

CHAPTER III

Life in Community

29.

The Holy Trinity, source and model of the Church,¹ is also the source and the model of our life as brothers. The Trinitarian communion (*koinonia*) of knowledge and love in which we share comes to us as gift, and urges us to open ourselves to knowledge and love of God and of our neighbours. Thus, growth in knowledge and in love within each local community, open to the entire Order, to the Church and to the whole human race, manifests ever more perfectly this fundamental element of our identity as brothers of Blessed Mary of Mount Carmel.

30.

Fraternal life modelled on the Jerusalem community² is an incarnation of God's gratuitous love, internalised through an ongoing process by which we empty ourselves of all egocentricity - which can affect groups as much as individuals - as we move towards authentic centering in God. In this way we express the charismatic and prophetic nature of the consecrated Carmelite life, weaving harmoniously into it the personal charisms of each member, in the service of the Church and of the world.³

We are therefore called to renew ourselves, as brothers in dialogue with one another, open to the signs of the times - and therefore to all people - welcoming those who are involved in our ministry, especially the young and the poor. We are also open to developing new forms of community and new ministries, that they may have a decisive impact on the Church and on society, inviting all people to conversion.⁴ Community life, lived in the spirit of Elijah and under the protection of Mary, Mother of God and our Sister, is thus the expression and the test of our fraternal love.

¹ LG 1-4; AG 2-4

² Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; also 5:12-14

³ 1 Cor 12:7; LG 12; AA 3; PO 9; RPU 27

⁴ CFL 23; Gen. Congr. 1980, p. 92; Gen. Congr. 1986, p. 14

31.

Communal life must tend towards deeper union, in mutual knowledge and love.

To this end, our life in common has moments of particular intensity and importance:⁵

- a) in the shared participation in the Eucharist, through which we become one body, and which is the source and the summit of our lives, and therefore the sacrament of brotherhood;
- b) in communal celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours;
- c) in prayerful listening to the Word;
- d) in meetings to be held periodically, according to the Provincial Statutes, to discuss issues which concern the life of the community;
- e) in other community meetings, to be held periodically according to the Provincial Statutes, where - in a spirit of dialogue and discernment -
 - we study the Rule, the writings of our mystics, and the official documents of the Church and of the Order;
 - we examine our faithfulness to the charism and to the mission of the Order;
 - we share our experiences;
 - we develop our aims for community life; (*progetto comunitario*)
 - we learn to read the signs of the times;
 - we make pastoral choices in the context of the local Church;
- f) in the common table and recreation together;
- g) in common work, manual and other, whether within the community or elsewhere on behalf of the community;
- h) in the sharing of joys, anxieties and friendships,.

32.

All our activities outside the house shall be closely related to our life within the house, and shall form with it a seamless whole.⁶

It is the very purpose of houses of apostolic Brotherhood to be present among the people:

to be open and closely joined with them, stimulating a critical reflection on their human needs.⁷

In this way, our communities will be authentic expressions of faith, hope and charity, and will become places conducive to full human development.

⁵ *Rule*, chps. 10, 9, 7, 14, 11, 4, 16 and 13

⁶ VII Prov., p. 160

⁷ Gen. Congr. 1974, p. 42

33.

By its very nature, community life must promote human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral growth of all religious, so that they may be fully integrated into the community and into its mission, according to personal qualities and aptitudes. Thus, the expression of unity is to be sought in organic diversity - not in shapeless uniformity.⁸

Discernment at all levels must precede both the appropriate distribution of work

and the community's choice of particular activities.

In some cases, experts and facilitators may be called upon to assist us in community dialogue.

Moreover, communities shall ensure that no member is so overloaded with work

- be it apostolic or other -

that community life and religious exercises become impossible or too difficult.⁹

Provincial Statutes shall stipulate the length of the annual vacation for each religious.

34.

§ 1. In order to promote the growth of the contemplative and fraternal dimensions of our lives, both excessive activity and undisciplined behaviour should be avoided, and likewise any life-style which is contrary to the deepest aspirations of the consecrated life.¹⁰

§ 2. Carmelites are to be aware of the growing importance of world-wide communication in present-day society, and of the major technological innovations in this field.¹¹

There is no doubt that the mass media can play an important role in evangelisation;¹²

the abuse and manipulative use of the media, however, can endanger human dignity and freedom.

Our communities shall therefore evaluate the best ways to make use of the mass media,

with a view both to safeguarding the contemplative and fraternal dimensions

of our lives, and to increasing the effectiveness of our apostolate.¹³

⁸ I Prov., pp. 21-23

⁹ Gen. Congr. 1974, p. 41; VI Prov., p. 116

¹⁰ II Prov., pp. 29-31

¹¹ IX Prov., p. 13

¹² EN 45

¹³ Can. 666

35.

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

Any friar who, for reasons of health, study, or apostolate, or for some other legitimate motive, must live outside his house,¹⁴ shall be attached to a well-established community, whose members shall encourage a fraternal relationship, assisting him in his activities.

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

36.

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

37.

To ensure that the economic structure of our religious life does not resemble existing global systems of unjust inequality, fraternity within the Carmelite family should find expression in concern for and sharing with communities throughout the Order, in particular the poorer among them.¹⁵

38.

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁴ Can. 665

¹⁵ I Prov., pp. 20-21

39.

To pray for the dead “is a holy and pious thought”;¹⁶
 we shall therefore devoutly remember in the Lord our dead brothers,
 by offering Masses on their behalf and praying for them,
 so that we may remain in spiritual union with them.
 Provincial Statutes must define the particular intercessions
 for the Supreme Pontiff,
 for dead confreres within the Province or the house,
 for members of the General Council who die in office,
 for former Generals, and for the nuns of our Order.
 The Prior General shall designate intercessions for religious
 who are not attached to a particular Province.

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

40.

Daily conversion to the Gospel is essential
 if we are to remain faithful to our vocation to fraternal life.¹⁷
 “Religious communities must be seen in the Church as prayerful
 and in a constant process of conversion.”¹⁸
 We must seek concrete forms of conversion,
 above all through a constant discernment of life
 in the light of the Gospel,
 of the signs of the times, and the experience of the poor;
 and through the faithful fulfilment of our ministries,
 taking into account the circumstances and traditions
 of the local Church.
 It is left to individual communities,
 in accordance with their Provincial Statutes,
 to develop the most appropriate ways to practise the spirit of penance.
 Provided they do not contradict the prescriptions of canon law
 or of the Bishops’ Conference of the country concerned,
 norms concerning fast and abstinence
 will be determined by Provincial Statutes,
 in keeping with the Rule,
 taking into account the customs and circumstances
 of the local Church.

¹⁶ 2 Macc 12:45

¹⁷ Mark 1:15

¹⁸ DCVR 14

41.

Our religious habit is “a sign of consecration,”¹⁹ and consists of a brown or dark tunic, a scapular and a cappa of the same colour; a leather belt shall be worn over the tunic. Provincial Statutes may decide on a different colour, if this is necessary for a particular reason (for example, climate). On more solemn occasions, a white cloak shall be worn, which is shorter than the tunic and has a white cappa of the same shape as the dark one. Wearing of the habit inside or outside the house is a matter to be decided by the Provincial Statutes, with due regard for the rights of the local Ordinary.²⁰

42.

In every house, there shall be an area for the brethren.²¹ Its extent shall be determined by the community. All friars shall respect the rules which apply to this reserved area of the house; for a just reason, the Prior may allow exceptions to these rules.

¹⁹ PC 17

²⁰ Can. 669 § 1

²¹ Can. 667 § 1

CHAPTER IV

Evangelical Counsels and Vows

43.

The essence and foundation of consecrated life is the radical following of Jesus Christ. The evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity, publicly professed in the Church, are a radical form of witness to the following of Christ.²² As we follow the obedient, poor and chaste Christ, we become less focused on ourselves, and we orient ourselves in history to the search for the Kingdom of God.

44.

Our consecrated life, configured to the life of Christ by means of the three evangelical counsels taken on by the vows, and by other evangelical values, is a gift from God.²³ Its motivation is not that “of the world,”²⁴ yet it places us in the world²⁵ as witnesses to the value of life itself as a precious gift. This value, lived in the spirit of the beatitudes, transfigures the world according to the Father’s design.

1. Obedience: hearing and discerning God’s plan

45.

By means of religious obedience, genuinely observed in deeds,²⁶ we surrender our will fully to God. Christ Jesus is the source and the reason of our obedience. He lived his freedom not in self-sufficiency and personal autonomy, but in obedience to the Father.²⁷ Christ’s obedience was not only a commitment to do his Father's works,²⁸ it was also a faithfulness to humanity and to the salvation of all.²⁹ Jesus obeyed because he loved his Father,³⁰ and because he loved us. Jesus was wholly of God, and wholly for people.

²² EE 10

²³ PC 1

²⁴ Rom 12:2

²⁵ John 17:18

²⁶ *Rule*, chp. 1

²⁷ Heb 10:5-10

²⁸ John 6:38; 17:4

²⁹ John 13:1

³⁰ John 14:31

Part II

The only purpose of his life was to bring about the Kingdom of God, and to this goal he remained faithful unto death.³¹

46.

The Spirit of Jesus lives in us;
we are not under the law, but under grace.³²
Allowing the Spirit to guide us,³³
we shall be taught to discern the will of God,³⁴
and we shall be led to the complete truth.³⁵

For us today, following Christ in his obedience³⁶
means listening together to the word of God,³⁷
received and lived in the Church;
learning to read the signs of the times
in order to discern the will of God today,³⁸
and fulfilling faithfully, day by day,
whatever mission he entrusts to us.

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

47.

We commit ourselves to obey God's will not only as individuals,
but also as a community.
It is in community that together we seek to know the will of God.
We engage in this search in a spirit of mutual discipleship and co-
responsibility,
as we listen to and fulfil the Word of God,
read in the light of the signs of the times
and in keeping with the charism of the Order.³⁹
In this way, we are brothers in obedience; side by side and together,
we face the challenges of the Gospel
and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

³¹ Phil 2:8; Heb 5:7-8; Luke 22:42

³² Rom 6:14; 8: 9

³³ ET 10

³⁴ Rom 12:2

³⁵ John 16:13

³⁶ *Rule*, prologue

³⁷ *Rule*, chps. 7, 8, 14

³⁸ *Rule*, chp. 11

³⁹ VI Prov., pp. 116-117

48.

The Prior, conscious of the presence of Christ and of his Gospel at the heart of the community, shall place himself at the service of God's will and at the service of his brethren, guiding them to mature and responsible obedience to Christ, through dialogue and timely discernment,⁴⁰ while remaining firm in his authority to decide and to command what must be done.⁴¹ In the community, the Prior must be a stimulus to live out our charism; he must be a sign and a bond of unity. The brothers are to "hold their prior humbly in honour, thinking not so much of him as of Christ who placed him over [them]."⁴²

49.

In grave cases, a major superior may impose a precept (*praeceptum*) on a member, by virtue of the vow of obedience. Such a precept shall be given in writing or in the presence of two witnesses.⁴³

*2. Poverty: sharing and solidarity***50.**

Jesus Christ the poor man, was born and lived in lowliness. During his life on earth, he chose to be deprived of all worldly riches,⁴⁴ power and prestige.⁴⁵ He took the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are,⁴⁶ and identified with the "little ones" and with the poor.⁴⁷ He shared all of his life with his disciples;⁴⁸ he shared his Father's plans,⁴⁹ his mission,⁵⁰ his prayer.⁵¹ In this way, he became not only their master, but their friend and brother.⁵² On the cross, in keeping with the Father's plan, Jesus experienced absolute nakedness and radical poverty.

⁴⁰ *Rule*, chps. 2, 3, 11; ET 25; RD 13

⁴¹ *Rule*, chp. 1; PC 14; ET 25; RD 13; Can. 618

⁴² *Rule*, chp. 8

⁴³ Can. 49; 601

⁴⁴ Luke 9:58

⁴⁵ John 6:15; 5:41

⁴⁶ Phil 2:7

⁴⁷ Matt 25:40

⁴⁸ John 1:39

⁴⁹ John 15: 15

⁵⁰ Matt 10

⁵¹ Luke 11:1-4

⁵² Heb 2:11; Rom 8:29

Part II

From the cross he gave himself up completely,
for the sake of humanity.
Rich though he was, Jesus became poor for us,
so that, through his poverty, we might be made rich.⁵³

51.

As they followed Jesus, the poor man,
the early Christian communities, inspired by
fraternal communion (*koinonia*),
lived and pursued a sharing of all material⁵⁴ and spiritual goods.⁵⁵

52.

As we follow Jesus and take as our model
the life of the primitive Church,
we too wish to embrace willingly the gift
of the evangelical counsel of poverty,
by our vow to hold all things in common,
and by declaring that no object belongs to any of us personally.⁵⁶
We believe that all we have is gift, and that all we have
- all the spiritual, material, and cultural goods
that are obtained by our labour -
must be freely returned, in whatever way can best serve the good of
the Church and of our Order,
for the human and social development of all.⁵⁷

53.

Poverty is a complex and ambiguous reality.
When it is the absence of the necessary means for survival,
resulting from injustice or personal and social sin, it is an evil.⁵⁸
But it can also be a Gospel form of life adopted by those
who trust in God alone, sharing all their possessions,
identifying with the poor in a spirit of solidarity, renouncing all desire
for dominion or self-sufficiency.
In contemplation, we internalise the authentic attitude of poverty,
which is a deep process of inner self-emptying
through which we become less and less in control
of our own activity and ideas,
of our virtues and of our ambitions,
as we open ourselves to God's action.
In this way, we become truly poor as Christ was poor,
even to the point of not owning the poverty we have chosen
in this process by which God's love empties us.

⁵³ 2 Cor 8:9; and also RD 12

⁵⁴ Acts 2:4-45; 4:32; 2 Cor 8:1-15

⁵⁵ 1 Pet 4:10-11

⁵⁶ *Rule*, chp. 9

⁵⁷ I *Prov.*, pp. 19-20

⁵⁸ SRS 16

54.

Thus, we who freely chose poverty as our evangelical lifestyle feel called by the Gospel and by the Church to awaken people's consciences to the problems of destitution, hunger and social injustice.⁵⁹ We shall accomplish this purpose if

- first and foremost -
- our own poverty witnesses to the human meaning of work as a means of sustaining life and as service to others;⁶⁰
- if we undertake to study and to understand the economic, social and moral causes of that poverty which stems from injustice;⁶¹
- if we use our possessions with restraint and simplicity, making them available to others, even free of charge, in the service of the human and spiritual development of our fellow men and women;⁶²
- and, finally, if we engage in healthy and balanced discernment with regard to the ways in which we are present among the people, choosing ways which foster the liberation and the integral development of human beings.⁶³

55.

Hence, solemnly professed religious shall have no personal material possessions; whatever they receive shall belong to the house, to the Province, or to the Order, according to these Constitutions and the Provincial Statutes.⁶⁴

56.

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

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

⁵⁹ ET 18

⁶⁰ *Rule*, chp. 15; ET 20

⁶¹ Gen. Congr. 1980, pp. 88-89; X Prov., p. 65

⁶² I Prov., pp. 19-20

⁶³ I Prov., p. 21; III Prov., pp. 50-53; Gen. Congr. 1980, p. 92; VI Prov., pp. 116-117

⁶⁴ Can. 668

57.

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

58.

Let us remember that in our time the best way to make manifest our vow of poverty is to faithfully fulfil the common law of work. Let us, therefore, embrace with enthusiasm the precept of the Rule, which invites us to work assiduously,⁶⁵ for we know that by our toil we co-operate in God's work of creation⁶⁶ and, at the same time, develop our own personalities; by our active charity we assist our confreres, and all others; and we contribute to the good of the Order. Moreover, we perpetuate the dignity Jesus gave to work - for he never disdained manual labour - and we follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose life on earth was full of ordinary concerns and work.

3. Chastity: celibate for the Kingdom

59.

The God of the Kingdom and the Kingdom of God are the essential points of reference and the universal framework for our celibate lives, and for all Christian existence. "Only God's love can call us decisively to religious chastity. This love demands a fraternal charity so powerful that it will lead religious to live more deeply with their fellow men and women in the heart of Christ. The gift of self, to God and to others, will then be the source of profound peace."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *Rule*, chp. 15; LE 27

⁶⁶ GS 34

⁶⁷ ET 13; PdV 50; RD 11

60.

Christ Jesus, the chaste man,
 dedicated himself wholly to the cause of the Kingdom.
 He loved everyone, especially the “little ones” and the poor.
 His love was never possessive:⁶⁸ it was liberating,⁶⁹
 totally dedicated to the service of his brothers and sisters.
 His life was limpid and the epiphany of the face of the Father.⁷⁰

61.

As we follow Jesus in his chastity,
 our celibacy also takes on the quality of a full and total love for God
 and for every human being.⁷¹
 Aware of God’s love, which stands over every individual,
 Carmelites must be continually transformed
 by this disinterested and unconditional divine love.
 Such internalisation occurs through a process
 of continuous transformation of all our affectivity,
 so that we become truly chaste through full personal development.
 Through the power of such chaste and undivided love,⁷²
 our interpersonal relationships grow in truth and in transparency.
 In a world often torn by struggle and division,
 the one who is new and chaste in the Spirit
 is the epiphany and radiance of the liberating presence of our Lord.

62.

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

63.

The charism of consecrated chastity is a gift from God;⁷³
 but we know that we carry this gift in earthen vessels,⁷⁴
 that is, in our weak and fragile humanity.

⁶⁸ John 20:17

⁶⁹ Luke 4:16 ff.

⁷⁰ John 5:36-37; 8:29

⁷¹ Mark 12:29-31

⁷² 1 Cor 7:24

⁷³ 1 Cor 7:7; PC 12; ET 15

⁷⁴ 2 Cor 4:7

Part II

For this reason, we feel the need to live according to values which promote a balanced and mature integration of our affectivity and of our capacity for a tenderness with evangelical attitudes, in a way that is coherent with our way of living.

If our celibate life, chosen for the Kingdom, is to be a suitable vehicle for our maturity as human beings and for our growth in faith, we need to be instructed, first of all in authentic brotherly love;⁷⁵ in communication and community dialogue; and in the ability to love others not possessively, but appreciating them as persons. We must learn also the meaning of gift, of gratuitous service, and of straightforwardness in friendships. Finally, we must come to understand silence as attentiveness to the Word, and Christian asceticism as that which purifies our feelings and re-establishes our authentic relationships with others, sharing in the Cross of Christ, who carried to the limit his selfless love for his Father and for his brothers and sisters.

⁷⁵ PC 12

CHAPTER V

Prayer

1. *Prayer in general*

64.

The Holy Trinity draws us into communion with themselves and with one another, in faith, in hope and in charity. These virtues are experienced, nourished and expressed in prayer, as we turn our attention to God, in adoration and in love, in obedient listening, in sincere contrition, and in hope-filled petition.⁷⁶

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

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

The Carmelite tradition of prayer is built on the concrete prayer experience of its members throughout history. This experience tells the story of the loving presence of God in the lives of Carmelites, so that they can say, with the psalmist, “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together,” and “O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.”⁷⁷

From the beginning, the Carmelite Order has taken on both a life of prayer and an apostolate of prayer. Prayer is the centre of our lives, and authentic community and ministry spring from this source.⁷⁸ The prayer of the Carmelite community is a sign of the praying Church to the world. It recalls the example of Mary, Mother of Jesus, who “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart,” praising the wonders that the Lord had worked in her.⁷⁹

By meditating and entering ever more deeply into the mystery of Christ, we become more obedient in following him, deepening our commitment to work as his disciples for the redemption of humanity.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ ET 43

⁷⁷ Ps. 34: 3, 8

⁷⁸ II Prov., p. 32

⁷⁹ Luke 2:19, 51; 1:46-55

Part II

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

Thus in our spirituality we integrate our love for the world and our sense of the transcendent.⁸¹

65.

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

When we pray, we keep in mind the needs and the concerns of the world we live in, together with an awareness of our own calling to serve all the members of the Church.⁸²

This may require communities to search for new ways of praying, such as shared meditation, communal biblical prayer, and also other new forms.⁸³

66.

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

by study,

by meditation

and by the sacraments.

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

67.

The silence of solitude which individuals and communities must cultivate makes us docile to the voice of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁴

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

This will enable us to engage more easily in personal prayer, and to make our study and other activities more fruitful.⁸⁵

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

⁸⁰ PO 14, 18; EE 29

⁸¹ F. Thusis, *Colpiti dal mistero di Dio. Contemplazione: filo conduttore della vita del Carmelo*, Rome, Curia Generalizia dei Carmelitani, 1983, pp. 42-43

⁸² II Prov., p. 32

⁸³ II Prov., p. 28; XII Prov., pp. 48-49

⁸⁴ ET 46

⁸⁵ OT 11

68.

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

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

*2. Liturgical prayer***69.**

As in the primitive Church, as religious we are called to celebrate together the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.⁸⁶ Liturgical prayer is the highest form of communal encounter with God, and brings about what it celebrates. Personal prayer⁸⁷ is intimately linked with liturgical prayer; one flows from the other.⁸⁸

70.

The daily celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is to be “the centre and the culmination of the life of the community.”⁸⁹ It is our way of expressing our desire to go with Christ to the Father. We offer him in total sacrifice our daily lives intimately united with Christ’s paschal mystery, so that we may be perfected daily in union with God and with one another, through Christ the Mediator, and so that God may finally become all in all.⁹⁰ In the celebration of the Eucharist, as we share in the table of the Lord and participate in the effects of Christ’s sacrifice, community is built, and our unity with the entire family of believers is established and made manifest.

71.

The sacred liturgy unites us with the apostolic witness and with the faith of the entire Church. Communal liturgical celebrations are moreover a central characteristic of our Rule.⁹¹

⁸⁶ *Rule*, chps 8, 16

⁸⁷ Matt 6:6

⁸⁸ SC 9-10, 12

⁸⁹ CD 30/2; LG 11; *Rule*, chp. 10

⁹⁰ SC 48

In addition to a diligent preparation of our liturgies, we must grow in love for liturgy and in our concern for its renewal. In this way, we hope to deepen our contemplative participation in the mystery which we celebrate.

72.

The public prayer of the Church is the manifestation of our participation in the Church at prayer, which, together with Christ, “is ceaselessly engaged in praising the Lord and interceding for the salvation of the entire world.”⁹² From its pre-eminence as the public and official prayer of the Church, it is a fruitful source for the spiritual life of those who share in it.⁹³

“The Liturgy of the Hours extends praise and prayer to the different hours of the day, making present the mysteries of salvation, the prayers of intercession, and the foretaste of heavenly glory which are offered to us in the Eucharistic Mystery.”⁹⁴ Together with the Eucharistic celebration, the Liturgy of the Hours unfolds for us continuously throughout the liturgical year the mysteries of the redemption accomplished for us by Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that we may encounter them and thus be filled with the grace of salvation.⁹⁵

73.

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

Those parts which, for whatever reason, are not recited in common, shall be said in private.⁹⁶

⁹¹ *Rule*, chps 8, 10

⁹² SC 83

⁹³ SC 90; II Prov., p. 30

⁹⁴ LH 12

⁹⁵ SC 102

⁹⁶ Letter *Haec Sacra Congregatione* from the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes to the Prior General of the Carmelites, 20 December 1969 in AOC 28 (1968-69) 49-50

74.

In places where we engage in pastoral work, it is fitting that we celebrate some part of the Liturgy of the Hours with the faithful.⁹⁷

75.

We shall confess our sins frequently to the Church in the sacrament of reconciliation, also celebrating it communally in keeping with the practices of local Churches.

We shall thus obtain forgiveness through God's mercy for the offences we have committed against him, and shall at the same time be reconciled with the Church.⁹⁸

76.

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

3. Personal prayer.

77.

Christians are certainly called to pray together; however, they must also draw apart and pray to the Father in secret.⁹⁹ The practice of the presence of God, which is a Carmelite tradition, has become increasingly difficult in these modern times. We must therefore make special efforts to help one another to seek God through prayer that is intimately linked with ordinary daily life. In the same way Carmelites are called to a deeper experience of those forms of prayer which are most in harmony with our own particular spirituality. We are encouraged to seek new forms of prayer in line with our charism.

⁹⁷ SC 100; LH 21

⁹⁸ LG 11

⁹⁹ Matt 6:6; SC 12

78.

Spiritual formation shall be closely linked with doctrinal and pastoral formation, and shall be presented in such a way that it may teach us to live in intimate communion and friendship with the Father, through his Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit.

Let us live the paschal mystery and seek Christ in our daily lives; in active participation in the Eucharist and in the Liturgy of the Hours; In people, especially the poor,¹⁰⁰ the sick, children and those who have no faith.

Our entire lives must be imbued with a deep religious sense, so that we may view the events of our own lives and of the world around us in the light of God.

Thus our whole life must be deeply contemplative, so that we may come to see all that happens as if with the eyes of God.

79.

Contemplation in the Carmelite tradition is truly a free gift from God.

God takes the initiative, he reaches out to us and fills us ever more deeply with his life and his love; we respond to him by allowing him to be God in our lives.

Contemplation is an attitude of openness to God, whose presence we discover everywhere.

In this way we follow the examples of the prophet Elijah, who ceaselessly looked for God, and of Mary, who pondered all things in her heart.¹⁰¹

80.

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

81.

A life of prayer also requires us to examine our way of life in the light of the Gospel, so that prayer may influence both our personal lives and the lives of our communities.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ DCVR 1; EE 2

¹⁰¹ 1 Kgs 17:1, 15; 18:19, 21; 2 Kgs 1:2; Luke 2:19, 51

¹⁰² II Prov., p. 31

82.

Lectio divina is an authentic source of Christian spirituality recommended by our Rule.¹⁰³

We therefore practise it every day,
so that we may develop a deep and genuine love for it,
and so that we may grow in the surpassing knowledge of Christ.¹⁰⁴
In this way we shall put into practice
the Apostle Paul's commandment,
which is mentioned in our Rule:
"Let the sword of the spirit, the Word of God,
live abundantly in your mouth and in your hearts;
and whatever you must do,
do it in the name of the Lord."¹⁰⁵

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

83.

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

84.

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

The one indispensable thing is
that prayer permeate our lives,
so that, in faith, hope and charity,
we may be able to glorify the name of the Father on earth,
in union with Christ. "We must pray at all times!"¹⁰⁶

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

85.

During her life on earth,
the Blessed Virgin Mary showed herself to be
the perfect image for the disciple of Christ.
For this reason, in her apostolic mission
the Church follows the example of the Virgin Mother of God
- the perfect model of the following of Christ¹⁰⁷ -
especially in her commitment to our redemption,

¹⁰³ *Rule*, chps. 7, 14

¹⁰⁴ PC 6; SC 24; DV 25

¹⁰⁵ *Rule*, chp. 14

¹⁰⁶ Luke 18:1

¹⁰⁷ SC 103

which Mary actively participated in from her “*Fiat*” to the Incarnation, to her presence at the foot of the Cross, and in her solidarity with the first Christian community gathered in prayer.¹⁰⁸

86.

Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the obligation to spread this devotion, are intrinsic parts of the Order’s mission within the Church. In keeping with the intention of the Church itself,¹⁰⁹ therefore, let us generously promote veneration of the Blessed Virgin, especially in the liturgy.

The example of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as it emerges from the liturgy itself,¹¹⁰ will inspire the faithful to imitate their Mother and, through her, her Son.

This will lead them to celebrate the mysteries of Christ with the same dispositions and attitudes with which the Virgin contemplated her Son in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, and in his self-emptying, and exulted together with all of her new children at his Resurrection.¹¹¹

We have great respect for the pious practices and devotions to Mary recommended over the centuries by the teaching authority of the Church.¹¹²

While traditional forms of Marian devotion (such as the wearing of the scapular and the recitation of the Holy Rosary) should be preserved, new ones may also be introduced.¹¹³

87.

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

¹⁰⁸ RMa 42-46

¹⁰⁹ MC 56

¹¹⁰ MC 2-14

¹¹¹ MC 16-23

¹¹² LG 67

¹¹³ MC 29; MC Guidelines 30-38

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

88.

During the liturgical year, the Church celebrates the paschal mystery of Christ realised in the saints.¹¹⁴

Carmelites are called to celebrate their saints with particular devotion, finding in them the most intense and authentic expression of the charism and spirituality of the Order through the centuries. The feast of the prophet Elijah and the memorial of the prophet Elisha, and the feasts of the protectors of the Order - St. Joseph, St. Joachim and St. Anne - are to be celebrated with particular solemnity.

89.

The Carmelite scapular is a sacramental of the Church; as such, it is a fitting symbol to express our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the affiliation of the faithful to the Carmelite Family. The scapular calls to mind the virtues of the Blessed Virgin with which we are to clothe ourselves - in particular, intimate union with God and humble service to others in God's Church, in the hope of eternal salvation.¹¹⁵

90.

The Marian shrines in which we exercise our apostolate and to which the faithful traditionally come in large numbers, are to be held in high regard. They are to become more and more centres where the Word is prayerfully heard and where there is liturgical life with appropriate celebrations (Eucharist and Reconciliation). In particular, our shrines shall increasingly become centres of reflection on the path taken by Mary and centres of evangelisation, with special attention to popular devotion to the one who is Mother of God, of the Church, and of all humanity.

¹¹⁴ SC 104

¹¹⁵ See Part I, note 93

Part II

Shrines also have an exemplary function:
they are places of welcome, attracting vocations;
places of solidarity, providing services to needy brothers and sisters;
places of ecumenical commitment with meetings and prayers.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ SanP 73-92

CHAPTER VI

Our Apostolic Mission - General Considerations

91.

Our Carmelite mission shares in the mission of Jesus, who was sent to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God and to bring about the total liberation of humanity from all sin and oppression.¹¹⁷

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

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

and by the values it upholds;

by the signs of the times;

and above all, by attentive listening to the Word, having regard also for its interpretation

from the perspective of the poor.

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

by the cultural, social and religious circumstances of the people.¹¹⁸

In our mission, we must take into account

the talents and charisms of the brethren,

and be aware of the natural limitations of our contribution.

92.

We Carmelites must fulfil our mission among the people

first and foremost through the richness of our contemplative life.

Our prophetic action may take many and different forms of apostolic service.

Since not all forms of apostolic work easily fit in with our charism or with the resources of an individual community,

we must always discern among the various options presented in any given situation.

93.

Inspired by the fundamental directions of our charism

and by present-day ecclesial and social contexts,

the following guidelines are offered

for the discernment of our apostolic mission:¹¹⁹

- a life of brotherhood and prayer in the midst of the people;
- a response to the needs of the local and universal Church;
- a preferential service to the poor and the marginalized;
- a special attention to issues concerning women;
- a commitment to justice and peace;

¹¹⁷ EN 9, 13, 69

¹¹⁸ EN 39; RPU 4 d) & e); EE 23, 25-26, 35-37

¹¹⁹ MR 15; I Prov., p. 19; Gen. Congr. 1974, p. 42; Gen. Congr. 1980, pp. 89-90; X Prov., p. 65; Gen. Congr. 1992, pp. 50-51

Part II

- a care for those who show an interest in the spirit, the spiritual heritage, and the life of Carmel.

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

94.

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

95.

Faithful to the spiritual heritage of the Order, we shall therefore channel our diverse works to the goal of promoting the search for God and the life of prayer. In our various apostolates we shall be inspired by Mary: her presence among the Apostles;¹²⁰ her motherhood of the Church, which she received at the foot of the Cross; her attentiveness to the Word of God, and her total obedience to the divine will. To this end, we shall foster and nourish among the people the memory of Mary and devotion to her.

96.

In the Scriptures and in Carmelite tradition, the prophet Elijah is respected as the one who in various ways knew how to read the new signs of the presence of God and who was able, not least, to reconcile those who had become strangers or enemies.

As Carmelites, heartened by this example and by our strong desire to put into practice our Lord's teachings of love and reconciliation, we shall take part in the ecumenical movement and in inter-religious dialogue, promoted by the Second Vatican Council.¹²¹ Through the former we shall promote relationships with the Orthodox and other Christians.

¹²⁰ LG 68

¹²¹ UR 5

Through the latter we shall promote dialogue at various levels with Jews and Muslims, with whom we share devotion to the prophet Elijah as a man of God; we shall enter into dialogue also with Hindus and Buddhists and those of other religions.¹²²

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

¹²² UR 7-12; RdU 50

CHAPTER VII

Our Apostolic Mission in the Local Church

97.

While preserving its universal character,
the Order shall endeavour to be fully involved
in the life of local Churches.¹²³

This implies close co-operation with the various elements
of these Churches.

Within local Churches, we shall offer the contribution of our charism
to the task of evangelisation
by fostering a deeper grasp of the contemplative dimension of life,
of fraternity, and concrete commitment to justice.

98.

To the extent that it is possible, we shall be prepared to undertake
- in keeping with the legal and pastoral provisions of the Church
and of our Order -

various forms of apostolate requested by the Church,
in accordance with the needs of time and of place.¹²⁴

We achieve this through parish work,
service to the faithful in churches,
instruction of young people in schools and elsewhere,
preaching of retreats, study, spiritual direction,
guidance about spiritual problems,
and other initiatives.

99.

Guided by the Magisterium,
by the official documents of the Order,
and by the signs of the times,
we shall willingly invite and introduce the faithful
to our rich tradition and to the experience of contemplation.

We shall encourage lay people to develop
their own particular gifts and charisms¹²⁵
so that they may be involved in the mission of the Church.

Let our mission,
inspired by the criteria set forth in articles 93 and 97,
be one that both evangelises and is evangelised within the Church
- a mission that is particularly concerned
for those who have lost their way.

¹²³ EN 60, 69; EE 38-43; MR 18

¹²⁴ EE 27

¹²⁵ AA 3; PO 9

100.

We also accomplish our mission through the work we do in parishes in response to the pastoral needs of local churches. A new parish is accepted by means of a written agreement which shall be drawn up, in accordance with the requirements of canon law, between the Prior Provincial, with the express consent of his Council, and the local Ordinary.¹²⁶

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

101.

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

102.

§ 1. For the conferral of offices in a diocese, the Prior Provincial, after consultation with his Council, shall admit or present to the bishop those brethren who give sufficient evidence of suitability.

§ 2. As religious, those friars who are engaged in diocesan duties in accordance with some agreement remain subject to the authority of their own superiors.

In matters pertaining to their duties, they are subject to the authority of those in whose service they are employed.¹²⁷

103.

Those who are engaged in any type of ministry within a diocese are subject to the jurisdiction of the Bishop, in keeping with canon law, in all matters pertaining to the faithful execution of their pastoral duties.¹²⁸

104.

Provincial Statutes may determine whether or not the offices of pastor and local prior may be held by the same person, and set the maximum time for which a religious may hold the office of parish priest in the same parish; they may also define the relationship between the parish priest and the community of religious, as regards co-operation in the apostolic activities of the parish.

¹²⁶ Can. 520

¹²⁷ Can. 681, § 1

¹²⁸ Can. 681, § 1

105.

The mission *ad gentes*

- in other words, the task of announcing the Gospel
in places where it is not known -

is one of the fundamental activities of the Church,¹²⁹
for the Church is missionary by its very nature.¹³⁰

The main agent of the mission *ad gentes* is the Holy Spirit,¹³¹
who inspires Provinces and Commissariats
to appoint members to this task.

It is the Spirit who gives the missionary charism
to those who are sent.

In this work the Order recognises “immense opportunities
in such areas as charity, evangelical proclamation,
Christian education, culture,

and solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed,
and those who suffer discrimination.”¹³²

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

Missionary work requires a specific spirituality¹³³
and a process of inculturation;

we are confident therefore, that the mission *ad gentes*
will reveal the heart of the Carmelite charism in a new way
for the good of the Church and of the Order.

129 RM 31-33

130 RM 5

131 RM 21

132 RM 69

133 RM 87

CHAPTER VIII

Concern for the Carmelite Family

106.

The Apostle enjoins us to do good to everyone, especially our brothers and sisters in the faith.¹³⁴ Therefore, the members of the Order shall develop a love and concern for those who are inspired by the same Carmelite ideal.

Since the Carmelite charism is given to the whole Carmelite family, all its members have an important role in the formation of others in whatever sphere these are found, so that the various expressions of Carmelite life may be mutually enriched.

107.

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

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

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

108.

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

109.

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

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

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

A General Delegate shall be appointed for the various forms of Carmelite laity.

Provincial Statutes shall provide for delegates at other levels.

¹³⁴ Gal 6:10

CHAPTER IX

Our Apostolic Mission and the Promotion of Justice and Peace throughout the world

110.

Christ did not bring about the salvation of the human race as an outsider or as a stranger to the history of the world. On the contrary, he identified both with his people and with the whole human race.

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

I was hungry and you gave me to eat;
I was thirsty and you gave me to drink;
I was a stranger and you welcomed me;
I was naked and you clothed me;
I was sick and you visited me;
I was in prison and you came to me.”¹³⁵

111.

We live in a world full of injustice and disquiet.

It is our duty to contribute to the search for an understanding of the causes of these evils;

to be in solidarity with the sufferings of those who are marginalized;
to share in their struggle for justice and peace;
and to fight for their total liberation,
helping them to fulfil their desire for a decent life.¹³⁶

112.

The poor, the “little ones” (*minores*), constitute the vast majority of the world population. Their complex problems are linked and, to a large extent, are caused by current international relations and, more directly, by the economic and political systems which govern our world today.

We cannot turn a deaf ear to the cry of the oppressed who plead for justice.¹³⁷

113.

We must hear and interpret reality from the perspective of the poor - of those who are oppressed by the economic and political systems which today govern humanity.

Their problems are many, and we must set priorities in responding to them.

In this way, we shall rediscover the Gospel as good news, and Jesus Christ as the liberator from all forms of oppression.

¹³⁵ PP 79; Matt 25:35-36

¹³⁶ PP 82, 86; SRS 35-40, 46

¹³⁷ ET 17; X Prov., p. 66; Gen. Congr. 1992, p. 52

114.

Social reality challenges us.
 Attentive to the cry of the poor, and faithful to the Gospel,
 we must take our stand with them,
 making an option for the “little ones”.
 “There is a growing desire within the Order to choose solidarity
 with the “little ones” of history,
 to bring to our brothers and sisters
 a word of hope and salvation from their midst,
 more by our lives than by our words
 ... We recommend this option for the poor,
 because it is in keeping with the charism of the Order,
 which can be summarised as
 ‘a life in allegiance to Jesus Christ’;
 allegiance to Jesus also means allegiance to the poor
 and to those in whom the face of Christ is mirrored preferentially.”¹³⁸

115.

Our Elijan inspiration, which our prophetic charism is founded on,
 calls us to walk with the “little ones”
 along the paths the prophet travelled in his time
 - along the path of justice, opposing false ideologies
 and moving towards a concrete experience of the true living God;
 along the path of solidarity,
 defending the victims of injustice and taking their part;
 along the path of mysticism,
 struggling to restore to the poor faith in themselves
 by renewing their awareness that God is on their side.¹³⁹

116.

To prepare and educate ourselves so that we may take on
 “the circumstances of the poor” in an evangelical manner,
 we propose to re-read the Bible,
 also from the perspective of the poor,
 of the oppressed and of the marginalized;
 to consider the Christian principles of justice and peace
 as an integral part of our formation at every level;
 to immerse ourselves in the circumstances of the poor;
 to use the tools of social analysis, in the light of faith,
 as a means to discover the presence of sin
 incarnated in certain political, socio-economic
 and cultural structures;¹⁴⁰
 to defend and to encourage even the smallest traces of vitality.

¹³⁸ Gen. Congr. 1980, pp. 89-90; X Prov., p. 64; *PrayComm*, pp. 161-162

¹³⁹ X Prov., p. 64

¹⁴⁰ X Prov., p. 65