In our communities we must all;

- * Have a missionary outlook and take the first step—don't be afraid to share our faith.
- * Be involved in our community.
- * Be supportive in, and of, our community.
- * Bear fruit—this you will see in yourself and in others.

and lastly,

*Rejoice! And as Pope Francis would say, "Do not be robbed of joy."

Claudia Sailsman O.C.D.S.
Carmel of the Holy Spirit
Ft. Lauderdale, FL



THIS IS A REFLECTION ON OUR CONSTITUTION AND STATUTES and what they mean to us who are called to a Secular Carmelite vocation. The One who has called us is the Lord. As he said in Isaiah, "Do not be afraid...I have called you by your name, you are mine." He calls us in a special way. A Carmelite understands his/her vocation as one who is also called. In response, one owes deep commitment to his or her Community members, as each one also received that same special call.

Every group, if it is to remain true to its stated goal, needs guidelines. We, as a Carmelite Community, have been provided with a Constitution to lead us on the path to a deep relationship with God. We would be lost without it.

When the Constitution and Statutes are thoughtfully analyzed, it becomes clear that they are designed, not only to help us grow spiritually, but also to aid us in maintaining peace, order, and cooperation within our Community. It is important for us to understand that the Constitution and Statutes are necessary helps to be on a journey to holiness. Because it is a way of life—a vocation—we embrace the challenges necessary to live and serve in an OCDS community.

Our Council, composed of a President and three councilors, is our immediate authority and they have great responsibilities. They must lead our Community in Christian love and wisdom, support and guide the Director of Formation, and do their best to maintain peace and tranquility among many different personalities. They step forward willingly, and take upon themselves the additional work and duties required of them. The virtues are evidenced in the way they lead the community.

We, in turn, as members of the Community also have a serious responsibility before God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. We are to accept

and obey in Christian love the decisions made by the Council, believing and trusting they are guided by the Holy Spirit. We may not agree, but humility asks us to trust. After all, St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross emphasize over and over again that humility and obedience are two important qualities required of Carmelites. There may be times when we are not pleased with a decision of the Council or upset with a member of the Community. The Statutes, numbers 53-57, recognize this and give us guidelines on how to handle the situation.

Pope Francis has called for a Church of Mercy. Mercy proceeds from love and walks hand in hand with humility, which is nothing more than seeing ourselves as we truly are. All our actions must proceed toward others from love for each other.

As John Vanier said in his book, *Community and Growth*, "Each community is grafted into the heart of Christ and into his body, the Church....A community is never there just for itself or for its own glory."

Taking these thoughts to their ultimate meaning brings us to the understanding that all the values and guidelines in our Constitution and Statutes—were made to help us live the Christian life—the life Jesus requires us to live with His command: "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

Grace de Luca, O.C.D.S.
Carmel of the Holy Spirit
Ft. Lauderdale, FL



IN THE SPANISH VIDEO SERIES, *TERESA OF AVILA*, there is a scene depicting an interaction between the Prioress of the Pastrana Carmel and the bossy, contentious Princess of Eboli, who had inflicted her presence on that community. The Princess announced she would have her way about some issue, and the Prioress is shown responding, with serenity that, "our Carmels are governed by the Rule and Constitutions of the Order, not by the will of an individual." The sentence certainly struck a chord in me and evoked the thought of how truly necessary it is to manage situations in our OCDS communities through our Constitution and Statutes.

We are fortunate to have familiarity with our booklet of OCDS legislation. Through this tool, we can resolve incidents by explaining the parameters defined in the legislation. Hence, with a minimum of difficulty, a potentially divisive or wounding incident can be avoided. It is no wonder our friars have encouraged us to be thoroughly conversant with the Rule and Constitutions of our Order! These are our invaluable and indispensable tools for healthy communities.

When a candidate is interviewed for Temporary or Definitive Promises, the Council must make certain that he or she is aware of the promise of obedience to "the authority of Carmel," as well as to the Church and the Lord. Through our superiors in Carmel, from Father General to the Provincial to the local Council, God's will for us is made known. We promise to trust in this, and the paragraphs pertaining to obedience, chastity, and poverty in our documents enunciate this eloquently. We all bow in humility to this in our promise of obedience and it makes our Carmelite life together run smoothly and sanctifies us. One witnesses the truth of this in our common life

as officers contribute their time and labor to the functioning of the community, as ailing or elderly members travel significant distances to maintain regular attendance, as members accept and adhere to policies or changes decided upon by the local or Provincial Council, many little or big matters.

Another reason to revere the Rule and Constitutions of our Order is that they inform us as to who and what we are and what is our mission. Paragraph 4 of the Constitutions recalls the *apostolic service of Mary*, "persevering in prayer with the apostles—giving witness to intercessory prayer." Paragraph 5 of the Constitutions elucidates the *prophetic vocation of Elijah*—and our own. It reminds us of the prophetic dimension of Christian and Carmelite spirituality that serves God in church and society "above all by being a voice for those who cannot, on their own, express (this) love and truth." When I am present in prayer at the weekday Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in my parish, I am conscious of being a voice for those who cannot, on their own, express this love and truth, from the unbelievers I know to the public figures I don't know, to devout people serving at their posts who are not free to be there. Despite all my human foibles and inadequacies, it's humbling to realize that I can be their voice, because I am a Secular Discalced Carmelite. As our beloved St. Thérèse discerned, we (too) are "love at the heart of the Church," praying for everyone and on behalf of everyone.

We have safety and security in knowing we are on a wise path, originally hewn by our holy forebears in Carmel and safeguarded today in our Order. How blessed we are to have access to the principles and guidelines provided in our Rule,

Continued on page 12



The Princess of Eboli. Image from the mini series St. Teresa of Avila.

Continued from page 11

Constitutions, and Statutes, which strengthen and enlighten our communities in their functioning. Where would we be without these groups, these principles, the holy individuals who have explained the value of them to us—our own OCDS, our Provincial Delegates and Regional Assistants, and hard-working friars? Thanks be to God for it all, now and in eternity. We will be glad we pledged allegiance to Jesus Christ in the Teresian Carmel according to Rule and Constitutions.

Carolyn Gwadz, O.C.D.S.
Saint Teresa Benedicta of the Cross
Washington, DC



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