

RULE AND CONSTITUTIONS
OF THE
DISCALCED NUNS
OF THE
ORDER OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
OF MOUNT CARMEL

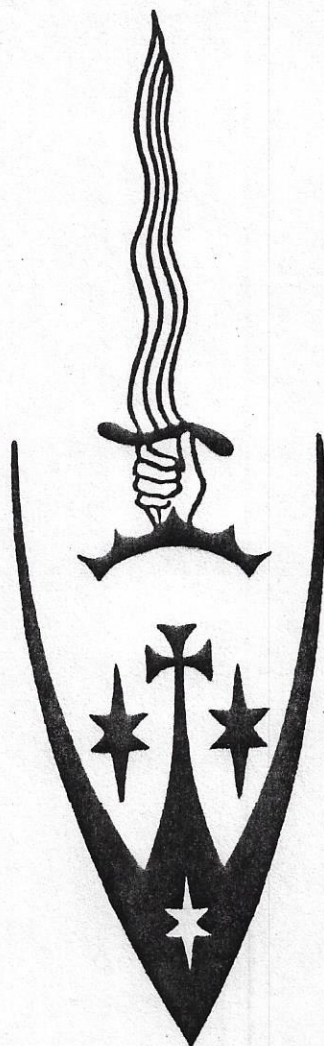


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OF THE ORDER OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF MOUNT CARMEL

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CONSTITUTIONS

THAT THE HOLY MOTHER TERESA OF JESUS GAVE TO HER NUNS

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**RULE AND CONSTITUTIONS
OF THE
DISCALCED NUNS
OF THE
ORDER OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
OF MOUNT CARMEL**

for the monasteries of Discalced Carmelites

(according to Canon 615)

accommodated to Vatican Council II

and to the current canonical laws

according to the norms given by

His Holiness John Paul II

on the 15th of October 1984

PROLOGUE

The Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelites were written by Saint Teresa of Jesus for the Nuns of her first foundation of Saint Joseph's of Avila, with the expressed permission of His Holiness Pius IV, granted in the Brief of foundation, February 7, 1562. They were first approved by the Bishop of Avila, Don Alvaro de Mendoza, and afterwards by the Reverend Father John Baptist Rubeo of Ravenna, General of the Carmelite Order.¹ In a Brief granted by Pius IV, July 17, 1565, he said: "With Apostolic authority, we determine that such Constitutions and ordinances which have been drawn up, as well as those which have been changed, amended, altered and rewritten, must be strictly observed".²

The Discalced made copies of the original of the Primitive Constitutions, which has not been preserved, and observed them faithfully in all the new foundations. Some clauses were added, but they seem to be by the Saint herself and from her pen, "therefore, these Constitutions must be held as her own and absolutely to be called those of the Saint".³

The Nuns were governed by these Constitutions until the year 1581 in which, the Discalced having been erected as a separate Province, held their first Chapter in Alcala de Henares. In the Chapter, the same Constitutions which the Saint had written for Saint Joseph's were officially approved.⁴ They had been carefully revised by the Saint herself during the months which preceded the Chapter, as can be seen in her letters.⁵ The text was worked out by Father Gratian from the original of our Holy Mother, was enriched by her fourteen years of experience as Foundress, and finally, was endorsed by the signature of Saint John of the Cross.⁶ These are, then, the most genuine expression of the Teresian Charism, as the Holy See has recently affirmed.⁷

¹Cf. Fr. Ephrem of the Mother of God, *Complete Works of Saint Teresa*, p. 629.

²Cf. Fr. Silverio of St. Teresa, BMC vol. II p. 163.

³Cf. Fr. Jerome of St. Joseph, *History of the Reform*, Vol. IV, chapter 7, no. 4.

⁴Ibid. IV, Ch. 2.

⁵Cf. *Letters*, 351, 352, 358, etc.

⁶Cf. Fr. Thomas Alvarez, *Saint Teresa of Jesus, Constitutions of 1581*, Prologue. Facsimile edition.

⁷Cf. Letter of Cardinal Casaroli to the Prepositor General of the Carmelite Order, Oct. 15, 1984.

With the approval of the Constitutions, the Holy Mother received one of the greatest joys of her life;⁸ she did not rest until she saw them printed, which was achieved before the end of the year, and she observed them faithfully until death. She carried them with her on her journey to Burgos and on her last journey to Alba de Tormes, and there, on her death bed amidst her ardent longings of love for God, she exhorted her daughters to keep them⁹ as the only way for them to sanctity:

"My daughters and my ladies; I beg you for the love of God to take great care to keep the Rule and Constitutions".¹⁰

The Constitutions, then, are the most concrete form of the Teresian ideal; in them one virtually meets Saint Teresa¹¹ and they are, as are all her works, the fruit of the Spirit of God, Whose Word will never pass away. This is how generations of Carmelites have seen it, and this reality has made them hold them as a sacred heritage.

Certainly, in the course of four centuries the Constitutions have been subjected to various modifications or adaptations, but these changes have always been of a non-essential nature and sanctioned by the authority of the Holy See.

The latest of these adaptations took place in 1926 owing to the codification of Canon Law; the adaptation was carried out with the greatest care, "for fear lest the venerated text which the Holy Mother, inspired from Heaven, had composed with so much precision and had observed, should be altered".¹² Although the redaction, having been written in Italian, was not literally the same as that of Alcala, the content was identical; the new text coincided point for point with the one of 1581.

Approved by His Holiness Pius XI, the Constitutions of 1926 are the ones which the Carmelites professed and lived until Vatican Council II permitted some experiments in order to bring about an adequate renewal of the religious life.

⁸Foundations, 29, 31; Cf. Fr. Siverio of St. Teresa, *History of the Discalced Carmel*, Tome IV, Ch. XXVI, p. 543.

⁹Cf. Fr. Thomas Alvarez, "Prologue" to the *Constitutions*.

¹⁰*Processes of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, Deposition of Constance of the Angels, BMC, Tome I, p. 103; Cf. Deposition of Mary of St. Francis, Tome III, p. 219; *Life of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, Fr. Ribera, p. 335.

¹¹Cf. Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, *Spiritual Commentary on the Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns*.

¹²Fr. William of St. Albert, Superior General of the Order, *Constitutions of 1926*, Prologue.

At the conclusion of the time appointed for the said experiments, our venerated Pontiff John Paul II, at the request of the Reverend Father Prepositor General of the Carmelite Order, deigned to assign the norms which were to direct the definitive legislation of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns for their adaptation to Vatican Council II and to the new Code of Canon Law.

In complete fidelity to the directives of His Holiness, the Constitutions of 1581 were newly adapted and these, together with the Primitive Rule and the prescriptions of the present Code of Canon Law pertaining to autonomous monasteries, to which Canon 615 refers, constitutes the fundamental Code for the Discalced Carmelite Nuns.

The specifications which different times, places, and mentalities can impose, will be inserted in additional Codes in accordance with norms of Canon 587. Preceding the entire legislation is an introduction which puts in relief the perennial timeliness of the Teresian Carmel and the perfect harmony between the Decrees of the Council and the teaching of the Holy Doctor.¹³

These are, then, essentially the same Constitutions which Saint Teresa of Jesus gave to her daughters, by which Carmelite Nuns scattered throughout the entire world have lived for four hundred years. The way of unsurpassable sanctification, accessible to peoples of every race, language, town, and nation, the Constitutions are as authentic now as when they were written, and they keep on giving to the world Carmelite saints whom the Church, by solemnly proclaiming their glorification, has proposed as models for our times.

From all that has been set forth, we conclude that the Constitutions of Saint Teresa, without doubt, belong to that "doctrine proved by the attainment of perfection" which the Council considered as one of the patrimonies of religious institutes and one of the greatest benefits which they ought to guarantee to their members.¹⁴ They are, therefore, the only valid means by which the Carmelite Nuns can continue their service to Holy Mother Church, since "the hope of renewal is to be placed rather in the better observance of the Rule and Constitutions than in the multiplication of laws".¹⁵

¹³Cf. Letter of Cardinal Casaroli, Oct. 15, 1984.

¹⁴Cf. Paul VI, Apost. Exhort., *Evangelica Testificatio*, 37.

¹⁵Vat. Con. II, Dec., *Perfectae Caritatis*, 4.

INTRODUCTION
EVANGELICAL AND THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES
AND SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES
OF THE TERESIAN CHARISM

THE ORDER OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY OF MOUNT CARMEL
AND THE RESTORATION BY SAINT TERESA OF JESUS

- The Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel - Origins and development - The Rule of Saint Albert - Return to the sources - The Constitutions of Saint Teresa of Jesus - The Discalced Carmelites - Unity of doctrine and juridical separation

The Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, as its very name gives us to understand, was instituted to honor the Mother of God.¹ A tradition of many centuries identifies the first Carmelites with the hermits of Mount Carmel, disciples of the prophets Elijah and Elisha.

In the Prophet Elijah, whom Sacred Scripture presents on the summit of Mount Carmel in profound prayer,² burning with zeal for the glory of God and living continually in His presence,³ the Order recognizes the inspiration of the Carmelite life, dedicated to contemplation in solitude. Elijah accomplishes his work and disappears "leaving behind him a spiritual following".⁴

For centuries the eremitical life flourished on the slopes of Mount Carmel. Subsequently the cenobitical life was organized and about the year 1210 the Superior, Brother Brocard, asked and obtained from the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Saint Albert, a Rule which confirmed and expressed concretely their purpose of living in "obedience to Jesus Christ". In passing to the West, the Rule suffered some modifications and the Carmelites adopted a mixed life, of both action and contemplation, although with great emphasis on the contemplative spirit.

The Rule, which had already been approved by Pope Honorius III was again approved by Innocent IV, with some changes which did not affect the first one in anything essential; and the Order spread rapidly throughout Europe where it acquired an extraordinary prestige because of its great intellectual figures and, above all, its saints.

¹Cf. Innocent IV, *Ex parte dilectorum* of Jan. 13, 1252, in An. OC 2, 1928; Urban IV, *Quoniam ut ait* of Feb. 20, 1263, (Bull Carm., 1, 28).

²Cf. 1 Kgs. 18:36,37.

³Cf. 1 Kgs. 18:15; 19:14.

⁴Cf. 2 Kgs. 2:15,16.

The Primitive Rule offers the members of the Carmelite Order a tested doctrine for attaining perfection.⁵ In it is emphasized as the principal end, the following of Christ, which the Council prescribes for institutes of consecrated life.

In order to achieve this end, the Rule imposes the profession of the evangelical counsels: chastity offered to God, poverty, and obedience; counsels which, as they are founded on the words and examples of Our Lord and recommended by the Apostles, by the Fathers and Doctors and Pastors of the Church, are a divine gift which the Church received from Our Lord and, with His grace, preserves perpetually.⁶

In order to preserve this "divine gift", the Rule prescribes solitude in the cell in order to live "meditating day and night on the Law of the Lord and watching in prayer".⁷

The center of this life is Sacred Scripture, the source at which contemplative prayer and ecclesial prayer according to the prescriptions of the Sacred Liturgy are nourished. To live in obedience to Jesus Christ demands that the soul strive to free itself from the impediments which could separate it from the fervor of charity.⁸ That this may be achieved, the Rule adds to the observance of the evangelical counsels diligent work and penance, expressed concretely in abstinence and fasting, silence and guarding the senses. Moreover, it exhorts being on guard against dangers and temptations and defending oneself from the snares of the enemy.

The Rule of the Order of Carmel not only promotes the heroic exercise of the virtues, but also encourages one to advance more and more on this road.

A supernatural prudence ought to moderate such an austere and penitential form of life, but no limits ought to be placed on its demands which are a consequence of the following of Christ. "If anyone does more, Our Lord will reward him at His coming".⁹

The terrible disturbances which Europe suffered toward the end of the Middle Ages had repercussions on religious Orders, and the Carmelites, alleging the need to dedicate themselves more to the

⁵Vat. Con. II, Dog. Const., *Lumen Gentium*, 43.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Rule of Saint Albert, 4.

⁸Vat. Con. II, Dog. Const., *Lumen Gentium*, 44.

⁹Rule of Saint Albert, 15.

active life, sought greater amplitude regarding retirement in the cell, and fast and abstinence. The Rule was mitigated by His Holiness Eugene IV in the year 1431 and, with the exception of some provincial reforms which were not of a definitive character, it was observed in this way throughout the Order until the foundation of the Carmel of Saint Joseph in Avila, August 24, 1562.

Saint Teresa of Jesus, delving into the primitive inspiration of her institute, the spirit of its founders and its sound traditions, places before her daughters as an ideal the holy hermits of Mount Carmel who spent their lives in obedience to Jesus Christ and His most holy Mother: "Let us remember our holy fathers of the past, those hermits whose lives we aim to imitate. What sufferings they endured! What solitude, cold, and hunger, and what sun and heat, without anyone to complain to but God!"¹⁰

With admirable balance and supernatural prudence, Saint Teresa adapted (as the Second Vatican Council would later ask) this kind of life to the circumstances of a convent of Nuns. Besides prayer and contemplation, she preserved the eremitical spirit, solitude and silence, absolute poverty, austerity and penance.

In conformity with the Rule,¹¹ she presents the Prioress as the center and soul of community life, a life founded on charity and joyfully enclosed by voluntary cloister.¹²

She recommends humility as the foundation of all the other virtues, especially of charity and a free and generous obedience. Finally, she gives to it all an apostolic and ecclesial meaning, with its own characteristic stamp of simplicity and radiant joy.

Thus she establishes in her monasteries an admirable kind of life, in which her Nuns "seek and love, before all else, God Who first loved us, and they zealously foster a life hidden with Christ in God, from which love of neighbor flows and is impelled, for the salvation of the world and the edification of the Church."¹³

In order to consolidate her work and to complete the details for which the Rule did not provide, Saint Teresa wrote Constitutions which were the most concrete creation of the practical genius of the holy Reformer. Although inspired by the Ancient Constitutions, she stamps them with her own personal characteristics and the ardent warmth of her own divine love.

¹⁰Way, 11, 4.

¹¹Rule of Saint Albert, 5, 18.

¹²Cf. Foundations, 31, 46.

¹³Vat. Con. II, Dec., *Perfectae Caritatis*, 6.

These constitutions - together with the Rule - have been the Law by which the Discalced Carmelite Nuns were governed from their beginnings and which, on her death bed, Saint Teresa left them as a heritage.

The stature of the saints which Carmel has given to the Church shows clearly the perfection of the laws by which they sanctified themselves.

In this way, Saint Teresa of Jesus not only returned to the primitive spirit and fervor, but did much more: she renewed the spirit of Carmel by her own ardent desires for perfection, enriched it with her own holy life and mystical experiences, and then unsurpassably explained them in her writings. She founded a religious family in the Church, a shoot - the most illustrious - from the venerable trunk of Carmel, and she gained for the Order Fray John of the Cross, to whom she herself taught the Carmelite ideal of which the Saint will later be the consummate master, bequeathing to the treasury of the Church marvelous treatises, some of which were written at the request of the Discalced Nuns and dedicated to them.

To preserve and to transmit this type of consecrated life and this doctrine, which the Church has made current by honoring its holy founders with the title of Doctor, is the principal duty of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns.

It all constitutes the patrimony of our Institute, of which Holy Mother Church has said through His Holiness Paul VI: "A doctrine proved by the attainment of perfection is considered by the Council as one of the patrimonies of Institutes and one of the greatest benefits which they must guarantee you."¹⁴

The origin of the Reform of the Carmelites of the old observance was also due to a divine inspiration, which met with a generous acceptance in the heart of Saint Teresa of Jesus in spite of her presentiment that it was going to cost her much labor.

The Saint was convinced that only those who were living the same life as that which the Discalced Carmelite Nuns were living, would be able to help them on their spiritual road.¹⁵ Assuming that this condition was not at that time fulfilled in the Carmelite Fathers, who professed the mitigated Rule, she asked permission of the Father General of the Order, Fray John Baptist Rubeo of Ravenna, to found two houses of reformed friars. The Saint gave the greatest importance to the choice of subjects who were to make the beginning, since she desired friars with the courage necessary

¹⁴Cf. Paul VI, Apost. Exhort., *Evangelica Testificatio*, 37.

¹⁵Cf. *Foundations*, 2, 5.

to "further the austerity which was needful,"¹⁶ and she was not entirely satisfied until Providence put in her path Saint John of the Cross. The Saint herself taught him the kind of life and fraternal character of her Carmels¹⁷ which he afterwards implanted in Duruelo, Mancera, and Pastrana. In this way, it became the life of the Discalced Carmelite Friars, a faithful copy of that of the Carmelite Nuns, without any difference other than a certain apostolic activity for the Professed. Thus the reform of the Discalced Carmelite Friars came into being six years after that of the Nuns. Saint John of the Cross was the first Master of Novices and also the first spiritual director of the Carmelite Nuns.

The growth of the Reform during the following thirteen years was extraordinary, in spite of the difficulties inseparable from the want of juridical independence. Resting on the provisions of the Council of Trent, which decreed that Superiors of Religious should profess the same Rule as their subjects,¹⁸ Saint Teresa worked untiringly until she brought this about. In 1580 she obtained from His Holiness Gregory XIII a Brief in which the separation of the Calced and Discalced was ordered, erecting the latter into a separate Province, with the power - among others - to make Constitutions of their own. The desire of Saint Teresa was at last going to be fulfilled, namely, that her Constitutions would be confirmed by the Church. The first General Chapter of the Discalced Carmelite Friars took place in Alcala de Henares, March 13, 1581. The Constitutions, which the Saint had written for her Nuns, were approved, having previously been put in order by the Chapter Fathers and completed by other norms then in force in the Church; Constitutions were likewise drawn up for the Friars, inspired by the Mother Foundress and very similar to those of the Nuns.¹⁹

Saint Teresa saw in such a separation a great benefit for the Order of Carmel. They would all be able now to serve God in peace, Calced and Discalced, and she could sing her "Nunc Dimitis".²⁰

Two years later, the Holy Mother took her flight to Heaven. The last words she spoke were to proclaim her love and submission to Holy Mother Church and to earnestly recommend to her daughters

¹⁶Cf. *Foundations*, 3, 16.

¹⁷Ibid., 10, 4; 13, 5.

¹⁸Cf. Fr. Silverio of St. Teresa, *History of the Discalced Carmel in Spain, Portugal, and America*, Bk. IV Ch. XIV. Ed. *El Monte Carmelo*, Burgos, 1926.

¹⁹Cf. Ibid., Carmelite Mystic Library (BMC), Tome IV p. 447 ff.

²⁰Cf. *Foundations*, 29, 32; Mary of St. Joseph, *Book of Recreations*, p. 150, Ed. *El Monte Carmelo*, Burgos, 1913.

the observance of the Rule and Constitutions, the observance of which, it seemed to her, was enough to canonize them.²¹

Saint Teresa left this place of exile with the consolation of seeing realized her first inspiration to undertake the reform of the Friars. From that moment the Carmelites could be governed by those who were living their own life.

This latter was, in what refers to the Nuns, the new element in the Constitutions of Alcala. The profound modifications introduced today in the legislation of the Carmelite Fathers have been the cause of such dependence losing its purpose. Actually, the monasteries of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns are autonomous and their juridical dependence differs according to their status.²²

United to their Carmelite brothers by such sacred bonds as those we have just recalled, they labor "to respond adequately to the intense urgencies which spring from a love wholly given to Christ and an unreserved surrender to the mission of the Church."²³

This has confirmed the timeliness of the Teresian Carmel, persuasively recommending all Carmelites to be faithful to the charism of their holy Foundress and reminding them of her words:

"All of us who wear this holy habit of Carmel are called to prayer and contemplation (cf. Interior Castle, V, 1, 2)'.

"It is necessary, then, that Carmelite Friars and Nuns, faithful to the life of prayer and its exercise, persevere in their vocation in order that they may attain that knowledge of the living God which must be their title to glory, their specific vocation, their providential mission.

"Let them exert themselves to be, with greater earnestness, adorers in spirit and in truth, as the Father seeks, with the conviction that this itinerary of the "Way of Perfection" will not only be of profit for their own souls, but also for the welfare of many others, as Saint Teresa affirms (cf. Life, 11, 4)".²⁴

²¹Cf. Fr. Silverio of St. Teresa, BMC, Tome II p. 242, Deposition of Mary of St. Francis.

²²Canons 614, 615.

²³John Paul II, "Letter to the Discalced Carmelites", May 31, 1982, AAS74 (1982) 836-841.

²⁴John Paul II, *Virtutis exemplar et magistra*, AAS73 (1981) 692-700.

II

JESUS CHRIST, CENTER OF THE LIFE CONSECRATED TO GOD IN CARMEL

The love of Jesus Christ in Our Holy Mother Saint Teresa of
Jesus - Jesus Christ, Master and Model of holiness - Jesus
Christ, Master of prayer - Jesus Christ only Mediator -
Following Christ - Union with Christ and apostolic
fruitfulness.

The religious state is that "which most closely imitates and perpetually represents in the Church that form of life which the Son of God chose to live in the world in order to fulfill the will of the Father and which He proposed to the disciples who wished to follow Him".¹ Among these disciples, Saint Teresa of Jesus stands out preeminently. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was for her the Way, Truth and Life; Lord and Master, Teacher and Model, Spouse and Friend, Good of all goods, and only love of her heart.

The foundations of her love for Jesus Christ are profoundly theological. She knows that Christ is one with the Father,² that He is so powerful that what He says on earth will be done in heaven,³ that all our blessings have come through Him.⁴ She knows that - as the Council has defined - He is the "only Mediator"⁵ between men and the Father, and that "God is very pleased to see a soul that humbly takes His Son as Mediator".⁶ She knows that Jesus Christ is the great revelation of the love God has for men: "Your Father gave You to us; may I not lose, my Lord, so precious a jewel".⁷ Finally, she knows that if anything appeases His Majesty and withholds the hand of His justice, it is "to have such a pledge here below".⁸

Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Second Vatican Council has

¹Vat. Con. II, Dog. Const., *Lumen Gentium*, 44.

²Cf. *Way*, 27.

³Ibid.

⁴Cf. *Life*, 22, 4; *Int. Cast.* VI 7, 15.

⁵Vat. Con. II, Dog. Const., *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

⁶*Life*, 22, 11.

⁷*Exclamations of the Soul to God*, 14, 2.

⁸*Way*, 35, 4.

defined, preached holiness of life of which He is the Teacher and Model.⁹

In perfect harmony with the decree of the Council, Saint Teresa did not conceive of any other way of becoming holy. She affirms that His Majesty was always her Teacher,¹⁰ and that many of the things she taught her daughters had been told her by her heavenly Master.¹¹ She affirms that the same will happen to them, because this Master of Wisdom teaches many things to anyone who wishes to be taught by Him.¹²

Commenting on the Our Father, she urges them to consider "Who the Master is Who taught this prayer";¹³ because there is a great deal of difference between one master and another, and this One, Who loves us so much, will help you to learn His lessons.¹⁴

"Keep at the side of this good Master, then, and be most firmly resolved to learn what He teaches you. His Majesty will then ensure your not failing to be good disciples, and He will never leave you unless you leave Him. Consider the words uttered by those divine lips, the very first of them will show you at once what love He has for you, and it is no small blessing and joy for the pupil to see that his master loves him".¹⁵

This "good Master" must necessarily be also a model for those who let themselves be taught by Him. That is why Saint Teresa asked her daughters never to tire of looking at Him. Fixing the eyes on Christ, our Good, they will learn true humility.¹⁶ Beholding Him before the judges, all labors will be easily suffered;¹⁷ looking at Him on the Cross so poor and naked they will

⁹Cf. Vat. Con. II, Dog. Const., *Lumen Gentium*, 40.

¹⁰Cf. *Life*, 12, 6.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 39, 8.

¹²*Way*, 21, 4; 6, 3.

¹³*Ibid.*, 24, 2.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 24, 3; 21, 4.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 26, 10.

¹⁶Cf. *Int. Cast.*, I 2, 11.

¹⁷*Life*, 22, 6.

learn to love poverty;¹⁸ and seeing Him obedient unto death, they will not wish to go any other way than that which was His.¹⁹ She also wishes them to look at our Model, Christ, so as to learn to undertake the labors of life which is so long, as He undertook them,²⁰ because fixing the eyes on Christ Crucified all will seem little.²¹

Prayer according to Saint Teresa, is nothing else but this company with Jesus Christ, "our Companion, Saint of Saints",²² this looking to Christ and considering His Life and His example so as to conform ours to His.²³

"I am not asking you now to think of Him ... or to make great and subtle meditations with your understanding. I am asking you only to look at Him.... See, He is only waiting for us to look at Him, as the Bride says. If you want Him, you will find Him".²⁴

"If ... to think of the Passion cannot be endured because it is so painful, who will prevent us from being with Him in His risen state? We have Him so near in the Blessed Sacrament, where He is already glorified and where we don't have to gaze upon Him as being so weary, and torn to pieces, His blood streaming, exhausted by His journeys, persecuted by those for whom He did so much good, and not believed in by the Apostles ... Behold Him here without suffering, full of glory, before ascending into heaven, strengthening some, encouraging others, our companion in the most Blessed Sacrament; it doesn't seem it was in His power to leave us for even a moment".²⁵

"According to the Teresian definition, prayer, which is 'a friendly conversation with God', requires in advance a certain living presence of Him 'Whom we know loves us' and Who is the constant protagonist of the dialogue, the friend Who speaks to us 'without the noise of words' (cf. Way 25, 2) and Who gives Himself to us in an ineffable manner.

¹⁸Ibid., 35, 3.

¹⁹Foundations, 5, 3.

²⁰Cf. Int. Cast., VI 7, 13.

²¹Ibid., VII 4, 8.

²²Way, 29, 4.

²³Ibid., 22, 7.

²⁴Ibid., 26, 3.

²⁵Life, 22, 6.

"Saint Teresa sees prayer as a supreme manifestation of the theological life of Christians who 'believing in love, endeavor to free themselves from everything in order to be able to attain that presence full of love' in which 'the mind and heart are fixed on the Most Sacred Humanity', on 'the Good Jesus', the 'Door' which leads to the Father and through which God introduces us into His intimacy".²⁶

"What more do we desire than to have such a good friend at our side...? Blessed is he who truly loves Him and always keeps Him at his side".²⁷ "If you accustom yourself to have Him at your side, and He sees that you try to please Him, you will not be able - as they say - to send Him away; He will never fail you; He will help you in all your trials; you will find Him everywhere".²⁸

This way of prayer is not only for those who are beginning. The Saint thinks that it must be followed at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end, and must not be left off even in the highest states of prayer. The thought of separating oneself from Christ for an instant "she cannot endure".²⁹

"For that reason, this mistress of prayer never separates herself from Christ, from the most Sacred Humanity of the Son of God; His friendship and His company illumine the pathways of her spiritual life up to the sublime experience of the Mystery of the most Holy Trinity. There the creature contemplates how these Persons of the Trinity 'never seemed to leave her anymore, but she sees clearly that they are in the interior of her soul, in the very, very, interior, in some place very deep within ... she perceives in herself this divine company' (Cf. Mansions VII 1, 7)".³⁰

Vatican Council II, confirming the doctrine of the Church, has again proclaimed Jesus Christ as the "Only Mediator".³¹ Our Holy Mother was so sure about this truth, that she defended it with the greatest energy before the theologians of her day.

"I see clearly", she writes, "and since that time have always seen, that it is God's will, if we are to please Him and He is to

²⁶John Paul II, *Virtutis exemplar et magistra*.

²⁷*Life*, 22, 7.

²⁸*Way*, 26, 1.

²⁹*Life*, 22, 6.

³⁰John Paul II, *Virtutis exemplar et magistra*.

³¹Vat. Con. II, Dog. Const., *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

grant us great favors, that it should be through His Most Sacred Humanity, in Whom, His Majesty says, He is well pleased. I have seen it by experience very many times; the Lord has told me so. I have seen clearly that we must enter by this door if we desire His Sovereign Majesty to show us great secrets. Thus Your Reverence should desire no other path, even if you are at the summit of contemplation. On this road you walk safely. This Lord of ours is the One through Whom all blessings come to us".³²

If Saint Teresa wishes her daughters to take Christ for their model, it is in order that they may follow Him more closely, and she exhorts them with fiery emphasis:

"Take up that cross, daughters, never mind if the Jews trample upon you, if His pain can thereby be lessened. Pay no attention to what they say to you; be deaf to their murmuring; stumbling, falling with your Spouse, do not draw back from the cross or abandon it".³³

As a consequence of these desires, she establishes in her "little dove-cotes" a poor and penitential way of life. She returns to the austerity of the Primitive Rule and she adds to it in her Constitutions other austerities which seem to her necessary in order to observe it with greater perfection.³⁴ According to the Saint, for a soul that truly loves Christ, "its pleasure is in somehow imitating the laborious life which Christ lived".³⁵ If she would have to choose the road by which to go to God, "I would always choose that of suffering, if only to imitate Our Lord Jesus Christ",³⁶ - because she sees "that there are few souls who accompany Him and follow Him in His trials"³⁷ and because Our Lord came into this world solely to suffer, and the more anyone imitates Him in that, the more glory he will have.³⁸ For this reason she exclaims: "Let us go together, Lord; wherever You go, I must go; whatever You suffer, I must suffer".³⁹

³²*Life*, 22, 6.

³³*Way*, 26, 7.

³⁴*Cf. Life*, 36, 27.

³⁵*Conceptions of the Love of God*, 7, 8.

³⁶*Int. Cast.*, VI 1, 7.

³⁷*Way*, 35, 2.

³⁸*Letters*, 347.

³⁹*Way*, 26, 6.

Thus lives Saint Teresa! Jesus Christ is her model, her companion on the way, her confidence, her breath, her joy, her rest. Her supreme longing is to see Christ: "What will it be when we see the eternal Majesty!"⁴⁰ Her hope is knowing that she is going to be judged by Christ Whom she has loved above all things⁴¹ and her consolation is the conviction she has that "in eternity, the dwellings correspond to the love with which we have imitated the life of our good Jesus".⁴²

From all that has been set forth here, it can be deduced that Saint Teresa of Jesus restored in the Church a type of life which marvelously adapts itself to the ideal of consecrated life put forward by the Council. Certainly, whoever dedicates her entire life to the consideration of the life of Jesus Christ and to follow Him, "lives more and more for Christ and for His Body which is the Church".⁴³

Here again, it is seen that the end of the reform of Saint Teresa is eminently ecclesial. The Discalced Carmelite Nuns will have the duty, above all, to be ardently united to Jesus Christ⁴⁴ in order that from such union "this hidden apostolic fruitfulness"⁴⁵ may be brought forth, which the Church in our times requires of monasteries of the contemplative life and which it has always recognized as the fruit of a life consecrated to God in Carmel.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ *Poems*.

⁴¹ Cf. *Way*, 40, 8.

⁴² *Foundations*, 14, 5.

⁴³ Vat. Con. II, Dec., *Perfectae Caritatis*, 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴⁶ John Paul II, "Letter to Discalced Carmelites", May 31, 1982.

III

THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN MARY, QUEEN AND MOTHER OF CARMEL

The Order of Saint Mary of Mount Carmel - The holy Scapular - Saint Teresa of Jesus, daughter of the Virgin - Devotion to the most holy Virgin, a renewing force in our life - Veneration of Mary in Carmel and its theological value - Saint Joseph, Father of the Discalced Carmelites and their Lord.

The most holy Virgin Mary, incomparable model for all souls leading a contemplative life, is especially so for Carmelites, "daughters of the one Order which from its beginning was formed as 'all Mary's'".¹ For this reason, the Church has always considered Carmel as an Order dedicated in a particular way to the love and service of the Immaculate Mother of God. Its history and its traditions have been bound to her with such sweet knots that without love for Mary, Carmel ceases to be Carmel.

In the book, *The Institutions of the First Monks*, we can follow, step by step, the development of the Marian tradition in Carmel since the first centuries. It is love for Mary which has interlaced history with tradition, giving us a picture of the dwellers of Mount Carmel gathered in caves around the "grotto of the Madonna", venerating the Mother of God, the Queen and Lady of that holy mountain.

Later, it is the same Blessed Virgin who honors her sons with a most sweet sign of her predilection: the holy Scapular, given by her to the General of the Order, St. Simon Stock, as a sign of brotherhood. The image of the most holy Virgin, clothed with the habit of the Order, not only occupied the place of honor in Carmelite churches, but it also spread throughout the entire world. Entrusted with propagating this devotion, which took deep root in the heart of Christian peoples, the Carmelites became messengers of the most holy Virgin and the holy Scapular, which having repeatedly received the blessing of Supreme Pontiffs and been recommended by them, saves the children of the Virgin from a thousand dangers and causes many souls, separated from God, to return to Him.²

Saint Teresa of Jesus, from the beginning of her renewal, felt her soul full of love for Mary. "In her endeavors to restore the Order to its primitive fervor, our Holy Mother desired to strive solely 'for the service of Our Lord and the honor of the habit of His glorious Mother' (Life 36, 6), and in founding the convent of

¹Cf. John Paul II, "Letter to Discalced Carmelites", May 31, 1982.

²Cf. Innocent IV, *Ex parte Dilictorum*, Jan. 13, 1252 in AnOC 2, 128; Urban V, *Quoniam ut ait*, Feb. 20, 1263, (Bull of Carmel 1, 128).

Saint Joseph in Avila, her most ardent desire was that 'this Rule of Our Lady and Empress be observed with the perfection with which it began' (Way 3, 5). Our Lord Himself encouraged her in this attitude when at the completion of this foundation, He thanked her 'for what she had done for His Mother' (Life 34, 24).

"Numerous other circumstances of her life prove how the charism of Teresa of Jesus is really under the sign of Mary. In the year 1562, the great Saint received from her, so to speak, investiture as Reformer (Life 33, 14), and she once renewed her Vows in her hands (Relations 48). It is no cause for wonder, therefore, to hear how repeatedly Saint Teresa calls her Nuns, 'daughters of the Virgin', (Life 32, 11; 33, 14; 36, 6; 24, 28; Way 13, 3; Mansions III, 1, 3; Foundations 19, 5; 21, 21) and exhorts them in these words: 'Since you have so good a Mother imitate her and consider what must be the greatness of Our Lady and the blessing it is to have her for a patroness' (Mansions III 1, 3)".³

The old motto "Carmel is all Mary's" is revived again with greater vigor in the Teresian Carmels, in which the holy Foundress establishes a kind of life which ought to resemble, in what is possible, that which the Mother of God lived on earth. For that reason, she calls her Carmels "little dovecotes of the Virgin", to point out that in them - in what is possible - the life of Nazareth ought to be renewed, and that the virtues characteristic of Carmel are those which were practiced in that holy house, from which was carried out a marvelously fruitful apostolate, which is the specific apostolate of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns.

"Devotion to the most holy Virgin constitutes a force in the renewal of Christian Life",⁴ and even more so in consecrated life. For that reason, without doubt, the Supreme Pontiff counsels Carmelites to "meditate, in imitation of the Holy Mother, on the mystery of Mary, whose heart is in intimate union with Christ, that they may become a fountain of life for the Church (cf. *Redemptor Hominis* 22), under the radiating light of their vocation, with its demands for solitude, silence and total sacrifice, being convinced, at the same time, of their secret fruitfulness, which is all the more urgent because the 'world is in flames' (Way 1, 5) and great dangers threaten it".⁵

³John Paul II, "Letter to Discalced Carmelites", May 31, 1982.

⁴Cf. Paul VI, *Apost. Exhort., Marialis Cultus*, Feb. 2, 1974, AAS66 (1974).

⁵Cf. John Paul II, "Letter to Discalced Carmelites", May 31, 1982.

Mary's mission toward Carmel has this end: to reproduce in her children the spiritual features of her first born Son.⁶ Hence Carmelites, especially consecrated to the most holy Virgin by religious profession, place their life in Mary's hands as the most certain means for arriving at the full knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. 4:13).⁷

The exemplary holiness of the Virgin moves them to lift their eyes to Mary, who shines as a model of the evangelical virtues they must practice: faith and docile acceptance of the word of God, generous obedience, simple humility, diligent charity, thoughtful wisdom, piety towards God that is prompt in fulfilling religious duties and grateful for blessings received ... fortitude in time of sorrow, poverty borne with dignity and confidence in Our Lord, watchful care towards her Son from the lowliness of His birthplace to the ignominy of the cross, provident delicacy ... virginal purity.⁸

Her daughters will be adorned with these virtues of the Mother of Carmel if, with firm purpose, they contemplate her example in order to reproduce it in their own life; and progress in virtue will be the consequence and the mature fruit of veneration paid to the Virgin.⁹

Devotion to the Mother of Our Lord will thus be converted for them into an occasion for growing in divine grace and it will contribute to their living their own vocation with greater earnestness, since this latter consists essentially in divine intimacy, and it is impossible to honor her who is full of grace without honoring in themselves the state of grace, that is friendship with God, communion with Him, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.¹⁰

This maternal mission of the Virgin prompts Carmelites to go with filial confidence to her who is always disposed to receive them with the affection of a Mother and with the efficacious help of an auxiliatrix,¹¹ bearing always in mind the words she addressed to the servants at the wedding at Cana: "Do whatever He tells you" (Jn. 2:5), words which accord with the voice of the Father on

⁶Cf. Paul VI, Apost. Exhort., *Marialis Cultus*, 57.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

Tabor: "This is my beloved Son, hear Him" (Mt. 17:5).¹²

Let the most holy Virgin, then, be the one to teach Carmelites how to fulfill the will of her Son; and let her intercession support their weakness and obtain from Him the full realization of their mission in the Church, to which they have been called by a divine vocation.

Saint Teresa of Jesus, in giving her daughters the most holy Virgin for a Mother and Model, has left them Saint Joseph for a Father and Lord, because "I do not know how anyone can think of the Queen of Angels during the time she went through so much with the Infant Jesus without giving thanks to Saint Joseph for assisting them so well".¹³ She wished the Carmelites to go to him in their needs, since she knew by experience that he gives help in every thing, because Our Lord, as He was subject to him on earth, also does in Heaven everything he asks. She especially desires them to take him for their master in prayer, that they may learn from him the continuous colloquy with Our Lord and the virtues proper to a life hidden with Christ in God.¹⁴

¹²Ibid.

¹³Life, 6, 8.

¹⁴Ibid., 6, 7.

IV

SAINT TERESA OF JESUS, DAUGHTER OF THE CHURCH

Timeliness of the Teresian Carmel - The essence of the religious state: "God loved supremely" - A sacrifice of praise - Contemplation and apostolic love - The Church and its mystery - The evangelical counsels and purification of the heart - The Teresian renewal, service to the Church.

In the Second Vatican Council, His Holiness Paul VI insists on "the obligation for religious men and women to be faithful to the spirit of their founders, to their evangelical purposes and to their example of holiness".¹ The most certain criterion to achieve the adequate renewal of religious life in the Church is to compare this spirit with the conciliar documents on which hinges all consecrated life.

Saint Teresa of Jesus "daughter singularly loved by divine Wisdom, is a rivulet which conveys to the source, a radiance which leads to the light. And her light is Christ, the Teacher of Wisdom, the living Book in which she learned truth; He is the light of Heaven, the Spirit of Wisdom Whom she invoked that she might speak in His name and her pen be guided by Him".² "Saint Teresa of Jesus is living; her voice still resounds in the Church today".³ "Four centuries after her death she appears before us haloed by this ecclesial light".⁴ In proclaiming her a Doctor of the Church, the Church has wished to emphasize the message she transmits to us, that she may have a more authorized mission to accomplish within her religious family and in the whole world.⁵

We are going to confirm these truths by briefly comparing some ideas expounded in the conciliar documents, with those which she explains in her writings.

The Sacred Council defines the religious state by saying that it is "by the vows or by other sacred bonds of a similar nature that a Christian binds himself to the practice of the three

¹Paul VI, Apost. Exhort., *Evangelica Testificatio*, 11.

²John Paul II, Homily at the Mass for the closing of the Fourth Centenary of the death of St. Teresa of Jesus, Nov 1, 1982, in Avila.

³Ibid.

⁴John Paul II, *Virtutis exemplar et magistra*.

⁵Ibid.

evangelical counsels aforementioned consecrating himself wholly to the service of God Who is supremely loved".⁶

The entire charism of Saint Teresa, therefore, and her initial inspiration for renewal proceed from this one source; love of God, a love which embraces everything, invades everything, vanquishes everything. God is for the Saint the Spouse supremely loved, and her soul is so enamored that she has left all the pleasures of the world for love of Him.⁷ She would wish to be consumed in loving Him;⁸ she would wish to suffer all the trials in the world in order to have the eternal joy of one degree more of that love. God heeds her desires in such a way that she herself is conscious of that love growing ever more and more.⁹ For long years she applies herself in praying for it, freeing herself from all obstacles which draw her away from the fervor of charity.¹⁰ Then God begins more and more to communicate Himself to her soul, bestowing on her the greatest graces to the point that she would feel in herself "a love of God so great that I knew not who had infused it".¹¹

Four centuries before the Council defined the contemplative life as a most excellent sacrifice of praise, Saint Teresa of Jesus "would wish not to do or say anything other than praise Our Lord";¹² "I wish to consume myself in the praises of God".¹³ In her Carmels it is her great consolation to see "these souls so pure, praising God".¹⁴ It is "that Our Lord may be praised"¹⁵ that she writes the history of her foundations. "I would wish to shout the praises of God"¹⁶ and so she often makes exclamations like

⁶Vat. Con. II, Dog. Const., *Lumen Gentium*, 44.

⁷Cf. *Conceptions of Love of God*, 4, 6, 7.

⁸Cf. *Life*, 8, 6.

⁹Cf. *Life*, 29, 4.

¹⁰Cf. Vat. Con. II, Dog. Const., *Lumen Gentium*, 44.

¹¹*Life*, 29, 8.

¹²*Conceptions of Love of God*, 4, 3.

¹³*Relations*, 39.

¹⁴*Foundations*, 18, 5.

¹⁵*Foundations*, Prologue 3.

¹⁶*Life*, 16, 3.

these: "I praise You Lord, and I bless You forever";¹⁷ "Be praised, O Joy of the Angels!"¹⁸

The Saint knows that "God is the last end and 'reason for existence' of the contemplative life"¹⁹ and that He deserves "infinitely that at least some among the beings He has created for His glory, should have as their only aim to live with their heart and soul fixed on Him".²⁰

The love of God will afterwards redound to the benefit of neighbor, and the greater its purity, the more efficacious will be its apostolate. For that reason, when Our Holy Mother arrives at the peak of love for God, in the spiritual marriage, God speaks to her about the mission for which he has destined her and about her vocation in the Church; "As a true spouse, you will be zealous for My honor".²¹

There is fulfilled in her the teaching of the Council on consecrated souls which says: "impelled by the love which the Holy Spirit has poured into their hearts, they spend themselves ever increasingly for Christ and for His Body, the Church",²² and "the more fervently they join themselves to Christ by the gift of their whole life, the fuller does the Church's life become and the more vigorous and fruitful its apostolate".²³

Yet it is not enough for the Holy Mother to live solely for God in order to love and praise Him; she desires that everyone praise Him and she strives for this with all her strength. Feeling in herself the hunger the saints felt "to draw souls to praise God",²⁴ she desires "to give a thousand lives for one soul to praise God a little more".²⁵ All her longing was "that, since God

¹⁷Way, 22, 1.

¹⁸Life, 19, 2.

¹⁹Cf. Pius IX, Apost. Const., *Umbratilen remotaque*, July 8, 1924, DDS pp. 385-390.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Cf. *Relations*, 35, 2.

²²Vat. Con. II, Dec., *Perfectae Caritatis*, 1.

²³Ibid.

²⁴*Int. Cast.*, VII 4, 11.

²⁵Ibid., VI 6, 4.

has so many enemies and so few friends, these few be good ones".²⁶
"She would desire everything here on earth to be tongues with which she might praise Him".²⁷

Then from her transpierced heart, springs an unrestrainable love for the Church, which becomes the object of her unceasing solicitude.

"At about this time there came to my notice the harm and havoc that were being wrought in France by these Lutherans and the way in which their unhappy sect was increasing. This troubled me very much, and, as though I could do anything ... I wept before the Lord and entreated Him to remedy this great evil".²⁸

Teresa felt deeply the martyrdom of the Body of Christ torn and profaned (Way 1, 1-2), and she understood that the love of God ought to impel one to work generously for the Church. These are her words: "Love does not consist in great delights, but in a strong determination to wish to please God and to strive as much as we can not to offend Him, and to ask Him for the continual advancement of the honor and glory of His Son and the increase of the Catholic Church" (cf. Mansions IV 1, 7). Thus she exclaims: "Happy the lives that are consumed in this way!" While she is distressed and it breaks her heart to see the division of the one Body of Christ, her soul opens out to those new missionary horizons which she sees widening in America. For her, to contemplate Christ is to direct her gaze to the Church, which has the obligation of expressing in this world the life and mystery of Christ.²⁹

"Seeing such great evils, and that human forces are not sufficient to stop this fire",³⁰ she found no other way than to fulfill the evangelical counsels with all possible perfection. In this, too, she agrees with the teachings of the Council in what it sets forth, that "the evangelical counsels have the power to unite to the Church and her mystery, in a special way, those who practice them".³¹

"As I realized I was a woman and wretched", she writes, "and unable to be useful in the service of the Lord, as I would wish to

²⁶Way, 1, 2.

²⁷Int. Cast., VI 4, 15.

²⁸Way, 1, 2.

²⁹John Paul II, *Virtutis exemplar et magistra*.

³⁰Way, 3, 1.

³¹Vat. Con. II, Dog. Const., *Lumen Gentium*, 44.

be, and as all my longing was, and still is, that, since He has so many enemies and so few friends, these be good ones, I resolved to do that little which was in my power, that is, to follow the evangelical counsels as perfectly as I could and to see that these few who are here should do the same, confiding in the great goodness of God Who never fails to help anyone who is determined to give everything for Him".³²

Saint Teresa, conscious of the duty [of Religious] "to work according to the capacities and the form of their proper vocation, whether it is prayer or active work, in order to implant and strengthen the kingdom of Christ in souls and to extend it throughout the world",³³ puts her hand to the work. And since the evangelical counsels "contribute not a little to purification of the heart and liberty of spirit, they continually enkindle the fire of charity ... and are especially able to make the life of the Christian like the virginal and poor life which Christ Our Lord chose for Himself and which His Mother, the Virgin embraced",³⁴ she founds her first Carmel, a little portal of Bethlehem, where followed by others, "trusting in the great goodness of God Who never fails to help anyone who is determined to give up everything for Him",³⁵ she and her daughters would live occupied in praying for those "who are the defenders of the Church and preachers and learned men who defend her",³⁶ in order to help "this Lord of mine, Who is so afflicted by those for Whom He has done so much good, that it seems these traitors would want to crucify Him again and that He should have no place to rest His head".³⁷

This is the Teresian ideal and the contribution of Our Holy Mother to the Church of God, because the kind of life she establishes and the virtues she proposes have an end that is eminently apostolic. She wishes her daughters to live in this way in order that, by their virtues, they may merit an abundance of grace for Holy Mother Church and that "the captains of this castle or city, who are the preachers and theologians, may be very advanced in the way of the Lord",³⁸ "and that those who are in Religious Orders, may make much progress in perfection and in their

³²Way, 1, 2.

³³Vat. Con. II, Dog. Const., *Lumen Gentium*, 44.

³⁴Ibid., 46.

³⁵Way, 1, 2.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Way, 3, 2.

vocation, which is very necessary".³⁹

"I beg of you to try to be such that we may merit these two things from God: one is, that among very learned men and Religious, there may be many who have the qualifications which, as I have said are necessary for this task, and that Our Lord may prepare those who are not well prepared, because one who is perfect will do far more than many who are not. The other thing is, that after they have been placed in this combat which, as I say is not a small one, Our Lord may have them in His hand so that they may be delivered from the many dangers in the world, and stop their ears to the song of the sirens on this perilous sea. If we can prevail with God in any of this, although cloistered, we are fighting for Him, and I will consider worthwhile all the trials I have suffered in founding this little corner, in which I also intended that the Rule of Our Lady and Empress be observed with the perfection with which it began".⁴⁰

The end of the Teresian Reform, and the means which must be employed in order to attain it are, then, clearly defined. Saint Teresa, so humble and distrustful of herself in other points, in this has not the least hesitation or doubt in affirming that Carmel would cease to be Carmel the day this end would be abandoned, or the means she had chosen to attain this end be replaced. With the greatest earnestness she writes thus to her daughters:

"O my sisters in Christ, help me to implore this of Our Lord! That is why He has brought you together here; this is your vocation, these must be your concerns, these must be your desires, these your tears, these your petitions".⁴¹

The Church has confirmed the timeliness of the Teresian charism in these words:

"The Holy Mother, who declares 'I would give a thousand lives in order to help one soul' desires her daughters to sacrifice themselves with generosity in order that the Lord may protect His Church on which they are to center all their interests: 'When your prayers and desires and disciplines and fasts are not employed in what I have mentioned (in favor of the Church and the Sacred Hierarchy), reflect that you are not doing or fulfilling the end for which the Lord brought you here together' (cf. Way 3, 10)".⁴²

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., 3, 5.

⁴¹Ibid., 1, 5.

⁴²John Paul II, *Virtutis exemplar et magistra*.

V

THE CARMELS, CONTEMPLATIVE MONASTERIES

The Carmels, contemplative monasteries - Solitude in the cloister, and silence - Constant prayer, generous penance, evangelical abnegation and love of the cross - Foundation of those who are to come

"The Second Vatican Council has confirmed the 'legitimacy' within the Church of monasteries of Carmelites who 'are wholly dedicated to contemplation in such a way that their members are occupied solely with God in solitude and silence, in continual prayer and intense penance....' The Council has reaffirmed the utility of the said institutes for the Church herself to which 'they impart growth by a hidden apostolic fruitfulness' in such a way that they constitute for her 'a glory and a fountain of heavenly graces'.

"At the same time the Council has indicated the fundamental conditions of this fruitfulness, recommending that, in carrying out the work of 'aggiornamento' in these institutes, 'their withdrawal from the world and the exercises proper to the contemplative life be preserved' (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 7)".¹

"It is easy to find in these Conciliar guidelines the teaching of Saint Teresa of Jesus. Was it not, perhaps, to restore a life entirely devoted to contemplation that she began her reform? In fact she had wholeheartedly accepted the imperative call of Our Lord: 'I do not want you to converse with men, but with angels' (*Life*, 2, 45), and had meditated at length on the example of Jesus of Whom she says: 'You know that His Majesty teaches that prayer be made in solitude' (*Way* 24, 4). For this reason the Saint recommends to her daughters: 'We must disengage ourselves from every thing in order to approach God interiorly' (*Way*, 29, 5).

"Saint Teresa knew better than anyone that this solitude is only a means, and in relation to this she expressed herself thus: 'It would be a hard thing if it were only in little corners that we were able to pray!' (*Foundations*, 5, 16). But at the same time she knew by experience the importance of this means and knew perfectly well that the desert is preeminently the place for meeting Our Lord, as Sacred Scripture says: 'Therefore, I will allure her, I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart' (*Hosea* 2:16). From this springs her continual insistence on the observance of enclosure, the concrete means to make this

¹Cf. John Paul II, "Letter to the Discalced Carmelites", May 31, 1982.

contemplative solitude a reality.² Therefore, she forcefully recommends, together with enclosure and the external signs which actualize it, all the other means which assure separation from the world. The Church, also, has reaffirmed it in our day, persuasively recommending rightful rigor in the observance of enclosure",³ making her own the compelling exhortation which Saint Teresa gave her daughters shortly before her death: "Nuns who see in themselves the desire to go out among seculars and converse much with them, should fear that they have not found the living water of which the Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, and that their Spouse has hidden Himself from them, and rightly so, since they are not satisfied to be with Him".⁴

Therefore, "the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, faithful to the spirit of the Rule in our days also, must observe all that is required in their life by this kind of desert, so necessary for attaining the perfection of their vocation and mission as contemplatives". "Among these things, the Holy Mother particularly recommends silence which as she says 'is a great help for prayer'".⁵ She confirms the precepts of the Rule by ordering in her Constitutions that the Nuns may not speak with one another, with the exception of those who have an office, who may speak when necessary;⁶ in her monasteries she arranges for work in solitude, because in this way silence is better kept⁷ and she reminds her daughters that the manner of life for Carmelites is "not only to be Nuns, but also hermits".⁸

"Enclosure does not isolate from communion with the Mystical Body. Still more, it places the Carmelite in the very heart of the Church. Let them live, then, their vocation and mission in the Church with love, following the example of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus in order to be 'in the heart of the Church', knowing, as she reminds us, that 'only by our prayer and our self-surrender

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴*Foundations*, 31, 46.

⁵John Paul II, *Virtutis exemplar et magistra*, and "Letter to the Discalced Carmelites", May 31, 1982.

⁶Cf. *Constitutions of 1581*, 10, 1, according to the facsimile edition by Father Thomas Alvarez. Ed. *El Monte Carmelo*, Burgos, 1985.

⁷Cf. *Way*, 4, 9.

⁸Ibid., 13, 6.

can we be useful to the Church' (cf. Last Conversations, 8, 7, 16)".⁹

If Saint Teresa of Jesus insists so much on the importance of solitude, it is because she considers it as an indispensable element for the life of prayer. "To accustom oneself to solitude is a great help for prayer, and since this must be the foundation of this house, it is necessary for us to learn to like what helps us most in it".¹⁰

"Teresa understood that her vocation and mission was prayer, in the Church and for the Church, a praying community, impelled by the Spirit in order that with Christ and in Him, it might adore the Father 'in spirit and in truth' (Cf. John 4:23).

"Contemplating the mystery of the Church which 'suffered' in those times, she felt the rending of its unity and the treason of many Christians; she considered the relaxation of customs as a rejection, contempt, and profanation of love; in a word, divine friendship was betrayed. Those who did not accept the Church, nor live by her, who would not follow her Magisterium, were rejecting Christ, were despising His love.

"From this follows, as we have seen, the ecclesial character of the reform of Carmel, which is not set up as a rejection or contestation, but springs from the depths of a Divine friendship. 'All my concern was ... since He has so many enemies and so few friends, that these may be good ones; I resolved to do the little that was in my power, which is to follow the evangelical counsels with all the perfection I could, and to endeavor that these few who are here should do the same' (Way, 1, 2)".¹¹

For that reason she understands prayer as 'following by this path ... Him Who has so loved us' (Cf. Life, 11, 1), for prayer is nothing but 'frequently engaging in conversation alone with Him Who, we know, loves us.' (Cf. Life, 8, 5).

"In other words, by prayer we open ourselves to the love which the Holy Spirit has poured into our hearts and we associate ourselves with Jesus as brothers and friends by crying with Him: 'Abba, Father' (cf. Rom. 5:5; 8:15).

"Teresa was convinced that in one who prays in the Holy Spirit, the entire Church prays. This is so for all authentically supernatural contemplation, which springs from faith and love, as

⁹Cf. John Paul II, *Virtutis exemplar et magistra*.

¹⁰Way, 4, 9.

¹¹John Paul II, *Virtutis exemplar et magistra*.

much in the liturgy as in listening to the Word of God, as much in praising Our Lord as in silent adoration; they are a glorification of the Father and a communion with Christ, a 'help for the sweet Jesus of my soul' made a reality in the Church, as this holy Virgin and Mistress teaches (cf. Way, 1, 5, 2).

"Therefore, when anyone prays, lives his prayer, and through it has knowledge of the living God and surrenders herself to Him, she also opens herself to a more intimate knowledge of the Church, in which Christ is mysteriously present with His grace; she understands the urgency of unconditional fidelity towards the Spouse of Christ, and she feels in her inmost being the desire to work for the Church even to giving up her life for it.

"When prayer, inflamed by the love of God, manifests itself as an intimate friendship with Him, it has the tendency to a communion or union of love in which the creature gives herself wholly to the will of the Creator; then the friendship is converted into an apostolic leaven, a motive of joy for the good of the Church and for men, a powerful cry which reaches even to the Divine Heart and redounds to the profit of the entire Church (cf. Way, 32, 12).

"This is the message of Saint Teresa, proclaimed with the authority of one who has experienced it in her life: the conviction that there is no love of Christ which is not converted into a generous surrender to the Church, and there is no true filial affection for the Church if it is not translated into apostolic ardor and work, nourished and fortified by prayer".¹²

"As for what refers to intense penance, indicated by the Council as characteristic - together with prayer - of a life which is entirely contemplative, the Life and Constitutions of Saint Teresa, even more than her exhortations, are what tell you of its importance, yet more, its absolute necessity. For this reason, an updating that would lead to a lessening of penance, that is, to a less generous, less joyful, less total sacrifice of yourselves, would certainly not be in accord with either the Council or the charism of your Holy Mother".¹³

With these words His Holiness John Paul II confirms in the name of the Church the authentic charism of Saint Teresa and its timeliness in the Church.

In fact, in order that prayer, which, as we have just seen, is the foundation of this life, be "genuine, it must be helped by

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

penance; because prayer and comfort are incompatible".¹⁴ "To think that God admits to His friendship people who live in comfort and without trials is absurd".¹⁵

The Discalced Carmelites, after the example of their holy founders and the traditions of the Order, have always practiced this generous penance which the love of God asks of souls who desire to work for Him for the Redemption of the world. Saint Teresa says that these souls have "great desires to do penance",¹⁶ "they would wish to do more and all they do seems to them little".¹⁷

However, the principal penance which Saint Teresa implanted in the convents she founded, was continuity in the observance of an austere and mortified life. Not content with imposing the Primitive Rule without mitigation, she added other privations and austerities. The tone of generosity and fervor which she imprinted on her little doves is clearly shown by these words:

"We observe the Rule of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and keep it without mitigation, as ordained by Fray Hugo, Cardinal of St. Sabina, which was given in 1248, in the fifth year of the pontificate of Pope Innocent IV".¹⁸

"Now, although there is some austerity, because meat is never eaten without necessity and there is a fast of eight months and other things, as is seen in the Primitive Rule itself, yet in many other respects it seems little to the Sisters and they observe other things which have seemed necessary to us in order to keep the Rule with greater perfection; and I hope in the Lord that what has been begun will prosper, as His Majesty has told me it would".¹⁹

This kind of life, poor and deprived of all comfort and gratification, is inseparable from the work of Saint Teresa of Jesus. If it was implanted in the Reform, it was not through later or outside influences, but by the express will of the Saint herself.

Fearing, no doubt, that at some time what she had in mind, or

¹⁴Way, 4, 2.

¹⁵Ibid., 18, 2.

¹⁶Int. Cast., V 2, 3.

¹⁷Ibid., 2, 14.

¹⁸Life, 36, 26.

¹⁹Ibid., 36, 27.

better, the inspiration which she had received from God, would become distorted, she asks that, even if everything she has written in the book of her life be torn up, the chapter in which she tells about the beginnings of the Reform be preserved and that, after her death, it be given to her daughters "in order that those who are to come may endeavor to keep what has been begun from declining".²⁰

And she has it so at heart and so fears that this could happen that it makes her write:

"It seems to me that she will be doing much harm and will be greatly chastised by God who would begin to relax the perfection which the Lord has begun here and has so favored it that it may be easily borne with so much sweetness...."²¹ "And let her to whom it seems rigorous lay the blame on her own lack of spirit and not on what is observed here (since persons who are frail and do not have good health are able to bear it with sweetness because they have the spirit) and let them go to another monastery where they shall be saved in a way suitable to their spirituality".²²

When the Saint speaks of sweetness, this word must be understood in the sense Saint John of the Cross gives it when he says that the soul who is truly resolved "To want to find and endure trials in all things for God, will find much ease and sweetness".²³

The Holy Mother melts into praise of God when she reflects on this truth, since she sees clearly that such happiness and contentment can be only His work. But she does not fail to mention the austerities and poverty which she implanted in her foundations.

"O greatness of God! Often I am astonished when I reflect and see how particularly His Majesty desired to help me bring about this little corner of God, for such I believe it is, and an abode where His Majesty takes His delight, as, once when I was in prayer, He told me that this house was a paradise of delight to Him. And thus it seems His Majesty has chosen the souls He has brought to it, in whose company I live, full of shame; because I would not have known how to desire such souls for this plan of so much austerity and poverty and prayer. And they bear it with joy and contentment, for each one feels herself unworthy to have deserved to come to such a place, some especially, whom the Lord called from much worldly vanity and ostentation, where they could have been

²⁰Cf. *Ibid.*, 36, 29.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid.*

²³Saint John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mt. Carmel*, II, 7, 7.

contented following its laws; and the Lord has so multiplied their satisfaction here, that they clearly understand the Lord has given them a hundredfold for the one they left; and they are never tired of thanking His Majesty.

"To those who are young, He gives fortitude and understanding, that they may not desire anything else, and ... to those who are older and in poor health He gives strength and has enabled them to bear the austerity and penance like everyone else".²⁴

One of the virtues which the Conciliar Decree proposes to Religious as indispensable for being able to "spread the Good News of Christ throughout the whole world, to the end that their witness may be seen by all and our Father Who is in Heaven may be glorified",²⁵ is the love of the cross. With this love the soul of Our Holy Mother was filled; she proposes it to her daughters as the remedy for all their trials. It is the key for understanding the paradox which a Teresian Carmel presents to the world today. In the crossbars of the grille, symbol of complete despoliation, is perceived the sweet reality of these words of Saint Teresa which, seen in another light, would prove to be incomprehensible:

"This house is a heaven, if one can be had on earth. It is a very happy life for anyone who is pleased with pleasing God and makes no account of her own pleasure. In desiring anything more, everything is lost, because nothing more can be had".²⁶

Let us remember the circumstances in which the Saint wrote: a small, poor house ... a little portal of Bethlehem; the poorest food, and so scanty that sometimes there was not enough for all;²⁷ a poor and mended habit, a hard bed, supererogatory penances.... Nevertheless, the Saintly Foundress writes:

"Everything observed in this house concerning enclosure, penance, and all the rest, have become for me extremely easy and amount to little. My contentment is so exceedingly great that I sometimes wonder what on earth I could choose that would be more pleasant".²⁸

Saint John of the Cross, treating of some favors God bestows on souls that have arrived at the highest degrees of mystical

²⁴Life, 35, 12.

²⁵Vat. Con. II, Dec., *Perfectae Caritatis*, 25.

²⁶Way, 13, 7.

²⁷Foundations, 1, 2.

²⁸Life, 36, 10.

union, writes:

"Few persons have reached these heights.... Some have, however, especially those whose virtue and spirit was to be diffused among their children. For God accords to founders, with respect to the first fruits of the spirit, wealth and value commensurate with the greater or lesser following they will have in their doctrine and spirituality".²⁹

The mystical Doctor wrote these words immediately after describing a favor which can be identified with the transpiercing of the heart of our Holy Mother, of which she had probably given him an account. Without doubt she is the one the Saint had in mind in speaking of "those whose virtue and spirit was to be diffused among their children".³⁰

Perhaps it is for that reason, as if she already had a presentiment in her heart how great that following of her doctrine and spirituality would be, that Saint Teresa insistently makes it known she is not writing only for that small group of Discalced who were then following her, but "for those who are to come".³¹ As one who puts her whole soul into her words, she begs her daughters not to allow the magnificent things which His Majesty has wrought through her to be lost.

She writes: "Let those who are to come and those who are to read this fear if they do not see what is now seen; let them not blame the times because it is always a suitable time for God to grant great favors to one who truly serves Him".³²

The Saint had also heard it said that, since founders are the foundation of their Order, the Lord grants them greater favors, and she exhorts her Nuns to look upon themselves always as the foundation of those who are to come:

"If we who live now had not fallen away from what our holy forbearers were, and those who come after us would live as they did, the edifice would always be firm".³³ Therefore, she desired that if anyone "should see her Order falling away in anything, she should strive to become herself such a stone that the edifice may

²⁹St. John of the Cross, *Living Flame of Love*, Stanza 2, 9, [Redaction B Stanza 2, 12].

³⁰Ibid.

³¹*Foundations*, 4, 6.

³²Ibid., 4, 5.

³³Ibid., 4, 6.

be raised up again".³⁴

"Reflect, my daughters, on the judgement of God, and the obligation we have of serving Him Who has let us persevere to make our Profession and remain always in the house of God as daughters of the Virgin...! May it please His Majesty to give us abundantly of His grace ... and protect and favor us that so good a beginning may not be lost through our weakness!"³⁵

As if she would wish to put it in the very depth of their souls, she asks them in the Name of Our Lord that each one consider that in her begins "this Primitive Rule of the Order of the Virgin, Our Lady, and in no way consent to relaxation in anything".³⁶

"Consider that by very little things the door is opened for very great ones and without your realizing it the world will be entering in"³⁷

She, so humble, puts before them the great labors and poverty with which she founded all these houses, and assures them that "they have not been founded by men ... but by the powerful hand of God",³⁸ and that if they do their part, Our Lord will make them advance.

"See, my daughters, see the hand of God!... In whatever way you want to look at this you will recognize that it is His work. It would not be right for us to undermine it in any way, even if it costs us our life, honor and tranquility; even more so, since we have all these together here, for life is to live in such a way as to have no fear of death or of any of life's happenings, and to have an habitual happiness, as you now all have, and this prosperity that cannot be surpassed when there is no fear of poverty, but on the contrary, desire for it. So, to what can the interior and exterior peace that you always enjoy be compared? It is in your power to live and to die with this peace, as you have witnessed in those you have seen die in these houses. For if you always ask God to further His work, and you trust not at all in yourselves, He will not deny you His mercy; if you have confidence in Him and courageous spirits, for His Majesty is very fond of

³⁴Ibid., 4, 7.

³⁵Ibid., 27, 10, 11.

³⁶Ibid., 36, 11.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

these, have no fear that you will lack anything".³⁹ May it please the Lord that all be for His glory and praise and that of the glorious Virgin Mary, whose habit we wear. Amen".⁴⁰

³⁹Ibid., 27, 12.

⁴⁰Life, 36, 28.

PRIMITIVE RULE

**THE PRIMITIVE RULE
OF THE ORDER
OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
OF MOUNT CARMEL,
GIVEN BY BLESSED ALBERT,
PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM
AND CONFIRMED BY INNOCENT IV**

Albert, by the grace of God, Patriarch of Jerusalem, to his beloved Sons, Brocard and the other Religious Hermits who live under his obedience, near the fountain of Elias, on Mount Carmel, health in the Lord and the blessings of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Fathers have instituted many and various ways, by which everyone, in whatever Order he may be, or whatever mode of Religious life he has chosen, may live in obedience to Jesus Christ and serve Him faithfully with a pure heart and a good conscience. But since you desire us to give you a rule of life conformable to your Institute, which you shall observe for the future, we give it to you as follows:

ON THE ELECTION OF A PRIOR, AND OF THE VOWS

We ordain in the first place that one of you be Prior, who shall be elected to that office by the unanimous consent of all, or of the greater and wiser part: to this Prior all the others shall promise obedience, and having promised, endeavor to practice it faithfully, together with chastity and poverty.

ON FOUNDING CONVENTS

You may have foundations in Deserts, or wherever they shall be given you, suitable and adapted to the observance of your Rule, as the Prior and the other Religious shall judge proper.

ON THE CELLS OF THE BRETHREN

Moreover, each one shall have a separate Cell, in the place wherein you propose to live, which shall be assigned to him by the order of the Prior, and with the consent of the other Religious, or the more capable part of them.

ON A COMMON REFECTORY

But you shall all assemble in the Refectory to take in common the food which shall be given to you, while hearing some part of the Holy Scripture read, when this can be conveniently done. No Religious shall leave the Cell assigned to him, or exchange it with another without leave from the Prior for the time being. The Cell

of the Prior shall be at the entrance of the Convent¹ in order that he may be the first to meet those who come there, and everything shall be done according to his will and direction. Each one shall remain in his Cell or near it, meditating day and night on the Law of the Lord, and watching in prayer, unless otherwise justly employed.

ON THE CANONICAL HOURS

Those who understand how to recite the Canonical Hours with the Clerics shall say them according to the Statutes of the holy Fathers, and the approved custom of the Church. Those who do not, shall say the Pater Noster twenty-five times for Matins, except on Sundays and solemn Feasts, on which we ordain that the said number be doubled, so that the Pater Noster shall be said for Matins fifty times. For Lauds the same prayer shall be repeated seven times. It shall be likewise said seven times for each of the other Hours, except Vespers, when it shall be recited fifteen times.

ON POVERTY

No Religious is to call anything his own; but let everything be in common; and the Prior, or the Religious appointed by him, shall distribute to each one whatever he may need, according to his age and necessities.

ON WHAT MAY BE OWNED IN COMMON

You may, if necessary, keep asses or mules,² and some cattle and poultry for food.

ON THE ORATORY, AND ON THE DIVINE WORSHIP

Let an Oratory be erected, as conveniently as possible, in the midst of the Cells, where you are to assemble every morning to hear Mass, when this can be conveniently done.

ON CHAPTER, AND ON THE CORRECTION OF THE RELIGIOUS

On Sundays, or other days if necessary, you shall treat of the observance of the Rule and the salvation of souls; at the same time the faults and defects of the Religious (if there be any) shall be corrected with charity.

¹Norm which refers to the eremitical life and which has no meaning for the nuns.

²The concession made here by the Rule is actually extended to all that is required for the work by which the monastery is maintained.

ON THE FAST

You shall fast every day, except Sunday, from the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross until Easter Sunday, unless sickness, infirmity, or any other just cause should prevent you; for necessity has no law.

ON ABSTINENCE FROM FLESH MEAT

You are not to eat flesh meat, except as a remedy in case of sickness or infirmity. But since you are frequently obliged to beg when travelling, you may, outside your own Convents, in order not to be troublesome to your hosts, take vegetables cooked with flesh meat; on sea, however, you are allowed to eat flesh meat.

EXHORTATIONS

As the life of man upon earth is a warfare, and all who will live piously in Christ shall suffer persecution; moreover, your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour; endeavor, therefore, with all diligence, to put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the snares of the devil. Gird your loins with the girdle of Chastity, and guard your hearts with holy thoughts, for it is written: a holy thought shall preserve you. Put on the breastplate of justice, that you may love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole strength, and your neighbor as yourself. In all things take the shield of Faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one, for without Faith it is impossible to please God. Place likewise on your head the helmet of salvation, that you may hope for salvation from your Savior alone, Who saves His people from their sins. Let the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, dwell abundantly in your mouths and hearts, and whatsoever you do, let it be done in the Name of the Lord.

ON MANUAL LABOR

You shall do some kind of work, that the devil may always find you occupied, lest through idleness he may gain an entrance into your souls. In this you have the teaching and example of St. Paul, the Apostle, by whose mouth Christ spoke, who was appointed by God as preacher and teacher of the Gentiles, in faith and truth; if you follow him, you cannot err. We were among you in toil and labor (he says) working day and night, lest we should be a burden to any of you: not as if we had not authority, but that we might give ourselves a pattern to you to imitate us. For, when we were with you, we declared this to you, that if any man will not work, neither let him eat. For we have heard that there are some among you who walk disorderly, working not at all. Now we charge them that are such, and beseech them by the Lord Jesus Christ, that

working in silence they would eat their bread. This way is good and holy; follow it.

ON SILENCE

The Apostle recommends silence, since he commands us to observe it while working. And, as the Prophet testifies: Silence is the service of justice. And again: In silence and hope shall your strength be. Hence we ordain that you observe silence from the end of Compline to the end of Prime the following day. Although you are not obliged to observe silence so rigorously at other times, yet you should carefully avoid talking too much. For, as it is written, and experience also teaches: In the multitude of words there shall not want sin. And he that has no guard on his speech shall meet with evils. Again: He that uses many words shall hurt his own soul. And Our Lord says in the Gospel that for every idle word that men shall speak they shall render an account on the Day of Judgment. Let each one therefore make a balance for his words, and a just bridle for his mouth, that he may not slip by his tongue, and fall, and his fall be incurable unto death. Let him, with the Prophet, take heed to his ways that he sin not with his tongue; and endeavor to observe silence with diligence and care, for it is the service of justice.

EXHORTATION TO THE PRIOR ON HUMILITY

And you, Brother Brocard, and whoever shall be elected Prior after you, bear always in mind, and observe in practice what Our Lord says in the Gospel: Whosoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister; and he who would be the first among you shall be your servant.

EXHORTATION TO THE BRETHERN TO HONOR THEIR PRIOR

You, also, Brethren, honor your Prior with humility, considering not him but in his person Christ, Who placed him over you, and Who says to the Prelates of His Church: He that hears you hears Me; and he that despises you despises Me; that you may not be brought into judgment for contempt, but rather by your obedience merit the reward of Eternal Life.

These points we have briefly written for you, appointing a Rule for your Institute, according to which you shall live. But if anyone does more than is herein prescribed, Our Lord will reward him on the Day of Judgment. Let him, however, use discretion, which is the rule of all virtue.

CONSTITUTIONS

that the

HOLY MOTHER TERESA OF JESUS

gave to her nuns.

Approved at the Chapter of Alcala of 1581.

Adapted and brought into conformity

with the documents

of Vatican Council II

and the present Code of Canon Law in 1990.

N. B. Meaning of the different kinds of type:

1. Norms which have fallen into disuse and no longer have juridical value.
2. Original text of the Constitutions of 1581.
3. Notes and specifications with normative value inserted into the text.

CHAPTER I

ON OBEDIENCE AND THE ELECTION OF SUPERIORS

1 (We declare that the Nuns of the Primitive Rule are subject to the Most Reverend Father General of the Order and the Provincial of the province of the Discalced Carmelite Priars, and that His Paternity, the Most Reverend General may visit them himself or through a visitor appointed by him for the Discalced Priars in conformity with the Constitution of this province.)¹

2 The elections shall be made by secret votes, (according to the holy Council.) The election being over, the votes are to be burned in the presence of all, so that the names of those who voted may never become known.

3 It is to be noted, however, that neither the Provincial² nor his companion have any vote in the elections of the Nuns,

(but the Provincial may propose to the Community three or four Nuns, from whom they may elect the one they prefer, without however forcing them to vote for one of these, for the Nuns always have the liberty to vote for others, and the Provincial likewise has the liberty to annul or confirm the election, as it seems best to him.)

4 To receive the votes of those who through sickness are unable to come to the grate, he who presides at the election shall appoint two Nuns of mature age and virtue, who shall go to receive the votes of the sick, and (they are bound in conscience to) bring them back without opening or altering them. When the elections are over, the votes shall be burned in the presence of all the nuns, as has been said.

5 Moreover, because (the monasteries of the primitive Rule are new, and) there is not a great number from which to choose for the government, we give permission for the re-election of the Prioress in the same convent, (provided that she receive three-fourths of the votes, without which there is no re-election.) For this re-election we give the faculties, anything else to the contrary notwithstanding.³

¹See no. 134 of the present Constitutions.

²Whenever in the present Constitutions the name "Provincial" or "Superior" appears, it is to be understood as "Ecclesiastical Superior", who is the Ordinary of the place when it is a matter of autonomous monasteries which are governed by Canon 615; and the Provincial of the Discalced Carmelites, when Canon 614 is applicable to the monastery.

³The reason St. Teresa gives for re-election continues to be valid, since today as yesterday, Carmels are monasteries which have a limited number of nuns, and there are not that many persons for the government. For the validity of the postulation the current norms of the Church will be followed. See nos. 141 and 154.

6 No Sister may give, receive or ask for anything, even from her parents, without permission of the Prioress, to whom everything that comes in as alms must be shown.

CHAPTER II

ON THE RECEPTION OF NOVICES, THEIR PROFESSION, AND THE NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS THERE SHOULD BE IN EACH CONVENT

7 Great care should be taken to ensure that those who are to be received be persons of prayer, sincerely aspiring to perfection and despising all worldly things, for if they are not detached from the world, they will hardly bear what is observed here, and it is better to make sure of this before receiving them than to have to send them away afterwards. They should be at least seventeen years of age, of sound health, intelligent and able to recite the Divine Office and assist in choir.

No one is to be admitted to profession except those in whom, during the year of their novitiate, all the qualities and conditions required for the observance have been found. Should any one of these be lacking, she should not be professed, unless her virtue is so remarkable and she is so useful to the Convent that no trouble need be feared by the Community from her, and that it is a service to Our Lord to accede to her holy desires. If these are not so great that they denote a divine vocation, she must on no account be admitted.

8 If the person is found to acceptable, but has no alms to bring to the Community, she must not on this account be rejected, because this has been our custom;

(and if she has wherewith and wishes to give to the house, but later, for some reason, she does not give it, there must be no lawsuits on this account, as everything must be done in such a way as to avoid scandal.)

9 In the reception of novices, let not the amount of the dowry be taken too much into account, lest avarice should gradually creep in, and the Nuns should make more account of the amount of the dowry to be brought than of the goodness and moral worth of the candidate herself. This should never be done, for it is a great evil. The Nuns should always keep in mind the poverty they profess and give proof of it in all things; and they should be convinced that it is not by money that they are to be maintained but by faith, perfection and confidence in God alone. This Constitution should be read frequently to the Nuns, and should be fulfilled diligently, for it is important.

10 (The Provincial cannot admit anyone to the habit or profession without the approving votes of the greater part of the Chapter, nor may he permit Religious of other Orders to be received in the said monasteries, nor those of the mitigated Rule of the said Order.)

11 (The Lay Sisters who are received should be of a strong constitution and desirous of serving God, and they are to be one year without the habit, that it may be better seen if they are fit to bear the labors and the observance of the Convent; they are not to receive the black veil, but they will be given profession after they have been for two years with the habit, unless their virtue be such that they merit to receive it before. They shall be treated with all sisterly love and be provided with food and clothing like the other Nuns.)⁴

12 (We ordain that from now on all professions are to be made, not at the grate, but in the Chapter-room, where none but the Religious of the monastery shall be present.)⁵

Moreover, it is our will that for admission of Novices to the habit and to profession, the votes of the majority of the Chapter should concur. These votes are to be secret and given by white and black beans.

13 (We also declare that the Religious who have founded any convent may not be put out of it without a very urgent cause, in the opinion of the Provincial.)

14 (In as much as the Council of Trent has ordained that there should not be more religious in a monastery than they are able conveniently to sustain, taking into account their income and the alms on which they live, in order that the Nuns in these convents may live in greater peace and be less solicitous about temporal things, we ordain that in those convents founded in poverty they should not exceed thirteen, or at the most fourteen, for the choir. Those that have income should not exceed twenty; this includes those who are received as Lay Sisters, and in all the monasteries, whether with income, or in poverty, there should not be more than three Lay Sisters.)⁶

15 When, for any just reason any Religious goes to another convent with the intention of remaining there for a considerable length of time, the Community may receive another in her place.

16 (We also declare that those convents that were founded with the intention of having income, until such time as they actually have the said income, may not have more than fourteen Nuns, unless one should receive the habit who can bring with her sufficient to sustain more. The Prioress or Superior may not act contrary to this order under penalty of deprivation of office.)

17 For the admission of someone to the habit, special care should be taken to see if they have the health and judgement necessary to bear this holy observance, because after being received it is difficult to provide a remedy. Let every precaution be taken

⁴The differentiation of persons within each community, should stem only from the diverse works to which the Sisters must attend, be it by special vocation from God, or by their particular aptitude. (cf. Vat. II Decree Perf. Carit. 15)

⁵Profession will take place during Mass according to the Ritual of Religious Profession adapted for the Discalced Carmelite Nuns.

⁶In all monasteries as many as 21 nuns can be received, without exceeding this number.

during the year of probation and let no one be admitted to profession who does not show promise of being able to follow the observance and be a good Religious. This is a matter of conscience for the Prioress and the Mistress of Novices and the rest of the community.

- 18 (A Novice sent away from a monastery is not to be received in any other without the votes of all the Nuns in the monastery from where she was sent away; but she is never again to be re-admitted to the monastery where she had been.)

CHAPTER III

ON ENCLOSURE

19 The Religious may not be seen without veil except by their parents, brothers and sisters, or in some other cases where there may be an equally just reason, but then only by such persons as may be likely to edify and help the Religious in the practice of prayer and give them spiritual consolation rather than recreation. There shall always be a third person present, except when it is something treating of the soul.⁷

20 The keys of the grate and of the turn are to be kept by the Prioress. When the confessor, doctor, or other persons enter the enclosure, they are always to be accompanied by two of the Nuns.

(When a sick nun wishes to make her confession, one of the Sisters must always be present and remain at a distance but in such a way as to see the confessor, with whom no one is to speak except the sick nun herself, unless it is for a simple word.)

One of these shall ring a little bell that the Sisters may know an outsider is in the house.

- 21 (The Nuns shall under no conditions go out to the church or to the entrance hall of the front door, rather they shall have a sacristan or an out-servant who will close the door of the church and the entrance that leads outside. This is necessary in order to keep the enclosure ordained by the holy Council and the decrees of the Supreme Pontiffs.)⁸

⁷The application of these norms will be left to the discretion of the Mother Prioress, who will see that the visit is edifying and of spiritual profit.

⁸To attend to the needs of the church, it is permitted to have a door leading to it according to the conditions specified by the Papal Enclosure. See no. 218.

N.B. In the foundations of the Holy Mother no one ever went to the speakroom with face covered.

22 The novices shall be visited like the professed, so that if they are discontented and do not wish to stay, they should have the opportunity to manifest this; it should be understood that the Nuns do not wish to keep them against their will, but that they are there of their own free choice.

23 The Nuns should have nothing to do with worldly affairs, nor speak of them, except when by doing so they may be able to help others by enlightening or consoling them in some difficulty. And if they do not have in mind some spiritual benefit, they should finish quickly as has been said; for it is necessary that those who come here leave with some gain, and that neither they nor we should have wasted time.

(The companion should be very watchful for this, and she should advise the Prioress when this is not kept; and if she neglects doing so she will incur the same penalty as the one who committed the fault. Having warned her twice, at the third time, she shall be put into the prison for nine days, and on the third day of the nine she shall receive a discipline in the refectory; because this is of great importance to the Religious Life.)

24 They should avoid, as much as possible, long conversations with their relatives, because apart from the difficulty in forgetting their affairs, it would be almost impossible to avoid speaking of worldly matters.

25 They should converse as little as possible with persons from without, even with the nearest relatives, unless their conversation be spiritual, and even then it should be very seldom and as brief as possible.

26 (Let the Provincial, Vicar or Visitor bear in mind the ruling of the Sacred Council of Trent, which orders that, under pain of excommunication "*latae sententiae*",)

No person, of whatever age, state, or status is allowed to enter the enclosure of monasteries of Nuns, except in case of necessity and with the particular permission (in writing) of the Superior,⁹

(and he should keep in mind that what the Sacred Council ordains must be observed.)

They should consider necessary only those who perform such work that the Nuns cannot do without help from outside, for example, workmen and other persons of this kind, and the doctor (and barber.)¹⁰

27 And whereas we Religious, as the Apostle says, are made a spectacle to the world, to Angels and to men, and as nothing more easily gives rise to scandal than familiarity between Religious men and Nuns, more especially were they to enter their monasteries

⁹See no 235.

¹⁰See no 234.

without necessity, we therefore order that Religious men take particular care not to go to the monasteries of our Nuns. We forbid the Provincial or Visitor to enter the said monasteries except in case of necessity, that is, for things that cannot be taken care of at the grate. For all that can be taken care of at the grate, such as special admonitions and spiritual conferences, we declare it unnecessary to enter the monastery¹¹

(unless during the visitation it should be necessary to enter the enclosure for the Chapter of faults because of the need there sometimes is to correct someone. However, if this is so, he could at the same time make the visitation of the cloister.)

In such a case, the Provincial or Visitor shall always bring a companion with him, who is not to leave him all the while he is in the monastery.

(On no account should he allow anyone to dine within the enclosure or in the parlor outside, nor should he do so himself.)

In like manner let the Provincial or Visitor see that the votes for the elections be taken at the grate, (in accordance with the ruling of the Council of Trent;) and thus we order that neither before nor after the elections, shall anyone enter the enclosure, but everything concerning them shall be completed at the grate.

28 Neither are the confessors to enter the monastery of Nuns under any circumstances, except to hear the confessions of the sick (when the doctor should say there is need,) and to administer the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick at the proper time. If after having received the sacraments the sick Sister should have some scruple, the confessor may enter to reconcile her and help her to die well. And if a sick Sister has been in bed for a long time and is unable to go to the confessional or the grate, the confessor may enter occasionally to hear her confession, even though she is not in danger of death.

29 And when for these reasons, the confessor is to enter the enclosure, he must go and return "recta via" without any delay;

(and we command the Prioress or Presider to see that this is strictly observed.)

We likewise charge (the consciences of) the nuns who accompany the confessor, to bring him by a direct way, (and under no conditions to delay with him.)

¹¹Unless it is for the canonical visitation.

CHAPTER IV

ON DINNER AND RECREATION¹²

30 The hour for dinner cannot be fixed as it must be according to what is available.

(In winter the bell shall be rung at eleven thirty on fast days of the Church, but on fasts of the Order at eleven. In summer it shall be rung at ten.)¹³

31 If the Lord should inspire any Sister to perform a mortification before dinner, she should ask permission to do so, that this good custom may not be lost, since it is very profitable. Let it be brief, however, that the reading may not be delayed.

32 Except at dinner and supper, no Sister may eat or drink without permission.¹⁴

33 After dinner and supper the Mother Prioress may permit all the Sisters to speak together of whatever they please, but their conversation must always be that of good religious, and they must all have their (distaffs or other) work.

34 Games are never to be permitted, for the Lord will give some the grace to provide recreation for the others. And when time is spent in this way, it is well employed. Let them try not to annoy one another and their joking and conversation should be with discretion. In summer when this hour is over, they shall rest for an hour, and those who do not wish to sleep should observe silence.

35 The Religious are not to embrace or touch the hands or face of each other, nor cultivate particular friendships; but all should love one another, as Our Lord Jesus Christ commanded His Apostles many times. As they are so few, they will be able to fulfill this precept easily by striving to imitate their Spouse, Who gave His life for us all. This mutual and general love is most important.

¹²In countries where there are difficulties in observing the norms prescribed in chapters 4 and 5, let them be adapted according to what is prescribed in no. 258, c.

¹³Since the liturgical norm to pray Vespers before noon during Lent (Fast of the Church) has been suppressed, the most convenient hour to eat is at eleven.

¹⁴Nevertheless it is permitted to take a light breakfast at a convenient hour.

CHAPTER V

ON THE CANONICAL HOURS AND OTHER SPIRITUAL THINGS

36 Matins is to be said after nine o'clock, and not before, but not so late that there may not be time for an examen of a quarter of an hour on how they have spent that day.¹⁵

37 The bell shall be rung for this examen, and the one appointed by the Mother Prioress shall read in the vernacular the meditation on the mystery for the following day. The time spent in this shall be so arranged that the bell for the Sisters to retire to rest will be about eleven.

(At this time of examen and reading all should be together in the choir.)

No one is to leave the choir without permission after the office has begun.

38 In summer, they shall rise at five¹⁶ and they shall remain in prayer until six, and in winter they shall rise at six and remain in prayer until seven.¹⁷ "Lauds is said before prayer." When prayer is finished they shall recite the hour "of Terce".

(And if the Prioress wishes, they may say them all at once; but if not, one or two may be postponed, but they must be finished before Mass.)

39 On Sundays and Feast Days, Mass, Vespers, (and Matins) are to be chanted. On the first days of Easter, and other days of solemnity,

N.B. - In the text of Chapter V, the necessary prescriptions have been introduced so that each one of the canonical hours corresponds to its true natural time, preserving nevertheless, the same hours prescribed by Saint Teresa for the liturgical prayer.

- The phrases and words added to the original text are in quotation marks.

- Notice that Holy Mother is referring to solar time; adapting this to the official hour, the result is one or two hours later, according to the time of the year.

¹⁵Although the liturgical norm of including examen during Compline will be followed, the time Saint Teresa indicates here will be maintained as a time of prayer.

¹⁶"At a convenient hour", so as to begin prayer at five or six according to the time of the year.

¹⁷A whole hour will be spent in prayer whether Lauds are chanted or recited.

especially on the feast of the glorious Saint Joseph, Lauds¹⁸ may be chanted. The chants shall never be harmonized, but (on one tone)¹⁹ all the voices in unison. Ordinarily, the entire office is simply recited, and the Conventual Mass is to be said daily (on one tone), which all the Sisters are to attend, if they can conveniently do so. They are not to be absent from Choir without a just cause. When the hours are over, each one shall go to her respective duties or office.

(Mass is to be said at eight in summer and nine in winter)

"The Mass will ordinarily be after Terce."²⁰ Those who receive Holy Communion shall remain in choir for a short time.

40 A little before dinner the bell shall be rung for "Sext and"²¹ the examen concerning the faults committed until that hour, and let them resolve to correct their most serious fault, saying an Our Father to obtain God's grace to do so.

(Each one shall kneel in the place where she is and make this examen briefly.)

41 (At grace after dinner, the Sisters are always to go to choir reciting the Psalm, "Miserere", as also after supper from the Feast of the Resurrection until the Exaltation of the Cross.)

42 At two o'clock in the afternoon, (Vespers) "None" is to be recited, after which they shall have spiritual reading, in such a way that (Vespers) "None" and the reading together take only one full hour.

(whether or not the Vespers are sung solemnly. This does not apply during Lent, when Vespers are said before dinner, for then the reading may take the full hour from two to three. If anyone should feel more inclined to prayer at this time, let her do what is more conducive to recollection.)

43 (Compline will be said in the winter) "Vespers will be said" at five o'clock in the afternoon, after which they shall have an hour of prayer, for their spirits will be well recollected and they will spend the time well.²²

(In summer, Compline will be said at six, after which, since it is the hour for supper, there cannot be

¹⁸And Matins.

¹⁹The chanting of the Divine Office should be moderate and devout in conformity with the Sacred Liturgy.

²⁰Unless circumstances demand something different.

²¹The hour of Sext will take place in Choir as well as the Examen.

²²Prayer will last one whole hour whether Vespers are chanted or recited.

an hour of prayer, but this hour will take place before Matins.)

"Throughout the year Compline is said at eight o'clock." But it should be remembered that from the recitation of Compline they should keep silence in conformity with the Rule.

CHAPTER VI.

ON COMMUNION AND CONFESSION

44 Holy Communion should be received

(every Sunday and on the Feasts of Our Lord and Our Lady, of our Father St. Albert and St. Joseph, and the Titular Feast of the House, Holy Thursday, the Thursday of the Most Holy Sacrament, and the Thursday of the Ascension, and any other days that the Confessor may advise)

in conformity with the spirit and devotion of the Sisters.²³

(with the permission of the Mother Prioress. Without this permission the Sisters may not receive Holy Communion on other days except those mentioned, even though the Confessor might tell them to do so.)

45 (In order to avoid the annoyance and distraction caused to the Fathers in going and coming each day to say Mass, we order that no Religious of any Order, not even one of the Discalced Fathers of the Primitive Rule, may be the Vicar or Chaplain of the said monasteries. The Prioress, together with the Provincial, should look for a priest, whose age, life and manners give the required satisfaction. And if he has the necessary qualifications, he might also be the Confessor of the Religious, with the consent of the Provincial. However, notwithstanding this ordinary Confessor.)²⁴

The Mother Prioress may permit (not only the three times provided by the Council of Trent, but also at other times) certain Religious to hear the confessions of her Nuns. These persons may be Discalced of the same Order of Carmel or of any other Order, provided that the Mother Prioress is satisfied that he has the required learning and virtues; and she may do the same for sermons; neither the present Provincial nor any future one can deprive them of this liberty.²⁵

(They may apply to such Confessors, both the Discalced as well as any others, the alms they receive or the interest from their chaplaincies.)

²³Every day according to the spirit and norms of Holy Church.
See no. 199.

²⁴See no. 204.

²⁵For the appointment of a Chaplain see no. 205.

CHAPTER VII

ON POVERTY AND TEMPORAL THINGS

46 In convents that are located in rich and prosperous places where they can be supported, they are to live on alms without any income; and in places where they cannot be sustained by alms alone, they may have an income in common. In everything else, there should be no difference between the monasteries that have an income and those founded in poverty.

47 If they can do without them, they should never ask for alms; great should be the need which would make them beg, rather they should help themselves by the work of their hands, as St. Paul did, for the Lord will provide what is necessary. As long as they do not desire more and are satisfied without comforts, they will never lack what is essential to sustain them. If they endeavor with all their strength to please God, His Majesty will provide for them in such a way that they will have sufficient for their support.

48 The Nuns are to possess absolutely nothing as their own, nor may they have the use of anything without the permission of the Prioress, neither in food nor in clothing. Neither are they to have a chest, trunk or cupboard, nor anything else in particular, except such things as are required for the offices of the community. Rather, everything must be in common. This is a point of the utmost importance, because the devil begins to relax the perfection of poverty by very little things. Let the Prioress, therefore, be very vigilant in this matter, and if she should discover that a Sister is attached to any particular thing, such as a book, a cell or anything else, she should deprive her of it; and we consider that this should be observed at all costs in every monastery whether they have an income or not. The Prioress should see that this point of the Constitutions is strictly observed, and not permit any violation of it.

(if she has been negligent in this matter, the Provincial should punish her severely.)

49 The money that our Lord will provide as alms is to be placed afterwards in a chest of three keys.

(unless the amount be less than nine or ten ducats, in which case it is to be given to the Procuratrix to pay for whatever the Prioress tells her to purchase. Every evening, before the bell is rung for silence, the Procuratrix is to give an exact and detailed account of her expenditures to the Prioress or to the Council Sisters.)²⁶

The amount of such expenditures is to be entered in the account

²⁶The Prioress will give the Turn Sister what she judges fitting for the daily expenses and the latter will give an exact account to the Prioress. The Prioress can do this directly or by means of a Council Sister. See nos. 160 and 161.

book of the convent, which is to be submitted each year to the Provincial for examination.²⁷

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE FAST AND CLOTHING

50 They shall fast everyday, except Sundays,²⁸ from the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross in September, that is, from the very day itself, until the Feast of the Resurrection. They shall never eat meat, except through necessity, as the Rule commands.

51 On the Fasts of the Church, and every Friday of the year, except from Easter to Pentecost, the use of eggs and dairy products in the refectory is forbidden. The Prioress may, however, give a dispensation in this matter in the case of the sick and those who need it. (And those to whom fish is harmful; but we declare that it is not our intention to take away the Bull of the Crusade where it is enforced.)

52 The habit is to be of coarse serge or woolen cloth of brown color, undyed. They are to use as little material as possible in making the habit. The sleeves shall be narrow, and the same width top and bottom, without pleats. The habit is to be of equal length all around and should reach to the feet. The scapular is to be of the same material and about three inches shorter than the habit. The choir mantle is to be of serge also, but white in color, and equal to the scapular in length. For this mantle as little cloth as possible should be used in order to avoid superfluity. The scapular is to be worn over the toque. The toque is to be made of coarse linen, without pleats. The tunics and sheets are also to be made of woolen serge. The sandals are to be made of hemp; and the stockings, which for decency are worn, should be of woolen or coarse cloth, or something similar. The pillow cases are likewise to be of woolen serge and in case of necessity, linen. The beds are to be without mattresses, but with a sack filled with straw, for experience has proved that this is sufficient for the weak and infirm.²⁹

(The beds are to be without curtains or hangings, but in case of necessity, there may be a screen of matting or coarse cloth before the door, provided it is poor.)

²⁷See no. 163.

²⁸And Christmas and the three following days and the Solemnities of the Church and the Order.

²⁹In places where the use of cloth or materials prescribed in this number is impossible, follow the norm of the Primitive Rule: "Necessity has no law". (Rule no. 10)

53 Each Sister shall have a separate bed. They are not to use carpets, (nor cushions) except for the Church. All these things are distinctive to our Order and must be observed. They are mentioned in detail lest relaxation should ever cause us to forget what our obligation is as Religious.

54 There should never be any addition of color either in clothing or bed covering, even though it be something as small as a band. They should never wear fur lined garments, but in case of infirmity,³⁰ they may use an extra garment of the same coarse woolen material.

55 They should keep their hair cut in order not to loose time in combing it. They are not to use mirrors, nor other curious things, but they are to live in complete self forgetfulness.

CHAPTER IX

ON WORK AND MANUAL LABOR

56 The Nuns are not to engage in very elaborate work, (especially in gold or silver but in spinning or other occupations,) of such a nature as to absorb the mind and hinder the spirit of recollection. They are not to dispute about the price of their work, but accept peaceably what is given to them; and when they find they are not given sufficient, let them not accept such work.

57 A daily task is not to be allotted to the Sisters, but each one should try to labor for the support of the others. Great importance is to be given to what the Rule commands: that whoever would eat should work, as the Apostle St. Paul did. If, however, some should wish to accept a special task, to be finished in a given time, they may do so, but no penance is to be imposed if the work is not finished.

CHAPTER X

ON SILENCE AND RECOLLECTION IN THE CELLS

58 Silence is to be kept from the end of Compline until the end of Lauds³¹ the following day. This silence must be observed very diligently. At other times, the Religious are not to speak to each other without permission, except those holding offices, who may speak when necessary. This permission may be given by the Prioress

³⁰ ... "or necessity."

³¹ The word "Prime" has been changed for that of "Lauds".

when one Sister wishes to speak with another in order to animate her love for her Spouse, or to comfort another when there is need or temptation. This is not to be understood for a question or reply, or for a few words, for then permission is not necessary.

59 The Prioress should provide the Sisters with good books, especially those of "The Carthusian", "Flos Sanctorum", "Contemptus Mundi", ("Oratorio de Religiosos") those of Fray Louis of Granada, and those of Fray Peter of Alcantara; for such reading is not less necessary for the nourishment of the soul than food is for the body.³²

60 Whenever the Nuns are not in acts of Community or engaged in the work of their offices, each Sister shall remain in her cell or in the hermitage assigned to her by the Prioress, where in quiet and recollection she shall do some work, except on Feast Days, and in this way she shall observe what the Rule commands that each one shall live in solitude.

61 No Religious may enter the cell of another without the permission of the Prioress.

62 That occasions for breaking silence by being together may be avoided, there shall never be a common workroom.

CHAPTER XI

ON HUMILITY AND PENANCE

63 The board, on which is indicated the order to be followed in the sweeping of the house, should commence with the name of the Mother Prioress, so that in all things she may give good example. Those who hold the offices of vesterian and provisor shall provide with charity for the needs of the Sisters, both in food and everything else. The Prioress and older Religious should not be treated with greater attention and care than the rest of the community, but all alike, as the Rule commands. In this matter regard is to be had only for necessity and age, but more to necessity than to age, for not infrequently age has fewer needs. Great care should be taken that this point be heeded by all, as it is necessary for many reasons.

64 Neither the Prioress nor any of the Religious should be distinguished by those titles peculiar to the world, such as "Madame", "Miss", and the like, but they should address one another in humble terms. The Prioress and Sub-Prioress and those who have filled the office of Prioress are to be addressed as "Mother" and "Your Reverence", and the other Nuns as "Sister" and "Your Charity".

³²See no. 200.

65 The house, with the exception of the Church, should have nothing ornamental in it; the woodwork should be rough, the house should be small, and the ceilings low, so that what is necessary and not what is superfluous is provided. The walls should be as strong as possible; those of the enclosure high, within which there shall be ample ground so that the Religious may build some hermitages, to which they may retire for prayer, after the example of our Holy Fathers.

66 No one should presume to correct the faults of another, unless in a grave matter (in which case the Sister should be charitably admonished in private, and if after three warnings there be no amendment.) The Prioress and no other Sister is to be informed of it. And since there are Monitresses whose duty it is to notice the faults and defects which are committed, let no one else assume this office, but rather shut her eyes to the faults of others and amend her own. Likewise if anyone is negligent in discharging the duties of her office, or makes mistakes, no one should interfere, unless it be a grave fault, in which case they are obliged to act as has been said above. The Nuns should take great care not to excuse themselves except when absolutely necessary, for in this way they will make great progress in humility.

67 Since everything is done in conformity with our Rule, the penances for faults and failings to do what has been said shall be, for both graver and lighter faults, the penalties indicated at the end of these Constitutions. In all that has been said, the Mother Prioress may act as it seems just to her, with discretion and charity; and she is not to impose penances under pain of sin. (but only under pain of corporal penalty)

68 (Besides the discipline of rods that are ordered by the Ceremonial, which must be taken when the ferial office is recited in Lent and Advent, they shall take the discipline on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, during the rest of the year.)

The discipline is to be taken every Friday of the year for the propagation of the Catholic Faith, (for the life and health of the King, Don Philip,) for the benefactors, for the souls in purgatory, for captives, and for those in mortal sin, reciting the Psalm "Miserere" and the other prayers for the above-mentioned intentions and for the Church. This discipline is to be taken in choir after Matins, and no Sister may take an extra discipline or perform other penances without permission of the Mother Prioress.

CHAPTER XII

ON THE SICK

69 The sick are to be treated with great charity, consideration and compassion in conformity with our poverty. When they have all that is necessary, let them praise God; and if they lack anything

of what the rich have in time of sickness, let them not be afflicted, for they must come prepared for this. To be truly poor is to want necessities in time of greatest need. The Mother Prioress should take great care that those in health should rather be in want of something necessary than that certain comforts should be wanting to the sick, and she should see that the other Sisters visit the sick and console them.

70 Let an infirmarian be appointed who has the charity for this office, and the sick should try to give proof of the virtue they have acquired in health by being patient and giving as little annoyance as possible, especially when the illness is not serious. They should be obedient to the infirmarian, that they may draw profit from their illness and edify their Sisters. They are to use linens and good beds with mattresses and sheets. They are to be cared for with great cleanliness and charity.

71 No Sister should speak of what is served at table, whether it be little or much, well or badly prepared. The Prioress, however, and the Provisor should see that the food which the Lord is pleased to send them be well prepared, that the Sisters may have sufficient with what is served, as they have nothing else for their sustenance.

72 The Sisters should make known to their Prioress and the Novices to their Mistress, their needs with regard to food and clothing, and if they need anything more than what is ordinarily given, even though the need is not very great. This, however, should be first recommended to Our Lord, because our nature often craves more than is necessary and the devil frequently suggests fears in order to deter us from fasting and penance.

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE DEAD

73 The Sacraments are to be administered to the Sisters who are in danger of death as prescribed by the Ceremonial. For each deceased Sister the obsequies are to be celebrated in the convent where she died, with a vigil and a chanted Requiem Mass. If possible, the Gregorian Masses are to be said; but where this cannot be done, let them do as best they can. All the Sisters of the convent shall recite one Office of the Dead.

74 (For every deceased Friar or Nun of the Primitive Rule, each Sister shall say one Office of the Dead, or they may recite it together in Choir; if it is possible they shall also have one Mass celebrated. Those who are not Choir Sisters, shall say thirty Paters and thirty Aves, because the Priars do the same for each of the deceased Nuns.)

CHAPTER XIV

EXHORTATIONS TO THE MOTHER Prioress AND TO THE OTHER RELIGIOUS ON THEIR RESPECTIVE OFFICES

The Prioress:

75 It is the duty of the Mother Prioress to be very watchful and diligent that in all things the Rule and Constitutions be observed. She should be zealous and vigilant as to what regards the good name and enclosure of the Convent. She should see how the work in the various offices is carried out and provide for both spiritual and temporal needs with a mother's love. She should try to be loved so that she may be obeyed.

76 The Prioress is to appoint reliable persons to the offices of Portress and Sacristan whom she may remove at pleasure, lest they should become attached to their office. She is to appoint Nuns to all the other offices as well, except those of the Sub-Prioress and the Council Sisters [Clavaries], who will be elected. (These must know how to write, and at least two must know how to keep accounts.)

The Sub-Prioress:

77 It is the duty of the Mother Sub-Prioress to have care of the choir, and to see that the Divine Office be recited or chanted well and with pause. And in this she shall be very exact.

78 She shall preside in the absence of the Prioress. She must always be with the Community and, when the Prioress is not present, she is to correct the faults committed in the choir and refectory.

The Council Sisters [Clavaries]:

79 Each month the Council Sisters should examine the accounts of the Portress, in the presence of the Prioress; and the Prioress shall consult them on important matters.

80 There is to be a chest of three keys in which the documents and deposits of the Convent are to be kept; one of these keys is to be kept by the Prioress, and the other two by the two senior Council Sisters.

The Sacristan:

81 It is the duty of the Sacristan to have charge of everything belonging to the Church and to see that Our Lord is served there with great reverence and cleanliness.

82 She is to see that the Sisters go to confession in order.

(and not to allow anyone to approach the Confessional] without permission, under penalty of grave fault, unless it were to confess to the one appointed.)³³

The Chief Portress and Turn Sister:

83 The office of Portress and First Turn Sister should be given to one and the same Sister. She is to provide all that has to be bought for the house, if the Lord provides the means for it.

84 At the turn she is to speak in a low voice and in such a way as to edify, and she should provide with charity for the needs of the Sisters.

85 She is to keep a written account of her receipts and expenses. When buying anything she should not dispute or haggle about the price but after bidding for it twice, she is to take it or leave it.

86 She is not to allow any Sister to approach the turn without leave, and if a Sister has to go to the grate, she should then call the companion.

87 She is not to give account to anyone, except to the Prioress, of what is transacted at the turn or grate.

88 Under pain of great fault, she is not to give letters to anyone without first having given them to the Prioress to read. Neither is she to give messages to any Sister or pass them outside, without having previously informed the Prioress.

The Monitress [Zelatrix]:

89 The Monitresses shall take great care in noting the faults they may see, for this is important, and they shall give an account of them to the Prioress.

90 By the command of the Prioress, they may sometimes correct the Sisters in public, even if this is done by younger ones to older ones, that they may be exercised in humility, and those who are admonished should not excuse themselves, even if they are not at fault.

The Mistress of Novices:

91 The Mistress of Novices should be a person of much prudence, prayer and spirit. She should be careful to read the Constitutions to the Novices and to teach them all that they have to do, both in the ceremonies and in mortification. She should always pay more attention to the interior than to the exterior, and to this end

³³See no. 204.

have them give her an account (each day) of the progress they make in prayer, their reflections on the Mystery which is the subject matter of their meditations, and the fruit they draw from it. She is also to teach them how they are to act in times of sweetness and aridity, and also how to break their own will, even in the smallest things. The Sister who has this office should not be negligent in anything, since it is a question of forming souls in whom God makes His abode. She is to treat the novices with compassion and love and is not to be disturbed or surprised at their failings, but she should mortify them, little by little, according to the spiritual strength of each. She should attach more importance to their not failing in the virtues than to strictness of penance. (The Prioress should see that help is given her in teaching the Novices to read.)

92 When the Prioress sees that she has no one suitable to be Novice Mistress, she must herself assume that office, so important is it, and take the work upon herself, appointing some Sisters to help her.

93 Each Sister is to give an account (once a month) to the Prioress of the progress they have made in prayer and the way in which Our Lord is leading them. If they are not doing well, His Majesty will give her light to guide them. For them to do this is an act of humility and mortification and will bring great profit.

94 But this practice, namely, that the novices are to give an account to the Mistress, and the other Sisters to the Prioress, of their prayer and of their spiritual progress is to be understood and fulfilled in such a way that the Sisters may give this account of their own free will because of the great spiritual fruit which they may derive from it, and not from any constraint on the part of the Prioress or Mistress. Therefore, we ordain that the Prioress and Mistress are not to insist on this point with their subjects, and the Religious should know that neither this regulation nor any other contained in these Constitutions binds under pain of sin, (as has been stated in the Prologue to the Constitutions.)

95 Whenever any of the Sisters holding office cannot go to prayer at the usual hour because of their duties, they are to make it at some other hour when they are free. This, however, applies only to those who have been absent from prayer for the whole hour or for the greater part of it.

CHAPTER XV

OF THE CONVENTUAL CHAPTER³⁴

96 The Chapter of faults is to be held once a week, where according to the Rule they will treat of the Observance and the salvation of souls, and the faults of the Sisters shall be corrected with charity; it should be celebrated at the most convenient hour.

97 The bell having been rung and all the Sisters assembled in Chapter, the Prioress or Presider shall give a sign to the Sister who has the office of reader, and she shall read some portion of these Constitution and of the Rule, saying first: "Jube domne benedicere" and the Presider shall answer, "Regularibus disciplinis nos instruere dignetur Magister caelestis". They shall respond: "Amen". Then, if the Prioress should think it fitting to make a few appropriate remarks with reference to what has been read, or to the correction of the Sisters, before doing so, she is to say: "Benedicite". They will respond: "Dominus", and prostrate until they are given the signal to rise. Then they shall rise and sit down in their places; when the exhortation is over and the signal is given by the Prioress, all are to rise to acknowledge their faults in the middle of the Chapter room, beginning with the Novices who shall then leave. Afterwards the Seniors and all will tell their faults to the Presider, but only those faults which are manifest.

98 During the Chapter the Sisters are not to speak except in two cases: to tell simply their own faults or those of the other Sisters, and to answer the Presider whatever is asked of them.

But in order that vices and defects may not remain hidden, the Sisters may tell the Mother Prioress what they have heard or seen, and if it seems opportune to her they may afterwards point it out with charity.

99 The Mother Prioress or the Presider, with the zeal of charity and the love of justice, is to correct faults without dissimulation: that is, those that are clearly manifest or which they acknowledge according to what will be laid down further on.

³⁴For the adequate adaptation of the Constitutions of 1581, to the norms of Vatican Council II and the present Canon Law, it has seemed most convenient to collect in two new chapters the norms previously included in chapters 15 to 20 of the said Constitutions. The mention of faults is continued because the Holy Mother kept them in her Reform as an efficacious means of tending, by purification of the heart and the practice of the virtues, to the union of the soul with God, the principal end of all our life of observance.

The Mother Prioress may mitigate or shorten the punishment due to faults committed without malice and out of weakness.

100 The Sisters must take care not to divulge or make public in any way whatsoever the secrets of the Chapter.

101 All the matters that the Mother Prioress decides upon in Chapter, are not to be discussed afterwards by any Sister, by way of murmuring, because from such conduct, discords follow, the peace of the Community is disturbed, parties are formed and the office of Superiors is usurped.

102 When the Chapter is finished the bell will be rung and when the non-Chapter Nuns have returned, they will say the Psalm, "Deus misereatur" and the other prayers as ordered by the Ceremonial. And the Presider will say: "Sit nomen Domini benedictum". They will respond: "Ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum".

CHAPTER XVI

OF FAULTS AND PENALTIES

103 The faults to which the Holy Mother refers in number 67 of the present Constitutions, are fundamentally the following.

104 If someone is not punctual in entering the Choir with all the Sisters, with order and decorum.

If she enters after the Divine Office has started.

If she does not give all possible care to the prayers and chant of the Divine Office.

If she does not prepare the readings at the time designated for it.

If due to negligence, she does not have in Choir the book with which she is to pray.

If she laughs in Choir or makes others laugh.

If she does not endeavor to properly observe the ceremonies of the Divine Office with all care.

If she arrives late to Community acts.

If she speaks idle words.

If she negligently handles or breaks the things she uses.

To those who accuse themselves of these or like faults, a prayer or prayers are to be imposed and given in penance, in proportion to the faults, or some humble work or a period of silence for having broken the silence of the Order.

105 If she arrives after the first psalm is finished, in which case she will prostrate until she is given the signal to rise.

If she is not attentive to the Divine Office, failing in recollection of eyes.

If knowingly she does not do what is ordered in common, or is not present at a Community act.

If she is negligent in the office entrusted to her.

If being admonished, she excuses herself.

If she shows carelessness or disorder in her habit or headdress.

If she enters the offices of the monastery without leave.

If someone reproves another or speaks to her with impatience.

If she has the habit of not keeping silence.

If she should take without leave something belonging to the Community, or should exchange it with another Sister.

If she should enter the cell of another without leave and without evident necessity.

Those who accuse themselves of such faults or are admonished for them, are to be corrected with charity by the Mother Prioress in proportion to the fault.

106 If someone does not receive with humility the admonition of the Mother Prioress or answers her disrespectfully.

If she fails in charity towards the Sisters or has the habit of speaking ill of the absent.

If she damages the unity or the reputation of the Community.

If by word or by writing she communicates with persons outside the monastery, without permission of the Prioress.

If she sends something outside of the monastery or, without leave, receives it and keeps it for herself.

In these cases the Mother Prioress can impose other sanctions,

such as separation from the Community for some time, deprivation of voice and vote, and deprivation of all offices in the Community. Let her exhort her with humility and patience, and if she should show humility, the Prioress will be merciful to her and all the Community is to help her in her good resolution.

107 In the case of graver faults, the Prioress, with the consent of her Council, can impose a proportionate penalty.

108 There can be yet graver penalties such as deprivation of the offices of Prioress, Sub-Prioress or Council Sisters, the deprivation of active and passive voice, or expulsion from the monastery. These penalties can only be applied according to the norms of law, in the following cases:

Evident and continued rebellion to Superiors.

Transgression of a vow of profession in a grave matter.

Illegitimate exit from the monastery.

Interception of the correspondence of a Superior.

109 Should the Prioress be guilty of any of these faults, she should be deposed from her office according to the sacred canons.

110 The following can also be motives for expulsion, in accordance with the norms of law: the incorrigibility of one who, admonished many times, does not want to amend; the lack of religious spirit; habitual carelessness in the obligations of the consecrated life; grave scandal.

111 The Superior with authority to deprive a Nun of voice and vote, or a Council Sister of her office, is the Diocesan Bishop, who must observe whatever the law prescribes.

CHAPTER XVII (addendum)

NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE CONSECRATED LIFE OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITE NUNS

112 Religious life, as a consecration of the whole person, manifests in the Church the wonderful marriage established by God as a sign of the future life. Thus, the Discalced Carmelite Nuns bring to perfection their full gift as a sacrifice offered to God by which their whole existence becomes a continuous worship of God in love. (Vat. Con. II, *Lumen Gentium*, 44 and Cf. Can. 607-1)

113 This form of life consecrated to God in Carmel constitutes a service to the Church for the extension of the Kingdom of God. (Cf. Can. 573)

St. Teresa of Jesus understood that the love of God must impel one to work generously for the Church, and she founded her monasteries so that by prayer and penance they would help the Church and her Pastors to extend the Kingdom of God throughout the whole world. (Cf. Can. 578)

114 Therefore, the Carmelite Nuns, aware of having received from God a special gift to collaborate in the salvific mission of Christ and of the Church, offer their life of prayer and penance for the good of the Church and of her Pastors, for the salvation of souls. For that purpose they consecrate themselves to God, loved above all, seeking the perfection of charity, to follow Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit. (Cf. Cans. 573-1; 574-1 and 578)

CHAPTER XVIII (addendum)

THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS AND THE COMMON LIFE

115 The evangelical counsels are a divine gift which the Church has received from her Lord and which she always preserves through His grace. (Vat Con. II, *Lumen Gentium*, 43 and Cf. Can. 575)

116 In order to live in the Church the vocation to which she had been called, our Mother St. Teresa chose this means: to follow the evangelical counsels with all possible perfection, and she instituted it as a form of stable life in her monasteries.¹ (Cf. Can. 574-1,2)

117 The Discalced Carmelite Nuns promise with public and solemn vows to live the evangelical counsels of Chastity, Poverty and Obedience, according to the Rule and Constitutions of their Order, and unite themselves in a special way to the Church through charity to which the aforesaid counsels lead. (Cf. Cans. 573-2 and 598-1,2)

1. Chastity

118 The evangelical counsel of chastity assumed for the Kingdom of Heaven entails the observance of perfect continence in virginity, by which the Carmelite, with undivided heart, gives herself totally to Christ in the Church. This perfect continence for the Kingdom of Heaven, supremely esteemed by the Church, fosters sanctity in it in a special way; it is a sign and stimulus of charity and an extraordinary source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world. (Vat. Con. II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 12; Cf. Cans. 598-1 and 599)

¹Cf. *Way*, 1, 2.

119 Chastity for love of the Kingdom of Heaven must be esteemed as an eminent gift of grace, since it frees the heart in a singular way, that it may be more and more inflamed in love for God and for all mankind. (Cf. Vat. Con. II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 12; Cans. 598-1 and 599)

120 Chastity being a fragile and vulnerable gift, exposed to contradictions and dangers due to human weakness, it is necessary that Carmelites not presume on their own strength, but trusting in the assistance of God, practice assiduously prayer, mortification, custody of the senses, the austerity of life prescribed in our laws, penances of supererogation, religious modesty, the continuous and permanent wearing of the holy habit, and the keeping of papal enclosure. Likewise, they will zealously close the doors of their monasteries to all that can separate them from the fervor of charity, or that can tarnish in the least the delicacy with which this virtue must be guarded. (Cf. Cans. 587-1 and 666)

121 Carmelites should bear in mind that our Holy Mother St. Teresa reminds them constantly of their glorious title of spouses of Jesus Christ,² and should guard their heart with all vigilance,³ so that they can arrive by love at transformation in the Son of God, their Spouse, and be able to enjoy their beloved Spouse, Who is the treasure hidden in the field of their soul.⁴ In Him, they will live profoundly united to their brothers and sisters and will find that profound peace⁵ and that joyful, pleasant, chaste, pure, spiritual, glad and loving knowledge of God which the pure of heart find in all things.⁶ (Cf. Can. 598-1, 2)

2. Poverty

122 In order to imitate Christ, who, being rich, made Himself poor for us, the Discalced Carmelites renounce earthly goods, in spirit and in fact, and they undertake to lead an austere and laborious life, depending on their Superior for the use and disposition of goods in common and observing faithfully all that is prescribed in the present Constitutions regarding the administration and renunciation of goods. (Vat. Con. II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 13; Cf. Can. 600; *Constitutions* 158-163; 209-211.)

²Cf. *Way*, 2, 1; 7, 8; 13, 2; 22, 7; 26,3, 6; 28, 3; *Conceptions* 2, 5.

³Cf. *Spiritual Canticle*, 1, 10.

⁴Cf. *Ibid.*, 1, 9.

⁵Cf. Paul VI, *Apost. Exhort.*, *Evangelica Testificatio*, 13.

⁶Cf. *Ascent III*, 26, 6.

123 The buildings of their monasteries must be poor,⁷ and the Carmelites, without relying on human artifices,⁸ nor occupying their thoughts with this,⁹ must trust in Divine Providence for their sustenance, be content with a moderate means of support, help themselves with the work of their hands and also help the poor and needy according to their means. (Cf. Cans. 598; 635-2; 640)

124 Discalced Carmelites ought to consider often "the riches that are found in holy poverty",¹⁰ and not fear it; rather they ought to desire it, count it as a special favor of God,¹¹ and keep it in every way, "in house, in dress, in words, and much more in thought".¹² Let them suffer with joy the consequences of poverty, endeavoring not to lack the desire to be in want.¹³ Let them strive to practice the holy virtue of humility, because the poor are neither honored nor esteemed by the world, rather poverty and humility almost always go together.¹⁴ (Cf. Can. 598-1)

3. Obedience

125 The evangelical counsel of obedience, after the example of Christ who became obedient unto death, requires willing submission to legitimate Superiors. These stand in the place of God, and thus one must render obedience with a spirit of faith and love. (Cf. Vat. Con. II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 14; Cf. Can. 601)

126 The Discalced Carmelites profess their submission to the Church in a special way after the example of their holy Foundress who consecrated her life and work to the service of the Church, in such a way, that she would have preferred to die a thousand deaths rather than depart in the least from its precepts and counsels.¹⁵ Each one of the nuns must obey the Supreme Pontiff as her highest Superior, in virtue of the vow of obedience. (Cf. Cans. 590-2 and 592-2)

⁷Cf. *Way*, 2, 9.

⁸Cf. *Ibid.*, 2, 1.

⁹Cf. *Ibid.*, 2, 4.

¹⁰*Way*, 2, 5.

¹¹Cf. *Conceptions*, 2, 8.

¹²*Way*, 2, 8.

¹³St. John of the Cross, *Letters*, 19, 2.

¹⁴Cf. *Way*, 2, 6.

¹⁵Cf. *Life*, 33, 5.

127 Carmelites should always have in mind that obedience is the true way to subject the will to reason and thus "to employ it purely and sincerely in the service of God".¹⁶ Therefore, they should obey with a spirit of faith, keeping in mind the words of the Lord who says: "He who hears you, hears me" (Lk. 10:16).¹⁷ They should always be ready to obey as if Christ were commanding through their Prioress,¹⁸ whose will the Lord very much wants to be fulfilled as if it were His own.¹⁹ Try to "go cheerfully about whatever services you are ordered to do"²⁰ and accept "the bitter as happily as the delightful, knowing that His Majesty desires it."²¹ (Cf. Cans. 598-1 and 601)

128 Let humility and obedience shine out from them all²² and since the virtue of obedience can do all things²³ and gives strength for everything, let them take great care to observe this vow with the greatest perfection,²⁴ since "there is no path which leads more quickly to the highest perfection than that of obedience."²⁵ (Cf. Cans. 598-1 and 601)

4. Union in Charity

129 In the monasteries of Discalced Carmelite Nuns, by the express will of their Foundress, St. Teresa of Jesus, Community life and separation from the world must shine forth as characteristics of consecrated life. Jesus Christ is the center of this life hidden in God, according to the words of the Gospel: "Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them";²⁶ and according to what He Himself manifested to St. Teresa of Jesus when

¹⁶*Foundations*, 5, 11.

¹⁷*Cf. Foundations*, 5, 12.

¹⁸*Cf. Maxims*, 26.

¹⁹*Cf. Int. Cast.*, concl. 2.

²⁰*Way*, 18, 5.

²¹*Foundations*, 5, 10.

²²*Letters* 264, to the Nuns in Seville.

²³*Cf. Life*, 18, 8.

²⁴*Cf. Way*, 18, 8.

²⁵*Foundations*, 5, 10.

²⁶*Cf. Matthew* 18:20.

promising that He would remain in our midst.²⁷ (Cf. Can. 607-2, 3)

130 Community life, by which all Carmelite Nuns are united to Christ as in a special family, is to be arranged in such a way that it becomes a mutual support for all in the fulfillment of their proper vocation. (Cf. *Perfectae Caritatis*, 15 and Can. 602) In this way each Carmelite monastery will be "a little dwelling of God, an abode of His glory, a paradise of His delight, a dovecote of the Virgin, Our Lady, where the mystery of the Church, the Spouse of Christ, should be lived in its fullness, in that austere and joyful way characteristic of the Teresian heritage".²⁸

131 In order that God will thus be pleased to dwell in the monastery, let the nuns strive to have only one heart and one soul, honoring each other as true sisters. Thus they will be an example of the universal reconciliation and harmony brought about by the Redemption of Christ. (Cf. Vat. Con. II, *Perfectae Caritatis*, 15 and Can. 602)

5. Formulas of Profession

132 For the Profession of Temporary Vows

I, Sister N. of N., make my profession of temporary vows for three years and I promise obedience, chastity and poverty to God our Lord, to the Blessed ever-Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and to you, Reverend Mother Prioress and to your successors, according to the primitive Rule of the Order of Discalced Carmelites and our Constitutions.

For the Solemn Profession

I, Sister N. of N., make my solemn profession and I promise obedience, chastity and poverty to God our Lord, to the Blessed ever-Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and to you, Reverend Mother Prioress and to your successors, according to the primitive Rule of the Order of Discalced Carmelites and our Constitutions, until death.

CHAPTER XIX (addendum)

JURIDICAL STATUS OF THE MONASTERIES ERECTION AND SUPPRESSION OF THE SAME

133 The Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel constitutes in the Church a spiritual family to which belong equally

²⁷Cf. *Life*, 32, 11.

²⁸John Paul II, Homily at the Mass closing the 4th Centenary of the death of St. Teresa of Jesus, Nov. 1, 1982, Avila.

the Carmelite Fathers and the Discalced Carmelite Nuns. Between them there ought to exist a unity of spirit and of doctrine, but not necessarily a dependence of government and jurisdiction.

As regards their juridical condition, our monasteries, conserving spiritual unity with the entire Order, have no other major superior above the Prioress, except the Holy See, nor are they associated with the Discalced Brothers in such wise that the Superior General should have any power over them whatsoever. Consequently, they are entrusted to the vigilance of the diocesan Bishop according to the norm of law. (Cf. Can. 615)

134 These monasteries, erected by a formal decree of the Apostolic See, are of Pontifical Right and depend immediately on the same in regards to internal governance and discipline. (Cf. Cans. 589, 593 and 609)

135 The Church acknowledges for these monasteries a just autonomy of life and above all of governance, so that they enjoy their own discipline and preserve their own doctrinal, spiritual and liturgical patrimony. It belongs to local Ordinaries to safeguard and protect the autonomy. (Cf. Can. 586-1, 1)

136 The juridical status of a monastery must be determined in the act of foundation or by special disposition of the Apostolic See.

137 Every Community of Discalced Carmelite Nuns must live in a monastery legitimately constituted under the authority of a Prioress, who is by law a major superior, designated according to the norm of law. (Cf. Cans. 608 and 613-2)

Each monastery is to have a public Church in which the Holy Eucharist is celebrated and reserved so that it truly is the center of the Community. (Cf. Can. 608)

138 To erect a monastery permission of the Apostolic See is required and the consent of the diocesan Bishop, given in writing. (Cf. Can. 609-1, 2)

139 The erection of a monastery will take place with due regard for its usefulness for the Church and the good of the Order, and insuring the necessary conditions so that the nuns may duly live the life proper to Carmel. (Cf. Can. 610-2)

Without neglecting sufficient attention to temporal needs, the nuns who undertake a new foundation will rest confident in the Providence of God. (Cf. Can. 610-2)

140 The diocesan Bishop, under whose vigilance our monasteries are, will inform the Holy See in cases in which the suppression of a monastery should be initiated. In the same manner the disposition of the goods of the suppressed monastery will be decided. (Cf. Can. 616-4)

CHAPTER XX (addendum)

GOVERNMENT OF THE MONASTERY

1. The Prioress and her Councillors

141 For the Office of Prioress a suitable religious, who has completed thirty-five years of age and five years since her Solemn Profession in the Order, will be elected for a period of three years in conformity to the law in Canons 623, 624-1; and the Constitutions 1, 5. Beginning with the third election, at least two-thirds of the votes are required. (Cf. Can. 181-1)

142 The Prioress of a monastery of Discalced Carmelite Nuns is a major superior and has toward the monastery the obligations and rights determined by universal law and the present Constitutions. (Cf. Cans. 613 and 620)

143 The religious legitimately elected for the Office of Prioress receives from God, through the ministry of the Church, the authority to govern the monastery and to lead the nuns in the path of their surrender to God according to the norms of the present Constitutions. In this way, she shall earnestly strive to form a community in which God is sought after and loved above all else. (Cf. Cans. 618 and 619)

144 The Prioress will have her Council consisting of three Councillors designated by the name Council Sisters [Clavaries], one of whom will always be the Sub-Prioress. They will be elected by the Chapter of the community for the same length of time as the Prioress. The Sub-Prioress as well as the Council Sisters should collaborate with the Prioress in accordance with number 79 of the present Constitutions. (Cf. Can. 627-1)

2. The Chapter and the Elections

145 The Chapter of the monastery is formed by all the Nuns in solemn vows under the presidency of the Prioress. (Cf. Cans. 631-1 and 632)

146 It is within the competence of the Chapter:

- a) To maintain, in close collaboration with the Mother Prioress, the spirit of the Community, fidelity to the mind and aims of our Holy Mother Foundress and the sound traditions of the Order and the Monastery.
- b) To discuss and resolve by secret vote, matters within its competence according to the norms of these Constitutions. (Cf. Can. 631-1, 2)

147 The consultative bodies of the Prioress - the Council and Chapter - will operate in conformity with the nature of Carmelite

Monasteries and the spirit of their Holy Foundress. (Cf. Can 633-2; Constitutions 77, 78, 79)

148 The election of the Prioress of the monastery will be presided over by the diocesan Bishop or his delegate. (Cf. Cans. 615 and 625-2)

149 The scrutiny will be done in conformity with the law and the Constitutions. The President will designate two priests who will act as scrutators. (Cf. Can. 164 and Constitutions, 27)

150 In all that refers to elections and is not determined in the present Constitutions, the norms of universal law are to be observed. (Cf. Cans. 164 to 179)

151 Once the Prioress has taken possession of her office, the Chapter will proceed to the election of the Sub-Prioress and the three Council Sisters [Clavaries]. The Mother Prioress will preside over this election, the two senior Council Sisters [Clavaries] acting as scrutators. (Cf. Can. 632)

152 The nuns, having in mind God alone and the good of their monastery, will elect those whom, in the Lord's Presence, they consider to be more worthy and suitable. Let them avoid procuring votes for themselves or for others. They may however, exchange impressions for guidance regarding what is best. (Cf. Can. 626)

3. Postulation

153 If a canonical impediment, which can be and usually is dispensed, prevents the election of one whom the electors consider to be most suitable and whom they prefer, the nuns can, by way of vote, postulate her from the competent authority. The welfare of the community and the choice of the majority of the Chapter are considered sufficient motives to proceed with a postulation. (Cf. Can. 180)

154 For a postulation to be valid at least two-thirds of the votes are required. In cases not foreseen by these Constitutions, the procedures prescribed by the general legislation of the Church shall be followed. (Cf. Cans. 180 to 183)

4. Visitation of the Monasteries

155 Our Monasteries are subject to the vigilance of the diocesan Bishop according to the norm of Canon 615. Therefore, the competent authority to visit them is the said Bishop or his Delegate. (Cf. Can. 628-2)

156 The Visitor has the right to be informed regarding the observance of the norms of the Church which concern contemplative life, religious discipline and the manner in which the norms referring to papal enclosure are observed. (Cf. Can. 628-1 and 2)

157 The nuns are to act in a trusting manner with the Visitor, whose legitimate questions they are obliged to answer with truth and charity. No one is permitted to divert the nuns from this obligation in any way, nor impede the purpose of the visitation. (Cf. Can. 628-3)

5. Administration of Goods

158 A Carmelite Monastery is a juridic person according to law and is capable of acquiring, possessing, administering and alienating goods, movable and immovable. (Cf. Cans. 634 to 640)

Nevertheless, whatever might be contrary in any way to the norms of numbers 46 to 49 of the present Constitutions is to be avoided. (Cf. Can. 634-1, 2)

159 The goods of the monastery, if it has any, are to be administered according to the norms of the universal law of the Church and the present Constitutions. They must be registered under the name of the juridic person of the monastery, and only in exceptional cases and due to the exigencies of civil law can they be put under the name of physical persons. In this case, one will endeavor to make up a contract recognized by civil law, in such a way that the rights of the monastery will remain safeguarded, following the dispositions of the competent ecclesiastical authority. (Cf. Can. 635-2)

160 The acts of ordinary administration can be validly made by the Prioress or, if necessary, by a nun whom the Prioress will designate. This one will always act under the direction of the Prioress who, in turn, will ask the approval of her Council in the cases foreseen by law. (Cf. Can. 636-1, 2)

161 Ordinary administration includes all expenses made for food, the house, ordinary maintenance of the monastery and annexed places; taxes and assessments, the salary of dependents, stipends and donations or assistance to needy persons. (Cf. Can. 638-1)

162 For the validity of alienation and any other transaction in which the patrimonial condition of the juridic person can be adversely affected, the written permission of the local Ordinary is required. But if it concerns a transaction which exceeds the amount defined by the Holy See for that region, or goods donated to the Church in virtue of a vow, or of objects of artistic or historical value, the permission of the aforementioned Holy See is required. (Cf. Can. 638-3 and 4)

163 The procedure for receipts and expenditures will be in accordance with No. 49 of these Constitutions. The book of accounts must be signed by the Prioress and her Council. (Cf. Can. 637)

CHAPTER XXI (addendum)

ADMISSION AND FORMATION

1. Admission of Aspirants

164 The right to admit aspirants pertains to the Mother Prioress with the deliberative vote of the Chapter of the monastery. (Cf. Can. 641)

165 In addition to the conditions required by universal law and by No. 7 of the present Constitutions, the character, health and maturity of aspirants can be verified, if it is necessary, by having recourse to the advice of experts, safeguarding what is established in Canon 220 of the Code of Canon Law. (Cf. Cans. 597 and 643)

166 Aspirants, before being admitted, must present baptismal and confirmation certificates as well as attest to their free status. (Cf. Can. 643)

167 The Mother Prioress, if she judges necessary, can ask for other information, even with the obligation of secrecy. (Cf. Can. 645-4)

168 The aspirant, before beginning the novitiate, will spend six months of postulancy under the direction of the Mistress of Novices, to verify that she is suited for the life of Carmel, and to receive an adequate preparation. During this time she is obliged to observe the law of enclosure. (Cf. Can. 597-2)

2. Novitiate

169 The time of postulancy being completed, the aspirant, if she is considered suitable according to the norm of No. 12 of the Constitutions, will make a retreat of eight days and will begin the Novitiate with the reception of the habit. (Cf. Can. 643-2)

170 The purpose of the novitiate is to give the novices a more intimate knowledge of their divine vocation and that which is proper to the Order; to enable them to experience the way of life in the monastery, to be imbued in mind and heart with its spirit, and have their intention and suitability tested. (Cf. Can. 646)

171 The novitiate must be made in a part of the monastery designated for this purpose and reserved exclusively for the novices. However, these will participate with the community in all acts in common, thus maintaining an opportune contact with the community according to the directives which the Prioress and Mistress will give by mutual agreement, in conformity with the proper family character of our monasteries. (Cf. Can. 647-2 and 3)

172 To be valid, the novitiate must last twelve continuous months in the same monastery. (Cf. Can. 648-1)

In no case must it extend beyond two years. (Cf. Can. 648-3)

173 Only for a just cause may the novitiate be interrupted. If absence from the novitiate lasts more than three months, be they continuous or interrupted, the novitiate is invalid. Any absence exceeding fifteen days must be made up. The Prioress has the authority to anticipate first profession if the circumstances warrant it, but not by more than fifteen days. (Cf. Can. 649-1 and 2)

174 The formation during the novitiate will consist principally in instructing and directing the novices gradually toward the perfection proper to the Discalced life, in which they will have Jesus Christ as a model in that virginal and poor life which He chose for Himself and for His Mother, the Virgin, particularly during the years of His hidden life in Nazareth.

To attain this ideal, the plan of formation to be followed is that proposed by St. Teresa of Jesus in the *Way of Perfection*, which she wrote for her nuns, as well as the other writings of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross.

Also proper to the novitiate is an initiation into the liturgical life, since Carmelites are called to participate in the duty and in the highest honor of praising God in the name of the Church. (Cf. Vat. Con. II, *Lumen Gentium*, 46; *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 85; Can. 650-1)

175 The direction of the novitiate is reserved solely to the Mistress under the direction of the Prioress. But if circumstances warrant it, the Prioress may designate a nun to help the Mistress, one who will comply with the latter in all that refers to the novitiate. (Cf. Cans. 650-2 and 651-2)

176 With the consent of the Superior, the Prioress will appoint as Mistress of Novices a nun who has completed thirty years of age and three from her solemn profession, and who has no other obligations which can impede her from fulfilling this duty. (Cf. Can. 651-1 and 3)

177 Besides diligently observing all that is prescribed in No. 91 of these Constitutions, the Mistress will teach the novices to find in the teachings of St. Teresa of Jesus, the conditions that the Vatican Council requires of monasteries of contemplative life, i.e.: solitude, silence, continual prayer and generous penance, and she will teach them to live them according to the particular charism of their Holy Foundress. Following her example, they will have as their greatest title of glory that of daughter of the Church. Consequently, she should foster in their hearts a profound love and submission to the Vicar of Christ and to all the pastors of Holy Church. Likewise, she should strive to help them know and love the history, life, spirituality and sound traditions of the Order of Carmel. (Cf. Can. 652-2)

178 Conscious of their own responsibility, the novices are to

collaborate actively with the Mistress so that they may faithfully respond to the grace of a divine vocation. (Cf. Can. 652-3)

179 For its part, the community should collaborate in the formation of the novices by the example of its life and by prayer. (Cf. Can. 652-4)

180 During the year of novitiate the novices should not be employed in offices or occupations which do not contribute directly to their proper formation. (Cf. Can. 652-5)

181 During the novitiate the novice may freely leave the monastery. On her part, the Mother Prioress, for just motives, after having listened to the Mistress, may dismiss a novice. (Cf. Can. 653-1)

182 When the novitiate is completed, if the novice is considered suitable, she is to be admitted to temporary profession, according to the norm of No. 12 of the present Constitutions; otherwise, let her be dismissed. In case of doubt, the Prioress may extend the time of probation, but not more than six months. Before temporary profession the novice must make a retreat of eight days. (Cf. Can. 653-2)

3. Profession

183 By religious profession the novice commits herself by public vow to observe the three evangelical counsels. She is consecrated to God through the ministry of the Church and is incorporated into the Order and her Community with the rights and obligations determined by universal law and the present Constitutions. (Cf. Cans. 654 and 658)

184 Temporary profession will be made for three years. (Cf. Can. 655)

185 For the validity of temporary profession the novice must have completed eighteen years of age and must have the other requisites demanded by universal law and No. 17 of these Constitutions. (Cf. Can. 656)

186 After first profession the formation of the nuns will continue and thus for at least two years they will remain in the novitiate under the direction of the Mistress. The latter, continuing the work begun in the novitiate, will employ her greatest effort in guiding the newly professed according to the norms prescribed by the Primitive Rule and these Constitutions. Taking as a manual of perfection the writings of the Holy Founders, she will guide the professed toward the supreme goal of every Carmelite, which is union of the soul with God. (Cf. Can. 659-1 and 2)

187 During the time dedicated to the first formation, the nuns are not to be given duties which hinder it, but they are to be

integrated progressively into the life and offices of the community. (Cf. Can. 660-2)

188 The time to leave the novitiate and join the community will take place in the third year of this second stage of formation, and it will be determined by the Mother Prioress according to the special circumstances of each one. (Cf. Can. 659-2)

189 The period of temporary vows being completed, the religious who freely requests it and is judged suitable is to be admitted to profession of solemn vows. Otherwise she must leave the Order, unless for just motives the Mother Prioress with the deliberative vote of the Chapter grants her an extension for a period which must not exceed six years. (Cf. Can. 657-1 and 2)

190 Solemn profession may be anticipated for a just cause, but not by more than three months. It is to be preceded by a retreat of eight full days. (Cf. Can. 657)

191 In the case of a novice who is in danger of death, the Prioress may admit her to profession, even though she has not completed the novitiate. If she recovers, she will remain in the same condition as if she had not made vows. (Cf. Can. 657-3)

192 The professed of temporary vows enjoy the same indulgences, privileges and spiritual graces as those of perpetual vows, and should they die, they have a right to the same suffrages, according to the norm of No. 73 of the present Constitutions. (Cf. Can. 654)

193 For the validity of solemn profession, besides the conditions indicated in Canon 656-3, 4 and 5, it is required:

- a) to have completed 21 years of age;
- b) to have spent three years in temporary profession, unless it is anticipated for a just cause, but not by more than three months;
- c) to have given proof of possessing the qualifications required in No. 17 of the Constitutions. (Cf. Can. 658)

194 The profession will be public and will be made in the hands of the Prioress, with the formula of vows approved in the Constitutions.

The act of profession, signed by the professed, the Prioress and the Council Sisters [Clavaries], will be kept in the archives of the community. If possible, the Prioress should send notice of the solemn profession to the Pastor of the Church where the professed was baptized. (Cf. Cans. 535-2 and 654)

195 By temporary profession the religious is incorporated into the

Order and into her own monastery with the rights and obligations determined by the Constitutions and common law. In making solemn profession, the incorporation is definitive and moreover the professed acquires active and passive voice. (Cf. Can. 654)

CHAPTER XXII (addendum)

OBLIGATIONS AND RIGHTS OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITE NUNS

197 The Carmelite Nuns, having as their supreme rule of life the following of Christ as proposed in the Gospel and expressed in the Rule, Constitutions and writings of St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross, must order their lives according to the spirit they have professed and the vocation they have received from God. (Cf. Cans. 598-2 and 662)

198 Contemplation of the divine mysteries and assiduous union with God in prayer is not only the first and foremost duty of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, but it constitutes the very essence of their vocation and the one and only apostolate of their lives immolated totally in contemplation. Therefore, they should strive to make progress each day in divine intimacy by means of conversation with God, converting their whole life into prayer. (Cf. Can. 663-1)

199 The nuns are to pay the greatest homage to the Most Holy Eucharist, participating in the celebration of Holy Mass and receiving this most Holy Sacrament in accord with what is prescribed in No. 44 of the present Constitutions. They are to adore Him as the summit and source of their entire consecrated life. They are to celebrate the Divine Office, the two hours of prayer prescribed by the Constitutions, and other exercises of piety before the Blessed Sacrament. They are to visit the Blessed Sacrament frequently, in so far as it is compatible with the monastic life of Carmel. (Cf. Cans. 608, 663-2 and 3)

200 They are to observe faithfully the time prescribed for spiritual reading, in which they will read Sacred Scripture and the writings of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross, which must constitute the main source of their formation and their spiritual life. They ought also to read assiduously the writings of St. Therese of the Child Jesus.

Besides the books indicated in No. 59 of these Constitutions, the Prioress is to insure that they have other approved books, such as the writings of the Fathers of the Church and the saints; commentaries on Sacred Scripture and Liturgy, histories of the Church and of the Order, and others which could help the nuns to deepen their interior life and their Carmelite spirituality. (Cf. Can. 663-3)

201 The communities of Discalced Carmelite Nuns are obliged to celebrate the entire Divine Office every day in choir. If for some reason, the nuns who have made solemn profession are not able to recite any one of the canonical hours in choir, they will pray them individually. In this matter, the Prioress can dispense because of sickness or another just cause. (Cf. Vat. Con. II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 95; Can. 663-3; *General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours*, 31-3)

202 Let all the Sisters enter deeply into the spirit of the Sacred Liturgy. They should exercise the greatest care and dedication in the fulfillment of the rubrics and ceremonies. They should strive to offer the celebration worthily, attentively and devoutly, and above all let the mind be in accord with the voice, so that their praise be the intimate expression of their union with Christ and with His Church. Thus, the celebration of the Divine Office will be a source of piety and of manifold divine graces. (Cf. Can. 663-3; *General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours*, 19)

203 As true daughters of the Virgin, the Carmelite Nuns will honor their Most Holy Mother with the following devotions:

- a) The solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel will be celebrated as the principal feast of the Order, and all other feast days of the Virgin will be celebrated according to their rank.
- b) Every Saturday, when the rubrics permit, the Mass of Our Lady on Saturday will be celebrated in their Churches.
- c) Every day after Compline they will chant the Marian antiphon which corresponds to the Office of the liturgical season.
- d) On Saturdays and on the eves of the solemnities of the Most Holy Virgin, the *Salve Regina* will be solemnly chanted in choir.
- e) The holy Rosary, the litany of Our Lady and the *Angelus Domini* will be prayed in community every day.

In addition, each community may show its filial piety toward the Blessed Virgin by means of other exercises of piety, according to the usages and customs proper to each monastery. (Cf. Can. 663-3 and 4)

Likewise, the Prioress will take care that the community make an annual retreat and that the nuns have some days of spiritual retreat according to the customs of each monastery. (Cf. Can. 663-5)

204 In each community there will be an ordinary confessor, approved by the local Ordinary. He will be chosen and proposed by the Mother Prioress after an exchange of opinions with the community.

The Prioress will see to it that the nuns frequently approach the sacrament of Penance according to the norm of law and in conformity with No. 45 of these Constitutions. (Cf. Cans. 630-2, 3 and 664)

205 The Prioress has the right to propose to the local Ordinary a suitable priest to be chaplain of the community. (Cf. Cans. 564 and 565)

206 Before the profession of temporary vows, the novice who possesses goods is to cede the administration of them to whomsoever she prefers during the whole time that she is bound by the said vows. She needs permission from the Mother Prioress of the monastery to modify these dispositions for a just cause and to place any act whatsoever in matters of temporal goods. Whatever the religious acquires through her personal work, she acquires for the monastery, as well as what she receives in any manner by way of pension, subsidy or insurance, or in any other form. (Cf. Can. 668-1, 2, 3)

207 Let the Prioress exercise the greatest zeal in fostering in the community, love for and obedience to Holy Church and to her holy Pastors, since the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, as daughters of St. Teresa, having consecrated themselves to the Church in a particular manner, contribute to her salvific mission and belong by their state to the life and holiness of the same.

She should give the community an account of the documents of the magisterium of the Church and ensure their observance in what refers to the nuns.

She will inform the Apostolic See regarding the status and life of the monastery at the time and in the manner determined by the Holy See. (Cf. Cans. 207-2 and 592-1, 2)

208 Because of the very nature of the poverty professed in the Order, the Carmelite Nuns must renounce their goods totally. They will make this renunciation before solemn profession in such a way that it takes effect from the day of the profession itself and, if possible, is also valid in civil law. In virtue of this radical renunciation, the nun loses the capacity to acquire and possess other goods. Therefore, acts contrary to the solemn vow of poverty are invalid. (Cf. Can. 668-4)

209 As a sign of their consecration to God and as a testimony of poverty and penance, the nuns will wear the habit of the Order continually and permanently according to what is prescribed in No. 52 of the present Constitutions. (Cf. Can. 669)

210 The nuns may write letters exempt from all inspection to the Apostolic See, to the Legate of the Roman Pontiff in the nation, to the Superior of the monastery and to the Prioress, in the case of her being absent. Likewise, they may receive letters from them under the same conditions. (Cf. Cans. 587-1 and 630-1)

211 The monasteries of Discalced Carmelite Nuns, being dedicated exclusively to contemplation, always have a distinguished place in the Mystical Body of Christ: for they offer an extraordinary sacrifice of praise to God, they enrich the people of God with the most abundant fruits of sanctity, they move it by their example, and make it grow with their hidden apostolic fruitfulness. They should value and appreciate the active apostolate for which they should pray constantly and offer the sacrifice of their life and their work. However urgent the needs of the active apostolate, the Carmelite Nuns cannot be summoned to collaborate in any kind of pastoral ministry. (Cf. Can. 674)

CHAPTER XXIII (addendum)

PAPAL ENCLOSURE IN THE MONASTERIES OF DISCALCED CARMELITE NUNS

212 The public witness to be rendered by Carmelite Nuns to Christ and to the Church entails a total separation from the world, as required by the character and purpose of the reform of St. Teresa of Jesus.

Thus, the monasteries of Carmelites must observe Papal enclosure according to the norms established by the Apostolic See in the present Constitutions. (Cf. Cans. 607-3 and 667-1, 2, 3)

213 The Discalced Carmelite Nuns, by special vocation and without undervaluing those who, inspired by the Holy Spirit, work for the building up of the earthly city, are led to the solitude of the cloister so as to remain entirely consecrated to contemplation. Persevering in union of prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, they implore the fire of the Holy Spirit upon the whole world. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum, VI; Carmelite Statute on Enclosure, I, 1*)

214 The law of enclosure derives, therefore, from an exigency or profound need for solitude and retirement, in order to create in this way a sort of oasis of prayer, of fraternal life, of spiritual emulation and of interior and exterior freedom so as to be able to reach with greater facility the plenitude of divine intimacy which is the fundamental and specific apostolate of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns on behalf of the Mystical Body of Christ. (Cf. *Carmelite Statute on Enclosure, I, 2*)

215 The law of enclosure applies to all parts of the house inhabited by the nuns, including the garden and yard, reserved to them. Excluded from it are the public church and the exterior sacristy, the accommodations for the use of the chaplains, guests and persons dedicated to the service of the monastery; access to the enclosure door (entrance hall), the turn and the exterior speakroom. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum, VI*)

216 All parts within the enclosure will be encircled by a high wall according to No. 65 of these Constitutions.

If any part of the convent or garden is visible from the exterior, the necessary means will be taken to impede seeing persons outside (the enclosure) or being seen by them. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 9)

217 The door at the entrance of the monastery, which will be habitually locked will have two different locks and two keys, of which one will always be carried by the Mother Prioress and the other by the Turn Sister. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 3)

218 If it is necessary for the service of the community, there may be another door in the garden. It also will have two locks and two keys, and two sisters will always come to open it. Likewise this will be done where there is a door to attend to the needs of the Church. Apart from these cases, no other doors to the exterior are permitted. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 3)

219 Near the enclosure door there will be a turn for incoming and outgoing deliveries which can be passed through it, without the need of opening the enclosure door.

It will be arranged in such a way that the nuns cannot be seen from outside nor can any person fit through it. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 4, 9)

220 The material separation between the choir reserved to the nuns and the Church will be made by means of an iron grate placed over a fixed and immovable support and another formed by wooden bars in a vertical position. The separation between the two will be approximately 20 inches. All will be so arranged that the altar and the lecturns may easily be seen by the nuns during liturgical celebrations for a more fruitful participation in these without their being exposed to the gaze of outsiders. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 4, 9)

221 Apart from the time of liturgical celebrations, the grates must remain covered on the inside of the choir by a curtain. This curtain may be drawn aside during the celebration of the Divine Office and during mental prayer. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 4, 9)

222 Near the choir grate there will be a small window for the reception of Holy Communion and of the veil during the ceremony of solemn profession. It will always be locked and the key will be kept by the Prioress. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 4, 9)

223 A confessional should be provided in a suitable place, so arranged that the confessor is outside the enclosure and the nun who is confessing is within. Between the confessor and the penitent there will be a small metal grate covered with a curtain, which must be attached and fixed. The confessional will be

habitually locked and the key kept by the Prioress.²⁹ (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 9)

224 In the Sacristy there will be another turn similar to the one at the entrance to the monastery. It shall be used only for the service of what pertains to divine worship. Only she who has the office of Sacristan may speak through this turn. Every night the turn will be locked and the key given to the Prioress. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 4)

225 In the speakroom, separation will be made by means of a wall approximately 20 inches high, upon which shall be fixed two iron grates arranged in such a way that they ensure total separation between the nuns and the visitors.³⁰ The distance between one grate and another will be approximately 20 inches. The speakroom will normally be locked with a key which is kept by the Prioress. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 4, 9)

226 The Mother Prioress, with at least the habitual consent of the Superior, can authorize the nuns to leave the enclosure in the following cases:

- a) To exercise their civil rights and those administrative acts which cannot be performed otherwise.
- b) To go to a Doctor and to fulfill his prescriptions relating to health.
- c) To accompany a sick nun.
- d) For indispensable needs that the work of the nuns may require or for an apprenticeship in some manual work in another monastery, for the least time possible.
- e) For necessary surveillance of places situated outside the enclosure but within the precincts of the monastery, and to attend to the needs of the monastery Church, but only when it is locked and no outsider is within it. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 7)

227 In these cases of egress, two nuns will always go together, unless the Prioress, for a just cause, permits otherwise. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 9)

228 All the nuns may leave the enclosure in case of imminent danger. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 7a)

²⁹*Visitation of Convents*, 15.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 15.

229 Except in cases of egress for reasons of health, the Prioress must obtain the previous consent of the Ordinary when the stay outside the enclosure might be longer than a week. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 7b, 5)

230 For any other egress, the Prioress must request the consent of the local Ordinary. To prolong an egress more than three months, permission must be obtained from the Holy See. However, this must not be done except in extraordinary cases and for grave reasons. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 7c, d)

231 To visit the site of or oversee the building of a new foundation, the nuns may go out as often as necessary, not dedicating to it more time than is required and informing the local Ordinary of the egress. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 9)

232 In order that they may withdraw from the world and unite themselves more closely to God alone, and in Him find and love all mankind with a superior love (following the spirit of St. Teresa of Jesus and her norms) the Carmelite Nuns will not be visited within the enclosure by their parents and relatives; nor will they go out to visit them even in their last moments.

By carrying out to the end this evangelical exigency which they voluntarily embraced, they hope to obtain for their own a good greater than that of their personal assistance, namely the eternal life promised by Jesus Christ to those who leave parents, brothers and sisters for His sake. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 9, 15)

233 The Carmelite Nuns will not attend meetings or conventions of any kind which would hardly or not at all be compatible with the cloistered life nor benefit the life of the community.

Only in extraordinary cases, in which the express will of the Holy See is evident will the nuns leave the enclosure for the aforementioned meetings. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 9, 12)

234 Safeguarding all that is prescribed in Chapter III of these Constitutions, entrance into the monastery is permitted to persons who ordinarily offer their services in the cloister, and to all those whose work or skill is necessary for the needs or service of the community. Only the sister appointed to do so by the Prioress may speak to these persons and she will never do so without another nun present. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 9, 15)

235 Besides all that is prescribed in numbers 26, 27 and 28 of the present Constitutions, entrance into the enclosure will be permitted in the following cases:

- a) to Cardinals of the holy Roman Church and persons who accompany them and Nuncios or Apostolic Delegates in the areas of their jurisdiction.

- b) to the Diocesan Bishop or Regular Superior for a just cause, and safeguarding what is determined in these Constitutions.
- c) to Sovereigns and Heads of State together with their wives and retinues.
- d) to a priest to administer the sacraments and assist the sick according to No. 20 of the Constitutions.
- e) to a priest with his servers for the celebration of funeral rites.
- f) to all those whose services are necessary to attend the sick.
- g) to nuns of other monasteries of the Order legitimately authorized to leave the enclosure due to a journey or to sickness. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 8)

236 The keeping of papal enclosure imposes a grave obligation on both the nuns and outsiders. Therefore, apart from the cases mentioned above, permission to enter the enclosure will not be permitted except for truly grave causes and with the authorization of the diocesan Bishop, according to the norm of law and with the consent of the Prioress.

The Prioress will not give the required consent except after having considered attentively the circumstances of the case and taken the necessary measures that such entries into the enclosure will not be detrimental to the silence, solitude and order of the community. (Cf. Can. 667-2, 3; Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 9)

237 In the use of means of communication great discretion and sobriety will be observed, avoiding all that can be harmful to contemplative life in Carmel.

- a) The telephone is permitted for the needs of the community. Only the Prioress or the sister whom she appoints will answer the phone.
- b) As a response to "such a demanding vocational option" as is "the state of perfection professed by the daughters of St. Teresa",³¹ the use of radio and television is not permitted in our monasteries. (Cf. Can. 666; Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 9, 15)

238 Let the Prioress see to it that the nuns are suitably informed of the afflictions and anxieties of the present day world, that they may be stimulated in the love of God and may intensify their

³¹Letter of Cardinal Casaroli to the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites, Oct. 15, 1984.

prayer and penance for mankind. Newspapers and magazines will be carefully selected by the Mother Prioress so that they really lead to this end. All that could disturb their separation from the world and the exercises proper to their contemplative life will not be admitted into the monastery. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 11,)

239 Bearing in mind the particular demands of the Teresian enclosure, entrance into the enclosure of our monasteries is not permitted for retreats or spiritual exercises or for any other kind of experience. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 9, 15)

240 Bearing in mind the diversity of conditions of the different countries and environments to which the Teresian Reform has spread, the concrete manner of realizing the material separation required by papal enclosure may be modified by specifying it in the complementary codes which will be submitted for the approbation of the competent authority. (Cf. *Venite Seorsum*, VII, 4)

CHAPTER XXIV (addendum)

TRANSFERS AND DEPARTURE FROM THE ORDER

1. Transfer of a Religious of another Institute to one of our monasteries

241 For the transfer of a religious of another Institute to one of our monasteries there is required:

- a) the authorization of the Superior General and the consent of the Council of the Institute to which she belongs.
- b) the favorable vote of the monastery disposed to receive her.
- c) previous notification to the local Ordinary of the monastery where she is being received.
- d) information obtained beforehand which is considered expedient.

She cannot be admitted to solemn profession in the monastery without previously having four years of probation, at least three of which she will spend in the novitiate. If, for any reason, she does not make perpetual profession, she must return to the Institute from which she came or obtain an indult of secularization. (Cf. Can. 684-1, 2)

242 For the transfer from a Secular Institute or from a Society of Apostolic Life to one of our monasteries, and vice-versa, permission of the Holy See is required, and its mandates are to be observed. (Cf. Can. 684-5)

2. Transfers within the Order

243 A Religious who has made perpetual vows in a monastery of our Order remains bound to it definitively. However, she may transfer to another monastery of the Order to lend help or for any other legitimate motive approved by the Superiors. In this case, besides the agreement of the interested party herself, the consent of the Prioresses of both monasteries with their respective Chapters is required and is sufficient.

When the transfer is temporary, the Superiors of both monasteries, in agreement with the interested party, will determine the time and conditions. When the period for which the transfer was made has expired, the religious must request an extension, return to the monastery she left or ask for a definitive incorporation into the monastery to which she has transferred. If a transfer is effected between monasteries of the same Federation or Association the norms which the statutes indicate will also be observed. (Cf. Can. 684-3)

244 Given the stability which the contemplative life in Carmel requires, when the legitimate motives which are dealt with in No. 243 do not exist, temporary transfers to other monasteries, especially if they are repeated with some frequency, usually alter notably the peace and discipline of the community, for which reason the nuns should refrain from requesting them.

The Prioress, with the approval of her Council, can propose to the sister the conditions she judges prudent for her reintegration into the community. (Cf. Can. 684-3)

3. Exclaustration

245 Only the Holy See can grant an indult of exclaustration for a Carmelite to remain outside of the monastery. (Cf. Can. 686-2)

246 A professed nun in solemn vows must not request an indult of exclaustration except for grave reasons. The Prioress should endeavor with motherly love to make her see the gravity of such a decision and its possible consequences.

Once an indult is obtained, during the time that she remains outside of the monastery she is free from the obligations which are not compatible with her new condition of life and must take off the habit of the Order.

She loses active and passive voice in her community and remains under the care and vigilance of the Prioress of her monastery and of the local Ordinary where she resides. (Cf. Can. 687)

247 When the period for which the indult was granted has expired, she must return to her monastery or ask for an indult of

secularization. However, given that the stay of a religious outside of the monastery is notoriously contrary to the reform of St. Teresa of Jesus, she will not be readmitted into the monastery she left without the favorable votes of two-thirds of the Chapter. (Cf. Can. 686-1, 3)

In the event that these are not obtained, the Prioress with her Council can request an exclaustation according to Can. 686-3. In such a case, the community will provide with charity for the material needs which the exclaustated religious might have in her new condition of life. In this matter account will be taken of the diverse circumstances which are acceptable to both parties. (Cf. Cans. 686-3 and 702-2)

4. Departure from the Order

248 A religious of temporary vows, having completed the period of her profession, may freely leave the Order if she wishes. (Cf. Can. 688-1)

249 If during the period of temporary vows a nun asks to leave the Order for a grave reason, the Prioress can, with the consent of her Council, grant her an indult of departure, but for this indult to be valid, it must be confirmed by the diocesan Bishop. (Cf. Can. 688-2)

250 When the period of temporary profession of a religious has been completed, the Prioress, after listening to the opinion of her Council, can, for just and reasonable causes, not admit her to the renewal of temporary vows or perpetual profession, in which case she must leave the Order. (Cf. Can. 689-1)

251 Even when it has been contracted after the first profession, physical or psychic illness which in the judgement of experts renders the religious mentioned unsuited to the life proper to the monastery, constitutes a valid motive for not admitting her to the renewal of temporary vows or solemn profession, for which reason she must leave the monastery. (Cf. Can. 689-2)

252 If a religious becomes insane during the period of temporary vows she cannot be dismissed even if she is not capable of renewing profession, nor making solemn profession. (Cf. Can. 689-3)

253 A professed nun in solemn or perpetual vows must not seek an indult or departure from the Order unless it is for very grave reasons duly considered in the presence of God. She will present her petition in writing through the Prioress, who will transmit it by means of the diocesan Bishop to the Apostolic See. The Prioress must join to the petition a report about her personal opinion and that of her Council concerning the petition. (Cf. Can. 691)

254 An indult of departure from the Order, once it has been legitimately granted and made known to the religious, brings with it, by the law itself, a dispensation from the vows and from all

obligations arising from religious profession, unless in the act of notification the indult is rejected by the religious herself. (Cf. Can. 692)

255 If it should be necessary to proceed to the dismissal of a religious in temporary or solemn vows, all the dispositions of the universal law will be observed carefully. The decree of dismissal will be given according to the norm of Canon 699-2 by the diocesan Bishop. (Cf. Can. 694 to 704)

256 Those who leave or are dismissed lawfully have no right to claim anything from the monastery for the work or any other type of service rendered in it. But the Prioress will attend to them with equity and charity in their material needs, according to the particular circumstances of each one and the possibilities of the monastery. (Cf. Can. 702)

257 In all that refers to departure from the monastery, temporary or definitive, that is not specified in these Constitutions, one will proceed according to the norm of Law. (Cf. Can. 686 to 704)

CHAPTER XXV (addendum)

OBLIGATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

258 a) The present Constitutions, approved by the Apostolic See, constitute the Fundamental Code of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns. Everyone must observe them entirely and faithfully as a means of reaching the perfection of their state to which they must tend continually, though they do not oblige under grave or venial sin.

b) The interpretation, modification or derogation of these Constitutions belongs exclusively to the Apostolic See.

c) To this Fundamental Code other Complementary Codes can be added in which are collected the various particular norms conditioned by the special circumstances of the different environments, mentalities, climates and customs of each nation. These Codes must be approved by the competent authority and observed with fidelity. (Cf. Can. 587-4)

259 The Fundamental Code expresses the intentions and will of St. Teresa of Jesus concerning the nature, purpose, spirit and character peculiar to her monasteries. It pertains therefore in an eminent manner - as well as the sound traditions of the Order - to the spiritual patrimony of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, which all must live and preserve with the greatest fidelity, within the filial spirit of the Church. (Cf. Can. 578)

260 A copy of these Constitutions should be kept in the archives

of the monastery and read from once a week to all the Sisters together at a time appointed by the Mother Prioress. Each Sister should also have a copy in her cell and read them many times; all should endeavor to fix them in their memory because this is what will bring them much profit.

L.D.V.M.

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