

# CONSTITUTIONS OF THE CARMELITE ORDER 1995

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## SECTION I: THE GIFT AND CHARISM OF THE CARMELITE ORDER AND ITS BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

### CHAPTER I: The Gift and the Mission of the Order

1.

Through Jesus Christ,  
Son of the Father  
and “firstborn of all creation”,  
we live in union with God  
and with our neighbours  
in a new way.

And so, we share in the mission of the Incarnate Word in this world,  
and we form the Church,  
which is in Christ “as a sacrament - a sign and instrument  
of communion with God, and of the unity of the whole human race.”

2.

Living in allegiance to Jesus Christ,  
and embracing his Gospel as the supreme norm of our lives,  
by the power of his Spirit  
who distributes his gifts to each according to his will,  
we seek to live together in mutual service of one another  
and of all people.

In this way, we co-operate in God’s plan  
to gather all men and women into one Holy People.

3.

Among the gifts of the Spirit is the evangelical life,  
which we profess as religious,  
called by Christ to live and to spread  
his transforming and liberating power,  
and even evangelical life itself,  
in a manner that is specific to us,  
effective, and contemporary.

This life is characterised by an intense search for God,  
in total adherence to Christ,  
finding expression in fraternal life and apostolic zeal.

4.

Inherent in this vocation  
is the full acceptance of the conditions  
which Christ sets  
for those who wish to follow him in this kind of life.  
It involves acceptance of God’s will,  
as sharing in Christ’s obedience.  
It also includes the life of poverty  
and community of goods,  
as an expression of our unity in Christ  
and of mutual gospel-inspired union with our brothers.  
Finally, it is consecrated chastity,  
as an expression of our love of God

and of our brothers and sisters.

5.

We look upon our consecrated life above all as an invitation and a great gift from God, by which he consecrates us to himself, that we may serve our brothers and sisters following Christ's example.

This vocation perfects in us, through our shared brotherhood, the power, which is also charismatic, a gift of the Spirit, received at baptism and at confirmation, binding us in a special way to the Church and making us ready to serve God and humanity, "to implant and strengthen the Kingdom of Christ in souls, and to spread it to the four corners of the earth."

6.

In this context, we the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel are engaged in a process of self-examination and seek to define the characteristics among the many existing charisms and vocations which give our religious family its particular identity within the Church.

7.

At the time of the Crusades to the Holy Land, hermits settled in various places throughout Palestine. Some of these, "following the example of Elijah, a holy man and a lover of solitude, adopted a solitary life-style on Mount Carmel, near a spring called Elijah's Fountain. In small cells, similar to the cells of a beehive, they lived as God's bees, gathering the divine honey of spiritual consolation."

8.

Later, St. Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem brought the hermits together, at their request, into a single "collegium"; he gave them a formula for living which expressed their own eremetical ideals ("propositum") and reflected the spirit of the so-called pilgrimage to the Holy Land and of the early community of Jerusalem. Moved by "their love of the Holy Land", these hermits "consecrated themselves in this Land to the One who had paid for it by the shedding of his blood, in order that they might serve him, clothed in the habit of religious poverty," persevering "in holy penance" and forming a fraternal community.

9.

This way of life was approved successively by Honorius III in 1226, by Gregory IX in 1229, and by Innocent IV in 1245.

In 1247, Innocent IV approved it definitively as an authentic rule of life, amending it to suit Western conditions.

These adaptations became necessary when the Carmelites began to migrate to the West to escape persecution, and expressed a desire to lead a life “in which, with the help of God, they would have the joy of working for their own salvation and that of their neighbour.”

10.

As a result of the approval of the Rule by Innocent IV, the Carmelites placed themselves at the service of the Church, according to the common ideal of the Mendicant Orders, also known as the Orders of Apostolic Brotherhood.

However, they retained the distinctive features of their original charism;

and over the centuries the Order and the Church found these features to belong to Carmelites, especially because of the teachers of spiritual life whom God raised up in the Order.

11.

The Rule outlines the guiding thrust of Carmelite life in allegiance to Christ, according to the spirit of the Order.

We are to ponder the law of the Lord, by day and by night, in silence and in solitude, so that the word of God may dwell abundantly in the hearts and on the lips of those who profess it.

We are to pray with perseverance, especially by keeping vigil and praying the psalms.

We are also to be clothed in spiritual armour; to live in fraternal communion, expressed through the daily celebration of the Eucharist, through fraternal meetings in chapters, through shared ownership of all material goods, through fraternal and loving correction of failings, and through a life of austerity, with work and penance, rooted in faith, hope and love, always conforming one's own will to God's, sought in faith through dialogue and through the prior's service to his brothers.

12.

Carmelite spirituality is characterised by two features. The first is its Elijan trait

which the Carmelites developed living as they did on Mount Carmel, the scene of the great prophet's deeds.

Its second feature is an intimacy with Mary in our spiritual life, eloquently witnessed by the title of being her brothers and the dedication of the first Church on Mount Carmel in her honour.

13.

As the human race enters into a new period of its history, we seek, as Carmelites inspired by the Spirit at work in the Church, to adapt our way of life to new conditions.

We seek to understand the signs of the times and to examine them in the light of the Gospel, of our charism, and of our spiritual heritage, so that we may incarnate this way of life in different cultures.

## CHAPTER II: The Charism of the Order

14.

“To live a life of allegiance to Jesus Christ and to serve him faithfully with a pure heart and a clear conscience”:  
these words, inspired by St. Paul, are the basis for all the elements of our charism; they are the foundation upon which Albert constructed our way of life. The particular Palestinian context in which the Order originated, and the approval bestowed by the Holy See at the various stages of the Order's historical evolution, gave new meaning and inspiration to the way of life set out in the Rule.

Carmelites live their life of allegiance to Christ through a commitment to seek the face of the living God (the contemplative dimension of life), through fraternity, and through service (diakonia) in the midst of the people.

15.

The spiritual tradition of the Order has stressed that these three fundamental elements of the charism are not distinct and unrelated values, but closely interwoven.

Down the ages the Carmelites have emphasised the dynamic of the desert experience as a crucial factor in unifying these values. The desert experience is a Carmelite commitment to make the crucified Christ - stripped and emptied - the very foundation of their lives; to channel their energies entirely towards him in faith,

tearing down any obstacles which may stand in the way  
of perfect dependence on him  
or impede perfect charity towards God  
and towards others.

This process of detachment which leads to union with God  
- the ultimate goal of all human growth -  
is found in our spirituality in the expressions  
“purity of heart” (“puritas cordis”)  
and “total availability to God (“vacare Deo”)  
These indicate a total openness to God  
and a gradual self-emptying.

Through this process, when we come to see reality with God’s eyes,  
our attitude towards the world is transformed  
according to his love,  
and the contemplation of the loving presence of God  
will be seen in our lives of fraternity and of service.

### *1. The contemplative dimension of our life*

16.

From its earliest days,  
the community of Carmelites adopted a contemplative style,  
both in its structures and in its basic values.  
This is clearly reflected in the Rule,  
which describes a community of brothers,  
totally dedicated to a prayerful attention to the Word,  
celebrating and praising the Lord with zeal.  
The Rule speaks of a community  
whose members are open to the indwelling of the Spirit  
and formed by the Spirit’s values:  
chastity, holy thoughts, justice,  
love, faith, the expectation of salvation,  
work accomplished in peace,  
silence which, as the Prophet tells us,  
is the cult of justice and brings wisdom to word and action;  
and discernment, “the guide and moderator of all virtues.”

17.

The tradition of the Order  
has always interpreted the Rule  
and the founding charism  
as expressions of the contemplative dimension of life,  
and the great spiritual teachers of the Carmelite Family  
have always returned to this contemplative vocation.  
Contemplation begins when we entrust ourselves to God,  
in whatever way he chooses to approach us;  
it is an attitude of openness to God,  
whose presence we discover in all things.  
Thus, contemplation is the inner journey of Carmelites,  
arising out of the free initiative of God,  
who touches and transforms us,  
leading us towards unity of love with him,

raising us up so that we may enjoy this gratuitous love  
and live in his loving presence.

It is a transforming experience  
of the overpowering love of God.

This love empties us  
of our limited and imperfect human ways of  
thinking, loving, and behaving,  
transforming them into divine ways.

18.

Contemplation also has a gospel and an ecclesial value.

The practice of contemplation  
is not only the source of our spiritual life;  
it also determines the quality of our fraternal life  
and of our service in the midst of the people of God.

The values of contemplation

- when lived faithfully in the midst of the complex events of daily life -  
make Carmelite brotherhood a witness  
to the living and mysterious presence of God among his people.

The search for the face of God,  
and openness to the gifts of the Spirit,  
make us more attentive to the signs of the times  
and more sensitive to the seeds of the Word in history,  
seeing and evaluating facts and events  
within the Church and within society.

Through living like Christ,  
in solidarity with the events  
and the hopes of the human race,  
Carmelites will be able to make appropriate decisions  
to transform life, making it conform more closely  
to the will of the Father.  
Moreover, for the good of the Church,  
the contemplative dimension  
will encourage those who feel called to an eremitical life.

## 2. *Fraternity*

19.

A contemplative attitude towards the world around us  
allows us to discover the presence of God  
in the events of ordinary daily life  
and especially, to see him in our brothers and sisters.

Thus we are led to appreciate the mystery  
of those with whom we share our lives.

Our Rule requires us to be essentially “brothers”,  
and reminds us that the quality of interpersonal relationships  
within the Carmelite community  
needs to be constantly developed  
and enhanced, following the inspiring example  
of the first community in Jerusalem.

For us to be brothers

means to grow in communion  
and in unity,  
overcoming privileges and distinctions,  
in a spirit of participation and co-responsibility,  
in sharing material possessions,  
a common programme of life, and personal charisms;  
to be brothers also means to care for one another's spiritual  
and psychological well-being,  
through walking in the way of dialogue and reconciliation.

20.

These fraternal values find expression and nourishment  
in the Word,  
in the Eucharist,  
and in prayer.

Hearing, praying and living the Word  
- in silence, in solitude and in community,  
especially in the form of lectio divina -  
Carmelites are led, day by day,  
to know and experience the mystery of Jesus Christ.  
Inspired by the Spirit and rooted in Christ Jesus,  
abiding in him by day and by night,  
Carmelites allow every choice and every action  
to be guided by his Word.

Inspired by the Word  
and in communion with the whole Church,  
the brothers come together to praise the Lord,  
and invite others to share in their experience of prayer.

Every day, if possible, the brothers are called,  
from solitude and from their apostolic work,  
to the Eucharist  
- source and culmination of their lives -  
so that, gathered together around the Lord's table,  
they may be "united, heart and soul,"  
living true, fraternal koinonia in unselfishness,  
in mutual service,  
in faithfulness to a common goal  
and in a spirit of reconciliation inspired by Christ's love.

As a contemplative fraternity,  
we seek the face of God and we serve the Church  
in the world or possibly in eremetical solitude.

### *3. Service in the midst of the people*

21.

As a contemplative brotherhood,  
we seek the face of God also in the heart of the world.  
We believe that God has established his dwelling place

among his people,  
and for this reason, the Carmelite brotherhood knows itself to be  
a living part of the Church and of history  
- an open fraternity, able to listen to the world it lives in,  
and willing to be questioned by it;  
ready both to meet life's challenges  
and to give an authentic, evangelical response  
based on our own charism.  
Carmelites will show solidarity and will be eager to collaborate  
with all who suffer, who hope,  
and who commit themselves to the search for the Kingdom of God.

22.

The notion of travelling, hinted at in the Rule,  
is an expression of the evangelical and apostolic style  
of the mendicant orders.  
It is a call to the Carmelite brotherhood to discern  
and to follow the ways marked out by the Lord's Spirit  
for communities and individuals;  
it is a sign of solidarity and of generous service  
- both to the Universal and local Church,  
and to the world of today.

23.

The community residence is where the community "gathers" and lives;  
for Carmelites, it is also a place of welcome and hospitality,  
so that people share in a common spirit,  
in fraternal reconciliation,  
and in the experience of God lived in the community.

24.

Finally, this way of being "in the midst of the people"  
is a sign and a prophetic witness of new relationships  
of fraternity and friendship  
among men and women everywhere.  
It is a prophetic message of justice and peace in society  
and among peoples.  
As an integral part of the Good News,  
this prophecy must be fulfilled through active commitment  
to the transformation of sinful systems and structures  
into grace-filled systems and structures.  
It is also an expression of  
"the choice to share in the lives  
of "the little ones" ("minores") of history,  
so that we may speak a word of hope  
and of salvation from their midst  
- more by our life than by our words."  
This option flows naturally from our profession of poverty  
in a mendicant fraternity,  
and is in keeping with our allegiance to Christ Jesus,  
lived out also through allegiance to the poor  
and to those in whom the face of our Lord is reflected

in a preferential way.

#### *4. Elijah and Mary, our inspirations*

25.

All that we desire and all that we wish to be today was fulfilled  
in the lives of the Prophet Elijah  
and of the Blessed Virgin Mary.  
In their own way, both had “the same spirit,  
... the same formation, and the same teacher  
- the Holy Spirit.”

By looking to Mary and to Elijah,  
we can more easily understand and internalise,  
live out and proclaim  
the truth which makes us free.

26.

In Elijah we see the solitary prophet  
who nurtured his thirst for the one and only God,  
and lived in his presence.  
He is the contemplative,  
burning with passionate love for the Absolute who is God,  
“his word flaring like a torch.”  
He is the mystic who,  
after a long and wearisome journey,  
learned to read the new signs of God’s presence.  
He is the prophet who became involved in the lives of the people,  
and who, by battling against false idols,  
brought them back to faithfulness to their Covenant  
with the One God.  
He is the prophet  
who was in solidarity with the poor and the forgotten,  
and who defended those who endured violence and injustice.

From Elijah, Carmelites learn to be people of the desert,  
with heart undivided, standing before God  
and entirely dedicated to his service,  
uncompromising in the choice to serve God’s cause,  
afire with a passionate love for God.  
Like Elijah, they believe in God  
and allow themselves to be led by the Spirit  
and by the Word that has taken root in their hearts,  
in order to bear witness to the divine presence in the world,  
allowing God to be truly God in their lives.  
Finally, in Elijah they see, not only prophetic wisdom,  
but also brotherhood lived in community;  
and with Elijah they learn to be  
channels of God’s tender love  
for the poor and the humble.

27.

Mary, overshadowed by the Spirit of God,

is the Virgin of a new heart,  
who gave a human face to the Word made flesh.  
She is the Virgin of wise and contemplative listening  
who kept and pondered in her heart  
the events and the words of the Lord.  
She is the faithful disciple of wisdom,  
who sought Jesus - God's Wisdom -  
and allowed herself to be formed and moulded by his Spirit,  
so that in faith she might be conformed to his ways and choices.  
Thus enlightened, Mary is presented to us  
as one able to read "the great wonders"  
which God accomplished in her  
for the salvation of the humble and of the poor.

Mary was not only the Mother of Our Lord;  
she also became his perfect disciple, the woman of faith.  
She followed Jesus, walking with the disciples,  
sharing their demanding and wearisome journey  
- a journey which required, above all, fraternal love  
and mutual service.

At the marriage feast in Cana, Mary taught us to believe in her Son;  
at the foot of the Cross, she became Mother to all who believe;  
with them she experiences the joy of the Resurrection.  
United with the other disciples "in constant prayer,"  
she received the first gifts of the Spirit,  
who filled the earliest Christian community with apostolic zeal.

Mary brings the good news of salvation to all men and women.  
She is the woman who built relationships,  
not only within the inner circle of Jesus' disciples,  
but, beyond that, with the people:  
with Elizabeth, with the bride and bridegroom in Cana,  
with the other women, and with Jesus' "brothers".  
Carmelites see in the Virgin Mary, Mother of God  
and archetype of the Church,  
the perfect image of all that they want and hope to be.  
For this reason, Carmelites have always thought of Mary  
as the Patron of the Order,  
its Mother and Splendour;  
she is constantly before their eyes and in their hearts  
as "the Virgin Most Pure."  
Looking to her, and living in spiritual intimacy with her,  
we learn to stand before God,  
and with one another,  
as the Lord's brothers.  
Mary lives among us, as mother and sister,  
attentive to our needs;  
along with us she waits and hopes,  
suffers and rejoices.

The scapular is a sign of Mary's permanent

and constant motherly love for Carmelite brothers and sisters.  
By their devotion to the scapular,  
faithful to a tradition in the Order, especially since the 16th century,  
Carmelites express the loving closeness of Mary to the people of God;  
it is a sign of consecration to Mary,  
a means of uniting the faithful to the Order,  
and an effective and popular means of evangelisation.

#### *5. The Carmelite Family*

28.

The many and various embodiments of the Carmelite charism  
are for us a source of joy;  
they confirm the rich and creative fruitfulness of our charism,  
lived under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit  
- a fruitfulness to be welcomed with gratitude  
and discernment.

All individuals and groups, whether institutional or not,  
which draw their inspiration from the Rule of St. Albert,  
from its tradition and from the values  
expressed in Carmelite spirituality,  
constitute the Carmelite Family within the Church today.

This Family includes ourselves  
and our brothers of the Teresian Reform;  
the women religious of both branches;  
affiliated religious congregations;  
the Third Orders Secular;  
secular institutes;  
individuals affiliated with the Order through the sacred scapular;  
and those who by whatever title or bond are affiliated with the Order;  
those movements which, though juridically not part of the Order,  
seek inspiration and support from its spirituality;  
and any man or woman who is drawn to the values of Carmel.

## **SECTION II: OUR LIFE TOGETHER**

### **CHAPTER III: Life in Community**

29.

The Holy Trinity, source and model of the Church,  
is also the source and the model of our life as brothers.  
The Trinitarian communion (koinonia) of knowledge  
and love in which we share  
comes to us as gift,  
and urges us to open ourselves to knowledge and love of God  
and of our neighbours.  
Thus, growth in knowledge and in love within each local community,  
open to the entire Order, to the Church and to the whole human race,

manifests ever more perfectly this fundamental element of our identity as brothers of Blessed Mary of Mount Carmel.

30.

Fraternal life modelled on the Jerusalem community is an incarnation of God's gratuitous love, internalised through an ongoing process by which we empty ourselves of all egocentricity - which can affect groups as much as individuals - as we move towards authentic centering in God. In this way we express the charismatic and prophetic nature of the consecrated Carmelite life, weaving harmoniously into it the personal charisms of each member, in the service of the Church and of the world.

We are therefore called to renew ourselves, as brothers in dialogue with one another, open to the signs of the times - and therefore to all people - welcoming those who are involved in our ministry, especially the young and the poor. We are also open to developing new forms of community and new ministries, that they may have a decisive impact on the Church and on society, inviting all people to conversion. Community life, lived in the spirit of Elijah and under the protection of Mary, Mother of God and our Sister, is thus the expression and the test of our fraternal love.

31.

Communal life must tend towards deeper union, in mutual knowledge and love. To this end, our life in common has moments of particular intensity and importance:

- a) in the shared participation in the Eucharist, through which we become one body, and which is the source and the summit of our lives, and therefore the sacrament of brotherhood;
- b) in communal celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours;
- c) in prayerful listening to the Word;
- d) in meetings to be held periodically, according to the Provincial Statutes, to discuss issues which concern the life of the community;
- e) in other community meetings, to be held periodically according to the Provincial Statutes, where - in a spirit of dialogue and discernment -

- we study the Rule, the writings of our mystics, and the official documents of the Church and of the Order;

- we examine our faithfulness to the charism and to the mission of the Order;

- we share our experiences;

- we develop our aims for community life; (progetto comunitario)

- we learn to read the signs of the times;
- we make pastoral choices in the context of the local Church;
- f) in the common table and recreation together;
- g) in common work, manual and other, whether within the community or elsewhere on behalf of the community;
- h) in the sharing of joys, anxieties and friendships.

32.

All our activities outside the house shall be closely related to our life within the house, and shall form with it a seamless whole. It is the very purpose of houses of apostolic Brotherhood to be present among the people: to be open and closely joined with them, stimulating a critical reflection on their human needs. In this way, our communities will be authentic expressions of faith, hope and charity, and will become places conducive to full human development.

33.

By its very nature, community life must promote human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral growth of all religious, so that they may be fully integrated into the community and into its mission, according to personal qualities and aptitudes. Thus, the expression of unity is to be sought in organic diversity - not in shapeless uniformity. Discernment at all levels must precede both the appropriate distribution of work and the community's choice of particular activities. In some cases, experts and facilitators may be called upon to assist us in community dialogue. Moreover, communities shall ensure that no member is so overloaded with work - be it apostolic or other - that community life and religious exercises become impossible or too difficult. Provincial Statutes shall stipulate the length of the annual vacation for each religious.

34.

§ 1. In order to promote the growth of the contemplative and fraternal dimensions of our lives, both excessive activity and undisciplined behaviour should be avoided, and likewise any life-style which is contrary to the deepest aspirations of the consecrated life.

§ 2. Carmelites are to be aware of the growing importance of world-wide communication in present-day society, and of the major technological innovations in this field. There is no doubt that the mass media can play an important role in evangelisation; the abuse and manipulative use of the media, however, can endanger human dignity and freedom. Our communities shall therefore evaluate the best ways to make use of the mass media,

with a view both to safeguarding the contemplative and fraternal dimensions of our lives, and to increasing the effectiveness of our apostolate.

35.

Each community shall comprise a sufficient number of friars to create an appropriate environment in which a truly fraternal life can develop.

Any friar who, for reasons of health, study, or apostolate, or for some other legitimate motive, must live outside his house, shall be attached to a well-established community, whose members shall encourage a fraternal relationship, assisting him in his activities.

For his part, as far as he can, he shall visit the community on a regular basis, and shall willingly take part in some of the community's meetings, in order to benefit more fully from the advantages of brotherhood.

36.

Hospitality is a characteristic of the fraternal life, and it is to be extended not only to the brothers within the Order and to members of their families, but also to others, insofar as possible.

37.

To ensure that the economic structure of our religious life does not resemble existing global systems of unjust inequality, fraternity within the Carmelite family should find expression in concern for and sharing with communities throughout the Order, in particular the poorer among them.

38.

It is necessary to foster attitudes of respect and gratitude towards the elderly who have spent their energies labouring for the Order and for the Church.

The community shall welcome their contribution to its activities, according to their abilities, and shall avoid evaluating individuals on the basis of such anti-evangelical criteria as efficiency and productivity.

Communities shall welcome as a gift the presence of sick brothers, seeing in them the suffering Christ.

Our brotherhood must be expressed in a very special way in the loving consideration with which we care for our sick or infirm brothers.

Communities shall ensure that these brothers lack nothing that might help them to regain their health; they shall be sent, if necessary, to clinics or places of health care, and shall have the support of every spiritual help.

39.

To pray for the dead “is a holy and pious thought”;  
we shall therefore devoutly remember in the Lord our dead brothers,  
by offering Masses on their behalf and praying for them,  
so that we may remain in spiritual union with them.  
Provincial Statutes must define the particular intercessions  
for the Supreme Pontiff,  
for dead confreres within the Province or the house,  
for members of the General Council who die in office,  
for former Generals, and for the nuns of our Order.  
The Prior General shall designate intercessions for religious  
who are not attached to a particular Province.

On the death of a confrere, the local Prior  
shall notify the Provincial Prior,  
who, in turn, shall notify the Prior General  
and every house within the Province,  
providing a brief biography of the deceased,  
to be published as soon as possible  
in the official publication of the Order.

40.

Daily conversion to the Gospel is essential  
if we are to remain faithful to our vocation to fraternal life.  
“Religious communities must be seen in the Church as prayerful  
and in a constant process of conversion.”  
We must seek concrete forms of conversion,  
above all through a constant discernment of life  
in the light of the Gospel,  
of the signs of the times, and the experience of the poor;  
and through the faithful fulfilment of our ministries,  
taking into account the circumstances and traditions  
of the local Church.  
It is left to individual communities,  
in accordance with their Provincial Statutes,  
to develop the most appropriate ways to practise the spirit of penance.  
Provided they do not contradict the prescriptions of canon law  
or of the Bishops’ Conference of the country concerned,  
norms concerning fast and abstinence  
will be determined by Provincial Statutes,  
in keeping with the Rule,  
taking into account the customs and circumstances  
of the local Church.

41.

Our religious habit is “a sign of consecration,”  
and consists of a brown or dark tunic, a scapular  
and a cappa of the same colour;  
a leather belt shall be worn over the tunic.  
Provincial Statutes may decide on a different colour,  
if this is necessary for a particular reason (for example, climate).  
On more solemn occasions, a white cloak shall be worn,

which is shorter than the tunic  
and has a white cappa of the same shape as the dark one.  
Wearing of the habit inside or outside the house  
is a matter to be decided by the Provincial Statutes,  
with due regard for the rights of the local Ordinary.

42.

In every house, there shall be an area for the brethren.  
Its extent shall be determined by the community.  
All friars shall respect the rules which apply  
to this reserved area of the house;  
for a just reason, the Prior may allow exceptions to these rules.

#### CHAPTER IV: Evangelical Counsels and Vows

43.

The essence and foundation of consecrated life  
is the radical following of Jesus Christ.  
The evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity,  
publicly professed in the Church,  
are a radical form of witness to the following of Christ.  
As we follow the obedient, poor and chaste Christ,  
we become less focussed on ourselves,  
and we orient ourselves in history to the search  
for the Kingdom of God.

44.

Our consecrated life,  
configured to the life of Christ  
by means of the three evangelical counsels  
taken on by the vows, and by other evangelical values,  
is a gift from God.  
Its motivation is not that “of the world,”  
yet it places us in the world as witnesses to the value of life itself  
as a precious gift.  
This value, lived in the spirit of the beatitudes,  
transfigures the world according to the Father’s design.

##### *1. Obedience: hearing and discerning God’s plan*

45.

By means of religious obedience, genuinely observed in deeds,  
we surrender our will fully to God.  
Christ Jesus is the source and the reason of our obedience.  
He lived his freedom not in self-sufficiency and personal autonomy,  
but in obedience to the Father.  
Christ’s obedience was not only a commitment to do his Father’s works,  
it was also a faithfulness to humanity  
and to the salvation of all.  
Jesus obeyed because he loved his Father,

and because he loved us. Jesus was wholly of God,  
and wholly for people.  
The only purpose of his life was to bring about the Kingdom of God,  
and to this goal he remained faithful unto death.

46.

The Spirit of Jesus lives in us;  
we are not under the law, but under grace.  
Allowing the Spirit to guide us,  
we shall be taught to discern the will of God,  
and we shall be led to the complete truth.

For us today, following Christ in his obedience  
means listening together to the word of God,  
received and lived in the Church;  
learning to read the signs of the times  
in order to discern the will of God today,  
and fulfilling faithfully, day by day,  
whatever mission he entrusts to us.

This involves a constant and profound process of transformation  
in order to internalise the will of God,  
which is always creative and life-giving,  
so that we may not only freely choose to act in accordance with the divine commandments,  
but being purified we may adhere more and more fully  
to the God who loves us.

47.

We commit ourselves to obey God's will not only as individuals,  
but also as a community.  
It is in community that together we seek to know the will of God.  
We engage in this search in a spirit of mutual discipleship and co-responsibility,  
as we listen to and fulfil the Word of God,  
read in the light of the signs of the times  
and in keeping with the charism of the Order.  
In this way, we are brothers in obedience; side by side and together,  
we face the challenges of the Gospel  
and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

48.

The Prior, conscious of the presence of Christ  
and of his Gospel at the heart of the community,  
shall place himself at the service of God's will  
and at the service of his brethren,  
guiding them to mature and responsible obedience to Christ,  
through dialogue and timely discernment,  
while remaining firm in his authority  
to decide and to command what must be done.  
In the community, the Prior must be a stimulus  
to live out our charism;  
he must be a sign and a bond of unity.  
The brothers are to "hold their prior humbly in honour,

thinking not so much of him  
as of Christ who placed him over [them].”

49.

In grave cases, a major superior may impose a precept  
(praeceptum) on a member,  
by virtue of the vow of obedience.  
Such a precept shall be given in writing  
or in the presence of two witnesses.

## 2. Poverty: sharing and solidarity

50.

Jesus Christ the poor man, was born and lived in lowliness.  
During his life on earth, he chose to be deprived  
of all worldly riches, power and prestige.  
He took the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are,  
and identified with the “little ones” and with the poor.  
He shared all of his life with his disciples;  
he shared his Father’s plans, his mission, his prayer.  
In this way, he became not only their master,  
but their friend and brother.  
On the cross, in keeping with the Father’s plan,  
Jesus experienced absolute nakedness and radical poverty.  
From the cross he gave himself up completely,  
for the sake of humanity.  
Rich though he was, Jesus became poor for us,  
so that, through his poverty, we might be made rich.

51.

As they followed Jesus, the poor man,  
the early Christian communities, inspired by  
fraternal communion (koinonia),  
lived and pursued a sharing of all material and spiritual goods.

52.

As we follow Jesus and take as our model  
the life of the primitive Church,  
we too wish to embrace willingly the gift  
of the evangelical counsel of poverty,  
by our vow to hold all things in common,  
and by declaring that no object belongs to any of us personally.  
We believe that all we have is gift, and that all we have  
- all the spiritual, material, and cultural goods  
that are obtained by our labour -  
must be freely returned, in whatever way can best serve the good of  
the Church and of our Order,  
for the human and social development of all.

53.

Poverty is a complex and ambiguous reality.  
When it is the absence of the necessary means for survival,

resulting from injustice or personal and social sin, it is an evil.  
But it can also be a Gospel form of life adopted by those  
who trust in God alone, sharing all their possessions,  
identifying with the poor in a spirit of solidarity,  
renouncing all desire for dominion or self-sufficiency.  
In contemplation, we internalise the authentic attitude of poverty,  
which is a deep process of inner self-emptying  
through which we become less and less in control  
of our own activity and ideas,  
of our virtues and of our ambitions,  
as we open ourselves to God's action.  
In this way, we become truly poor as Christ was poor,  
even to the point of not owning the poverty we have chosen  
in this process by which God's love empties us.

54.

Thus, we who freely chose poverty as our evangelical lifestyle  
feel called by the Gospel and by the Church  
to awaken people's consciences  
to the problems of destitution, hunger and social injustice.  
We shall accomplish this purpose if  
- first and foremost -  
our own poverty witnesses to the human meaning of work  
as a means of sustaining life and as service to others;  
if we undertake to study and to understand  
the economic, social and moral causes of that poverty  
which stems from injustice;  
if we use our possessions with restraint and simplicity,  
making them available to others, even free of charge,  
in the service of the human and spiritual development  
of our fellow men and women;  
and, finally, if we engage in healthy and balanced discernment  
with regard to the ways in which we are present among the people,  
choosing ways which foster the liberation  
and the integral development of human beings.

55.

Hence, solemnly professed religious  
shall have no personal material possessions;  
whatever they receive shall belong to the house, to the Province,  
or to the Order, according to these Constitutions  
and the Provincial Statutes.

56.

Without prejudice to the canonical validity  
of all that is set forth in article 55,  
in countries where civil law does not recognise  
the effect of solemn profession, members may perform  
certain juridical acts (donations, wills, etc.) in civil courts  
and with civil validity, in favour of the house, the Province,  
or the Order.

In those cases where civil law does not even recognise the house, the Province, or the Order as juridical persons, members may act, in civil courts, as if they were owners, but always without prejudice to the canonical validity of the laws set forth above.

57.

In our use of material goods, it is our responsibility before God to observe faithfully the poverty which we have freely professed, keeping in mind that we make the vow of poverty in order to live a simple life, individually and within our communities, avoiding whatever might offend the sensibilities of the poor. Provincial Statutes shall decide what amount should be made available to each religious for his personal expenses, taking into account that needs may differ from one country to another. Rules concerning fasting and abstinence, set forth in article 40, should also encourage us to live simply and to help the poor.

58.

Let us remember that in our time the best way to make manifest our vow of poverty is to faithfully fulfil the common law of work. Let us, therefore, embrace with enthusiasm the precept of the Rule, which invites us to work assiduously, for we know that by our toil we co-operate in God's work of creation and, at the same time, develop our own personalities; by our active charity we assist our confreres, and all others; and we contribute to the good of the Order. Moreover, we perpetuate the dignity Jesus gave to work - for he never disdained manual labour - and we follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose life on earth was full of ordinary concerns and work.

### *3. Chastity: celibate for the Kingdom*

59.

The God of the Kingdom and the Kingdom of God are the essential points of reference and the universal framework for our celibate lives, and for all Christian existence. "Only God's love can call us decisively to religious chastity. This love demands a fraternal charity so powerful that it will lead religious to live more deeply with their fellow men and women in the heart of Christ. The gift of self, to God and to others, will then be the source of profound peace."

60.

Christ Jesus, the chaste man, dedicated himself wholly to the cause of the Kingdom.

He loved everyone, especially the “little ones” and the poor.  
His love was never possessive: it was liberating,  
totally dedicated to the service of his brothers and sisters.  
His life was limpid and the epiphany of the face of the Father.

61.

As we follow Jesus in his chastity,  
our celibacy also takes on the quality of a full and total love for God  
and for every human being.  
Aware of God’s love, which stands over every individual,  
Carmelites must be continually transformed  
by this disinterested and unconditional divine love.  
Such internalisation occurs through a process  
of continuous transformation of all our affectivity,  
so that we become truly chaste through full personal development.  
Through the power of such chaste and undivided love,  
our interpersonal relationships grow in truth and in transparency.  
In a world often torn by struggle and division,  
the one who is new and chaste in the Spirit  
is the epiphany and radiance of the liberating presence of our Lord.

62.

Love lived out in celibacy has for us  
- as it had for Jesus -  
both mystical value and social or political value:  
it is at the same time the undivided love of God  
- the only Absolute who gives meaning to our existence -  
and a preferential, gratuitous and liberating love  
for the humble and the poor,  
in order that the values of the Kingdom of God  
- equality, solidarity, and dignity of the human person -  
may take root and spread throughout the human community.

63.

The charism of consecrated chastity is a gift from God;  
but we know that we carry this gift in earthen vessels,  
that is, in our weak and fragile humanity.  
For this reason, we feel the need to live according to values  
which promote a balanced and mature integration of our affectivity  
and of our capacity for a tenderness with evangelical attitudes,  
in a way that is coherent with our way of living.

If our celibate life, chosen for the Kingdom,  
is to be a suitable vehicle for our maturity as human beings  
and for our growth in faith,  
we need to be instructed,  
first of all in authentic brotherly love;  
in communication and community dialogue;  
and in the ability to love others not possessively,  
but appreciating them as persons.  
We must learn also the meaning of gift, of gratuitous service,  
and of straightforwardness in friendships.

Finally, we must come to understand silence  
as attentiveness to the Word,  
and Christian asceticism as that which purifies our feelings  
and re-establishes our authentic relationships with others,  
sharing in the Cross of Christ,  
who carried to the limit his selfless love for his Father  
and for his brothers and sisters.

## CHAPTER V: Prayer

### *1. Prayer in general*

64.

The Holy Trinity draws us into communion with themselves  
and with one another, in faith, in hope and in charity.  
These virtues are experienced, nourished and expressed in prayer,  
as we turn our attention to God, in adoration and in love,  
in obedient listening, in sincere contrition,  
and in hope-filled petition.

Prayer is the fruit of the action of the Holy Spirit in us  
and in our lives.

It is the Spirit who gives us words when we can find no words;  
who leads us to unity with the entire Church;  
who helps us to deepen our experience of intimacy with God.

The Carmelite tradition of prayer is built  
on the concrete prayer experience of its members throughout history.

This experience tells the story of the loving presence of God  
in the lives of Carmelites,  
so that they can say, with the psalmist,  
“O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together,”  
and

“O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.”

From the beginning, the Carmelite Order has taken on both  
a life of prayer

and an apostolate of prayer.

Prayer is the centre of our lives,  
and authentic community and ministry spring from this source.

The prayer of the Carmelite community is  
a sign of the praying Church to the world.

It recalls the example of Mary, Mother of Jesus,  
who “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart,”  
praising the wonders that the Lord had worked in her.

By meditating and entering ever more deeply into  
the mystery of Christ,  
we become more obedient in following him,  
deepening our commitment to work as his disciples

for the redemption of humanity.

In the Our Father, Jesus taught us to pray in a way that unites heaven and earth.

Thus in our spirituality we integrate our love for the world and our sense of the transcendent.

65.

Seeking inspiration in the authentic sources of Christian spirituality, we bring together our sense of God and our human experience.

When we pray, we keep in mind the needs and the concerns of the world we live in, together with an awareness of our own calling to serve all the members of the Church.

This may require communities to search for new ways of praying, such as shared meditation, communal biblical prayer, and also other new forms.

66.

Prayer can assume a variety of forms, according to the needs of the community and of each individual; it is nourished by the constant search for God, supported by lectio divina, by study, by meditation and by the sacraments.

This constant search for God must be the foundation and the highest expression of community life.

67.

The silence of solitude which individuals and communities must cultivate makes us docile to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

In all the houses of the Order we must therefore create and foster an atmosphere of silence, recollection and solitude.

This will enable us to engage more easily in personal prayer, and to make our study and other activities more fruitful.

However, specific norms on such matters shall be decided by local Chapters, according to the Provincial Statutes.

68.

It is extremely desirable that wherever possible Provinces and Regions establish and develop centres of spirituality, retreats and study, and to make these available, both to the brethren and to others who are drawn to the spirituality of our Order, for retreats and spiritual exercises.

Moreover, regional and international co-operation among existing spirituality centres and houses of study shall be promoted.

## *2. Liturgical prayer*

69.

As in the primitive Church, as religious we are called to celebrate together the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours. Liturgical prayer is the highest form of communal encounter with God, and brings about what it celebrates. Personal prayer is intimately linked with liturgical prayer; one flows from the other.

70.

The daily celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is to be “the centre and the culmination of the life of the community.” It is our way of expressing our desire to go with Christ to the Father. We offer him in total sacrifice our daily lives intimately united with Christ's paschal mystery, so that we may be perfected daily in union with God and with one another, through Christ the Mediator, and so that God may finally become all in all. In the celebration of the Eucharist, as we share in the table of the Lord and participate in the effects of Christ's sacrifice, community is built, and our unity with the entire family of believers is established and made manifest.

71.

The sacred liturgy unites us with the apostolic witness and with the faith of the entire Church. Communal liturgical celebrations are moreover a central characteristic of our Rule. In addition to a diligent preparation of our liturgies, we must grow in love for liturgy and in our concern for its renewal. In this way, we hope to deepen our contemplative participation in the mystery which we celebrate.

72.

The public prayer of the Church is the manifestation of our participation in the Church at prayer, which, together with Christ, “is ceaselessly engaged in praising the Lord and interceding for the salvation of the entire world.” From its pre-eminence as the public and official prayer of the Church, it is a fruitful source for the spiritual life of those who share in it.

“The Liturgy of the Hours extends praise and prayer to the different hours of the day, making present the mysteries of salvation, the prayers of intercession, and the foretaste of heavenly glory which are offered to us in the Eucharistic Mystery.” Together with the Eucharistic celebration, the Liturgy of the Hours unfolds for us continuously throughout the liturgical year

the mysteries of the redemption  
accomplished for us by Our Lord Jesus Christ,  
so that we may encounter them and thus be filled  
with the grace of salvation.

73.

The Liturgy of the Hours is to be celebrated in common;  
provision should therefore be made to allow  
all members to participate.  
Where special difficulties exist in a particular community,  
at least Morning and Evening Prayer shall be recited in common every day.

Those parts which, for whatever reason, are not recited in common,  
shall be said in private.

74.

In places where we engage in pastoral work,  
it is fitting that we celebrate some part of  
the Liturgy of the Hours with the faithful.

75.

We shall confess our sins frequently to the Church  
in the sacrament of reconciliation,  
also celebrating it communally in keeping with the practices  
of local Churches.  
We shall thus obtain forgiveness  
through God's mercy  
for the offences we have committed against him,  
and shall at the same time be reconciled with the Church.

76.

Every member of the Order can confess to any priest  
in full communion with the Church;  
by virtue of these Constitutions, the priest immediately receives  
the necessary jurisdiction, if there is need of such.

### *3. Personal prayer*

77.

Christians are certainly called to pray together;  
however, they must also draw apart and pray to the Father in secret.  
The practice of the presence of God,  
which is a Carmelite tradition,  
has become increasingly difficult in these modern times.  
We must therefore make special efforts to help one another  
to seek God through prayer  
that is intimately linked with ordinary daily life.  
In the same way Carmelites are called to a deeper experience  
of those forms of prayer  
which are most in harmony with our own particular spirituality.  
We are encouraged to seek new forms of prayer in line with our charism.

78.

Spiritual formation shall be closely linked with doctrinal and pastoral formation, and shall be presented in such a way that it may teach us to live in intimate communion and friendship with the Father, through his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. Let us live the paschal mystery and seek Christ in our daily lives; in active participation in the Eucharist and in the Liturgy of the Hours; In people, especially the poor, the sick, children and those who have no faith. Our entire lives must be imbued with a deep religious sense, so that we may view the events of our own lives and of the world around us in the light of God. Thus our whole life must be deeply contemplative, so that we may come to see all that happens as if with the eyes of God.

79.

Contemplation in the Carmelite tradition is truly a free gift from God. God takes the initiative, he reaches out to us and fills us ever more deeply with his life and his love; we respond to him by allowing him to be God in our lives. Contemplation is an attitude of openness to God, whose presence we discover everywhere. In this way we follow the examples of the prophet Elijah, who ceaselessly looked for God, and of Mary, who pondered all things in her heart.

80.

Silent prayer is of great assistance in developing a spirit of contemplation; we should therefore practise it daily for an appropriate length of time.

81.

A life of prayer also requires us to examine our way of life in the light of the Gospel, so that prayer may influence both our personal lives and the lives of our communities.

82.

Lectio divina is an authentic source of Christian spirituality recommended by our Rule. We therefore practise it every day, so that we may develop a deep and genuine love for it,

and so that we may grow in the surpassing knowledge of Christ.  
In this way we shall put into practice  
the Apostle Paul's commandment,  
which is mentioned in our Rule:  
"Let the sword of the spirit, the Word of God,  
live abundantly in your mouth and in your hearts;  
and whatever you must do,  
do it in the name of the Lord."

It is suggested that lectio divina be practised communally  
on a regular basis,  
so that the brethren may share their experience of God  
and respond together to the challenges of his Word.

83.  
The reading of spiritual books,  
especially the works of authors of our Order,  
is highly recommended.

84.  
Retreats and days of recollection shall be decided by communities,  
according to the guidelines given in the Provincial Statutes.

The one indispensable thing is  
that prayer permeate our lives,  
so that, in faith, hope and charity,  
we may be able to glorify the name of the Father on earth,  
in union with Christ. "We must pray at all times!"

#### *4. Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Saints*

85.  
During her life on earth,  
the Blessed Virgin Mary showed herself to be  
the perfect image for the disciple of Christ.  
For this reason, in her apostolic mission  
the Church follows the example of the Virgin Mother of God  
- the perfect model of the following of Christ -  
especially in her commitment to our redemption,  
which Mary actively participated in from her "Fiat" to the Incarnation,  
to her presence at the foot of the Cross,  
and in her solidarity with the first Christian community  
gathered in prayer.

86.  
Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary,  
and the obligation to spread this devotion,  
are intrinsic parts of the Order's mission within the Church.  
In keeping with the intention of the Church itself, therefore,  
let us generously promote veneration of the Blessed Virgin,  
especially in the liturgy.  
The example of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

as it emerges from the liturgy itself,  
will inspire the faithful to imitate their Mother  
and, through her, her Son.  
This will lead them to celebrate the mysteries of Christ  
with the same dispositions and attitudes  
with which the Virgin contemplated  
her Son in Bethlehem, in Nazareth,  
and in his self-emptying,  
and exulted together with all of her new children  
at his Resurrection.

We have great respect for the pious practices and devotions  
to Mary recommended over the centuries  
by the teaching authority of the Church.  
While traditional forms of Marian devotion  
(such as the wearing of the scapular  
and the recitation of the Holy Rosary)  
should be preserved, new ones may also be introduced.

87.

As Carmelites, we express our devotion to  
the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel  
by celebrating her Commemoration every year with special solemnity.  
All other Marian feasts included in the liturgical calendar  
shall also be celebrated solemnly  
and, when liturgical law permits,  
the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin of Mount Carmel  
and the Office of Mary are recommended on Saturdays.

Moreover, it is recommended  
that each community gather daily to sing  
the Flos Carmeli (Flower of Carmel),  
the Salve Regina (Hail Holy Queen),  
or some other Marian antiphon,  
in keeping with the liturgical season.

88.

During the liturgical year, the Church celebrates  
the paschal mystery of Christ  
realised in the saints.

Carmelites are called to celebrate their saints with particular devotion,  
finding in them the most intense and authentic expression  
of the charism and spirituality of the Order through the centuries.

The feast of the prophet Elijah  
and the memorial of the prophet Elisha,  
and the feasts of the protectors of the Order  
- St. Joseph, St. Joachim and St. Anne -  
are to be celebrated with particular solemnity.

89.

The Carmelite scapular is a sacramental of the Church;  
as such, it is a fitting symbol

to express our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary  
and the affiliation of the faithful to the Carmelite Family.  
The scapular calls to mind the virtues of the Blessed Virgin  
with which we are to clothe ourselves  
- in particular, intimate union with God  
and humble service to others in God's Church,  
in the hope of eternal salvation.

90.

The Marian shrines in which we exercise our apostolate  
and to which the faithful traditionally come in large numbers,  
are to be held in high regard.

They are to become more and more centres  
where the Word is prayerfully heard  
and where there is liturgical life  
with appropriate celebrations (Eucharist and Reconciliation).

In particular, our shrines shall increasingly become  
centres of reflection

on the path taken by Mary  
and centres of evangelisation,  
with special attention to popular devotion to the one  
who is Mother of God,  
of the Church, and of all humanity.

Shrines also have an exemplary function:  
they are places of welcome, attracting vocations;  
places of solidarity, providing services to needy brothers and sisters;  
places of ecumenical commitment with meetings and prayers.

## CHAPTER VI: Our Apostolic Mission - General Considerations

91.

Our Carmelite mission shares in the mission of Jesus,  
who was sent to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God  
and to bring about the total liberation of humanity  
from all sin and oppression.

Our ministry as Carmelites is, therefore an integral part  
of our charism.

We are guided in this by the teaching of the pastors of the Church;  
by our tradition

and by the values it upholds;

by the signs of the times;

and above all, by attentive listening to the Word,

having regard also for its interpretation

from the perspective of the poor.

We are to evaluate and renew our service (diakonia) in the Church,  
so that we may better respond to the questions raised

by the cultural, social and religious circumstances of the people.

In our mission, we must take into account

the talents and charisms of the brethren,

and be aware of the natural limitations of our contribution.

92.

We Carmelites must fulfil our mission among the people first and foremost through the richness of our contemplative life. Our prophetic action may take many and different forms of apostolic service. Since not all forms of apostolic work easily fit in with our charism or with the resources of an individual community, we must always discern among the various options presented in any given situation.

93.

Inspired by the fundamental directions of our charism and by present-day ecclesial and social contexts, the following guidelines are offered for the discernment of our apostolic mission:

- a life of brotherhood and prayer in the midst of the people;
- a response to the needs of the local and universal Church;
- a preferential service to the poor and the marginalized;
- a special attention to issues concerning women;
- a commitment to justice and peace;
- a care for those who show an interest in the spirit, the spiritual heritage, and the life of Carmel.

In these ways we commit ourselves to listening to God, as he speaks to us in Scripture and in the history of our people.

94.

We shall therefore study needs and demands, both religious and social, in every time and place so that we may strengthen our witness to a spirit of community among all the People of God, by means of various appropriate apostolic activities, initiated and implemented in a spirit of fraternal co-operation.

95.

Faithful to the spiritual heritage of the Order, we shall therefore channel our diverse works to the goal of promoting the search for God and the life of prayer. In our various apostolates we shall be inspired by Mary: her presence among the Apostles; her motherhood of the Church, which she received at the foot of the Cross; her attentiveness to the Word of God, and her total obedience to the divine will. To this end, we shall foster and nourish among the people the memory of Mary and devotion to her.

96.

In the Scriptures and in Carmelite tradition, the prophet Elijah is respected as the one who in various ways knew how to read the new signs of the presence of God and who was able, not least,

to reconcile those who had become strangers or enemies.

As Carmelites, heartened by this example  
and by our strong desire to put into practice our Lord's teachings  
of love and reconciliation,  
we shall take part in the ecumenical movement  
and in inter-religious dialogue,  
promoted by the Second Vatican Council.  
Through the former we shall promote relationships  
with the Orthodox and other Christians.  
Through the latter we shall promote dialogue at various levels  
with Jews and Muslims,  
with whom we share devotion to the prophet Elijah as a man of God;  
we shall enter into dialogue also with Hindus and Buddhists  
and those of other religions.

Moreover, Carmelites are to make themselves available  
to accompany those who genuinely desire  
to experience the transcendent in their lives  
or who wish to share their experience of God.

#### CHAPTER VII: Our Apostolic Mission in the Local Church

97.

While preserving its universal character,  
the Order shall endeavour to be fully involved  
in the life of local Churches.  
This implies close co-operation with the various elements  
of these Churches.  
Within local Churches, we shall offer the contribution of our charism  
to the task of evangelisation  
by fostering a deeper grasp of the contemplative dimension of life,  
of fraternity, and concrete commitment to justice.

98.

To the extent that it is possible, we shall be prepared to undertake  
- in keeping with the legal and pastoral provisions of the Church  
and of our Order -  
various forms of apostolate requested by the Church,  
in accordance with the needs of time and of place.  
We achieve this through parish work,  
service to the faithful in churches,  
instruction of young people in schools and elsewhere,  
preaching of retreats, study, spiritual direction,  
guidance about spiritual problems,  
and other initiatives.

99.

Guided by the Magisterium,  
by the official documents of the Order,

and by the signs of the times,  
we shall willingly invite and introduce the faithful  
to our rich tradition and to the experience of contemplation.  
We shall encourage lay people to develop  
their own particular gifts and charisms  
so that they may be involved in the mission of the Church.  
Let our mission,  
inspired by the criteria set forth in articles 93 and 97,  
be one that both evangelises and is evangelised within the Church  
- a mission that is particularly concerned  
for those who have lost their way.

100.

We also accomplish our mission through the work we do in parishes  
in response to the pastoral needs of local churches.  
A new parish is accepted by means of a written agreement  
which shall be drawn up, in accordance  
with the requirements of canon law,  
between the Prior Provincial, with the express consent of his Council,  
and the local Ordinary.

Provincial Statutes shall define the criteria to be applied  
when accepting parishes.

101.

If a parish is erected in a church belonging to the Order,  
the above agreement must clearly define the relationship  
between the parish and the religious community,  
particularly with regard to the use of the church  
and to financial matters.

102.

§ 1. For the conferral of offices in a diocese,  
the Prior Provincial, after consultation with his Council,  
shall admit or present to the bishop those brethren  
who give sufficient evidence of suitability.  
§ 2. As religious, those friars who are engaged in diocesan duties  
in accordance with some agreement remain subject  
to the authority of their own superiors.  
In matters pertaining to their duties,  
they are subject to the authority of those  
in whose service they are employed.

103.

Those who are engaged in any type of ministry within a diocese  
are subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop,  
in keeping with canon law,  
in all matters pertaining to the faithful execution  
of their pastoral duties.

104.

Provincial Statutes may determine whether or not

the offices of pastor and local prior may be held by the same person, and set the maximum time for which a religious may hold the office of parish priest in the same parish; they may also define the relationship between the parish priest and the community of religious, as regards co-operation in the apostolic activities of the parish.

105.

The mission ad gentes  
- in other words, the task of announcing the Gospel  
in places where it is not known -  
is one of the fundamental activities of the Church,  
for the Church is missionary by its very nature.  
The main agent of the mission ad gentes is the Holy Spirit,  
who inspires Provinces and Commissariats  
to appoint members to this task.  
It is the Spirit who gives the missionary charism  
to those who are sent.  
In this work the Order recognises “immense opportunities  
in such areas as charity, evangelical proclamation,  
Christian education, culture,  
and solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed,  
and those who suffer discrimination.”

All our communities shall support this essential task  
with their prayers and by encouraging the faithful  
to become personally involved  
and, according to their circumstances, to provide material help.

Missionary work requires a specific spirituality  
and a process of inculturation;  
we are confident therefore, that the mission ad gentes  
will reveal the heart of the Carmelite charism in a new way  
for the good of the Church and of the Order.

## CHAPTER VIII: Concern for the Carmelite Family

106.

The Apostle enjoins us to do good to everyone,  
especially our brothers and sisters in the faith.  
Therefore, the members of the Order shall develop  
a love and concern for those who are inspired  
by the same Carmelite ideal.  
Since the Carmelite charism is given to the whole Carmelite family,  
all its members have an important role in the formation of others  
in whatever sphere these are found,  
so that the various expressions of Carmelite life  
may be mutually enriched.

107.

We shall accompany the Carmelite nuns  
and we shall support each other as far as possible.  
A Provincial Delegate for the nuns shall be appointed in each Province  
in accordance with the Provincial Statutes,  
in provinces where there is at least one monastery of Carmelite nuns.

In addition, a General Delegate shall be appointed,  
who shall be responsible for developing relationships  
between monasteries and exchanging information.

The General Delegate shall work in collaboration  
with the Religious Federal Assistant, where there is one.

108.

Mutual co-operation with the sisters of institutes affiliated with the Order  
is to be promoted.

109.

The Carmelite Order is enriched by the faithful who,  
inspired by the Holy Spirit, order their lives according to the Gospel  
and in the Carmelite spirit.

The Third Order and the other forms of Carmelite laity  
influence the spirit and the structure of the entire Carmelite family.

Let us help them to reach the goal they have set for themselves:  
of healing and developing human society  
through the leaven of the Gospel.

A General Delegate shall be appointed for the various forms of Carmelite laity.  
Provincial Statutes shall provide for delegates at other levels.

## CHAPTER IX: Our Apostolic Mission and the Promotion of Justice and Peace throughout the world

110.

Christ did not bring about the salvation of the human race  
as an outsider or as a stranger to the history of the world.

On the contrary, he identified both with his people  
and with the whole human race.

Those who “claim to be followers of Christ must heed his call,  
especially when he says:

‘I was hungry and you gave me to eat;  
I was thirsty and you gave me to drink;  
I was a stranger and you welcomed me;  
I was naked and you clothed me;  
I was sick and you visited me;  
I was in prison and you came to me.’”

111.

We live in a world full of injustice and disquiet.  
It is our duty to contribute to the search for an understanding

of the causes of these evils;  
to be in solidarity with the sufferings of those who are marginalized;  
to share in their struggle for justice and peace;  
and to fight for their total liberation,  
helping them to fulfil their desire for a decent life.

112.

The poor, the “little ones” (minores),  
constitute the vast majority of the world population.  
Their complex problems are linked and, to a large extent,  
are caused by current international relations  
and, more directly, by the economic and political systems  
which govern our world today.  
We cannot turn a deaf ear to the cry of the oppressed  
who plead for justice.

113.

We must hear and interpret reality from the perspective of the poor  
- of those who are oppressed by the economic and political systems  
which today govern humanity.  
Their problems are many, and we must set priorities  
in responding to them.  
In this way, we shall rediscover the Gospel as good news,  
and Jesus Christ as the liberator from all forms of oppression.

114.

Social reality challenges us.  
Attentive to the cry of the poor, and faithful to the Gospel,  
we must take our stand with them,  
making an option for the “little ones”.  
“There is a growing desire within the Order to choose solidarity  
with the “little ones” of history,  
to bring to our brothers and sisters  
a word of hope and salvation from their midst,  
more by our lives than by our words  
... We recommend this option for the poor,  
because it is in keeping with the charism of the Order,  
which can be summarised as  
'a life in allegiance to Jesus Christ';  
allegiance to Jesus also means allegiance to the poor  
and to those in whom the face of Christ is mirrored preferentially.”

115.

Our Elijan inspiration, which our prophetic charism is founded on,  
calls us to walk with the “little ones”  
along the paths the prophet travelled in his time  
- along the path of justice, opposing false ideologies  
and moving towards a concrete experience of the true living God;  
along the path of solidarity,  
defending the victims of injustice and taking their part;  
along the path of mysticism,  
struggling to restore to the poor faith in themselves

by renewing their awareness that God is on their side.

116.

To prepare and educate ourselves so that we may take on  
“the circumstances of the poor” in an evangelical manner,  
we propose to re-read the Bible,  
also from the perspective of the poor,  
of the oppressed and of the marginalized;  
to consider the Christian principles of justice and peace  
as an integral part of our formation at every level;  
to immerse ourselves in the circumstances of the poor;  
to use the tools of social analysis, in the light of faith,  
as a means to discover the presence of sin  
incarnated in certain political, socio-economic  
and cultural structures;  
to defend and to encourage even the smallest traces of vitality.