

CHAPTER X

The Process of Formation of the Carmelite

117.

Carmelite formation is a specific process through which a person learns to identify fully with the Carmelite ideal of life, which consists in contemplative fraternity lived in the midst of the people.

Carmelites learn to be more and more authentic disciples of Jesus Christ through their formation, participating in the offering he makes of himself to the Father, and sharing fully in his mission for the good of humanity, in keeping with the specific charism of the Carmelite Order.

118.

Carmelites are called to maturity in Jesus Christ by virtue of baptism and confirmation and are therefore engaged in a continual process of conversion of heart and spiritual transformation. This is a life-long process which brings them into ever deeper communion with Jesus Christ our brother, in a spirit of solidarity and interdependence with all those in need of liberation and with the whole of creation which awaits redemption.¹

Through this process of growth in maturity, religious are enabled to grasp objectively a reality which is both personal and communal, to evaluate critically and then express the difference between theory and practice, and to grow continually in interpersonal and community relationships.

119.

Our communities are to develop a lifestyle which will show this conversion and continual development of life in Christ, expressed in a spirit of thanksgiving for the vocation they have received. In this way their very existence will evangelise, attracting and inviting new vocations.²

120.

The following guidelines are offered for candidates in initial formation. They reflect the process of formation in which we are engaged. The relationship between professed religious and new candidates should be based on interaction and openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Committed members personify what the Order demands and the living charism of our tradition; new candidates challenge and stimulate us through the personal gifts they have received from the Holy Spirit, thereby enriching and renewing Carmelite life.³

¹ Rom 8:19-23

² Gen. Congr. 1986, p. 41

³ MR 12

CHAPTER XI

The Ministry of Formation

121.

The process of formation in its various stages shall be entrusted to formators who are mature, both in human experience and in the consecrated life, and capable of providing guidance and of accompanying the candidates on their journey.

122.

Major superiors or chapters shall appoint suitable formators, trained specifically for the work they are to do; they shall not hesitate to exempt these formators from other duties which may appear more important, but which cannot be compared with that of formation.⁴

In view of the importance and the heavy responsibilities attached to the role of formator, those who engage in this task are to receive particular support and consideration, and special attention is to be paid to their general state of health.

123.

At every stage of the process, formators shall be assisted by a team,⁵ which may include non-Carmelites, and which shall assist them in accompanying the candidates and in making evaluations and decisions in their regard.

124.

The Prior Provincial and his Council, together with the team, shall be directly involved in formation - through visitations, meetings, and inquiries - and in making evaluations and final decisions.

125.

The general direction and guidance of all that pertains to formation is the prerogative of the Prior General or his delegate for the Order as a whole; and of the Prior Provincial or his delegate for each Province. All of these officials must ensure that the task of formation is addressed in a spirit of fraternal co-responsibility.

126.

The primary responsibility for formation rests with the candidates themselves.⁶ They share this responsibility with their formators,⁷ with the community in which they receive their formation,⁸ and with the major superior and his delegate.

⁴ Can. 651, §3

⁵ PI 32

⁶ PI 29

⁷ PI 30, 32

⁸ PI 26-28

Whatever assistance the candidates receive from these must enable them to develop their personal gifts, with a view to their gradual insertion into Carmelite life and their incorporation into the Order.

Candidates should be guided in a way that encourages them to share with others their experiences, their activities and their duties.

127.

Norms and procedures pertaining to the formation of new candidates must include these criteria: personal talents and aspirations, the demands of communal living, and the concrete requirements of the Church. The norms for formation must also keep in mind the Rule, the present Constitutions and other official documents of the Order

128.

The mission of all educators implies grave responsibilities, which can be summarised in the following norms: openness, with discernment, to new ideas and new methods of forming candidates; development of the candidates' sensitivity to the problems and aspirations of the people whom they are to serve; education of the candidates to view human life, and the concrete problems it raises, in the light of the Word of God; preparation of the candidates for the transformation of men and women into authentic partners in the task of building a human and evangelical community, and enable them to have upright consciences so that they may collaborate in God's work of transformation.⁹

129.

All aspects of the formative process are defined in the *Ratio Institutionis Vitae Carmelitanae (RIVC)*, approved by the Prior General with his Council. It is the task of the Prior General's delegate for formation to promote its implementation. The Prior General and his Council shall convene a meeting of all the formators of the Order, at least once every six years, to revise and update the *RIVC*.¹⁰

130.

Finally, they are to remember that there are no ready-made answers to the ever-changing problems of formation. All of us must live our formation as an ongoing process of development and growth, and seek in this way the new paths by which God leads us. By sharing and exchanging our experiences, we shall be better able to understand what God wants of us. Our efforts in the area of formation must always be inspired by the words of the Gospel: "We are merely servants; we have done no more than our duty."¹¹

⁹ PI 30-31, 33-41

¹⁰ Can. 659, §2 and §3; 650, §1

¹¹ Luke 17:10

CHAPTER XII

The Ministry of Vocations

131.

The vocation to the consecrated life in the Carmelite Order is a gift of God; but this gift is mediated by Carmel. The attitude of individuals and of communities within the Order helps in discerning such vocations. Nothing promotes vocations more effectively than the enthusiasm of the friars, which reflects their pride in being Carmelites. This is expressed in their love for the Word of God, for the celebration of the liturgy, for community living, for the memory of Carmelite Saints, for being among the people in service and in ministry, and in the interest they take in promoting Carmelite activities and publications.

Every Province shall have at least one member responsible for promoting vocations; his task shall be:¹²

- a) to stimulate communities, encouraging members to become involved in the ministry of vocations and in particular among the young;
- b) to promote and co-ordinate vocation initiatives, involving especially younger Carmelites;
- c) to discern signs of a vocation in candidates;
- d) to accompany candidates as their vocation develops.

132.

Though all our communities are to be involved in promoting vocations nevertheless, appropriate and specific bodies are necessary at provincial and/or inter-provincial levels. These bodies shall organise experiences of brotherhood and prayer, in conjunction with whatever activities are initiated by other communities and individuals to promote vocations; in particular, they must be adequately prepared to welcome, to discern, and to accompany those who are in the process of discerning their vocation.

133.

Some link shall be established in each country between our vocational promoters and local bodies for vocational ministry.

¹² Gen. Congr. 1986, p. 42

CHAPTER XIII

The Stages of Formation

134.

While formation is a life-long process, it has specific and progressive moments and stages. Initial formation consists of the following stages: the pre-novitiate, the novitiate, and the period of first profession. Formation for various ministries begins during initial formation and continues after solemn profession. Ongoing formation is a life-long process.

Initial formation and ongoing formation must be understood as stages in one continuing process, each with its own specific goals.

1. The Pre-novitiate

135.

The goal of the pre-novitiate is to help candidates to know themselves better and understand their deeper vocational motives, to nourish their strength in responding to that call, and to provide them with the opportunity to experience God's call in a climate of freedom and objectivity.

136.

The right to admit to the pre-novitiate belongs to the major superior or his delegate, after hearing the views of those in charge of the pre-novitiate.

137.

It is for the Provincial Statutes to stipulate the form, the duration and the elements of the pre-novitiate.¹³

138.

Candidates shall be admitted to the novitiate in accordance with the norms of canon law, when they have reached an awareness of being called by God and have been judged suitable.¹⁴

¹³ PI 44

¹⁴ Can. 641-645; PI 43, 49

2. The Novitiate

139.

The novitiate is a time of initiation in Carmelite life.¹⁵ During this stage, candidates shall experience our way of life in order to learn whether they are suited to it. Novices must come to know and live the following of Christ, poor, chaste and obedient, within the framework of the Carmelite charism.¹⁶

140.

The novitiate shall take place in a house which has been canonically designated for this purpose.¹⁷ It is the right of the Prior General, with the consent of his Council and after consulting the Prior Provincial concerned, to designate, transfer or close any novitiate house by written decree. In particular circumstances, he may designate more than one novitiate house within the same Province.¹⁸

In special cases, the Prior Provincial may authorise novices who are under his authority to reside for a certain time in another house of the Order.¹⁹

141.

Before entering the novitiate, candidates shall make a retreat for a period of at least five full days.

142.

Candidates can be validly admitted to the novitiate only after their seventeenth birthday.²⁰

143.

The novitiate begins with the rite of acceptance to the novitiate according to our ritual.

144.

The whole community in which the novice resides is jointly responsible for his formation. However, particular guidance and direction of the candidate's formation are to be entrusted to one specific religious who shall possess the appropriate gifts and a discerning judgement of modern culture which will enable him to prepare the candidate for life within the Order, in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel, of the Rule, and of the Constitutions of our Order.

¹⁵ Can. 646

¹⁶ PI 46-48

¹⁷ Can. 647, §2; 648, §1

¹⁸ Can. 647, §1

¹⁹ Can. 647, §3

²⁰ Can. 643, §1,1

This religious, as well as all the others who are expected to co-operate in the formation of novices, shall be provided with the appropriate means.

145.

The programme of the novitiate shall follow the guidelines of the *RIVC*.

146.

Ordinary studies shall be suspended for the duration of the novitiate. However, the major superior may allow, or prescribe, courses in subjects which may help to complete the formation of the novice.²¹

147.

To complete the novice's formation, if the major superior in consultation with the novice director judges it opportune and he has the consent of his Council, he may allow the novices to undertake, for one or more periods of time, some form of apostolic activity, consonant with the nature of the Order, outside the novitiate house.²²

148.

The time allocated to apostolic activity outside the novitiate house may be divided into several periods; however, the total number of days each novice spends outside the novitiate house for such activities shall be added to the twelve months required for the validity of the novitiate, keeping in mind that the total duration of the novitiate shall not extend beyond two years.²³

Such apostolic activity shall not begin before the novice has spent at least three months in the novitiate house. Moreover, it must be carried out in such a way that the novice shall live in the novitiate house for at least six uninterrupted months, and return to the novitiate house at least one month before making his temporary profession.

149.

With due regard to articles 147 and 148, an absence from the novitiate house for a period longer than three months, whether consecutive or interrupted, shall invalidate the novitiate, which shall then have to be repeated. An absence in excess of 15 days shall be made up.²⁴ Decisions concerning absences not exceeding 15 days shall be made by the major superior in each individual case, in consultation with the novice director and taking into account the reasons for the absence.

²¹ Can. 652, §5

²² Can. 648, §2

²³ Can. 648, §2, §3

²⁴ Can. 649, §1

150.

If a religious who left the Order either at the end of his novitiate or after his profession wishes to be re-admitted, the Prior General, with the consent of his Council and in consultation with the Prior Provincial concerned, may re-admit him. The Prior General is not obliged to require the candidate to repeat his novitiate; however, after hearing the Prior Provincial concerned, he shall impose a probation period, after which the candidate can be admitted to take vows. The Prior General shall also determine, after hearing the Prior Provincial concerned, the duration of temporary vows before solemn profession, in keeping with articles 655 and 657 of the Code of Canon Law.²⁵

151.

Novices enjoy all the spiritual benefits granted to the Order. The norms of canon law are to be observed with respect to the novice's material goods.²⁶

3. The Period of Simple Profession

152.

§1. At the end of the novitiate, candidates who are suitable and who freely ask to make profession shall do so. This profession marks the beginning of consecrated life.²⁷ Formation in Carmelite life, however, must continue; each stage must flow from the previous one in a systematic and balanced way.²⁸

§2. During this period, it is important that candidates deepen and consolidate their Carmelite consecration in order to reach a final decision maturely. Professional and technical training for various ministries shall also take place at this time.²⁹

If candidates are to benefit fully from this stage of their formation, they must endeavour to integrate their academic work and apostolic activities with a life of prayer and brotherhood. During the period of initial formation, young religious are not to be burdened with offices or works which might interfere with their formation.³⁰

153.

At the end of the novitiate, it is the prerogative of the major superior, with the consent of his Council and after hearing the local Chapter, to admit to temporary profession those candidates who have been found suitable.

²⁵ Can. 690, §1

²⁶ Can. 668, §1

²⁷ Can. 653, §2; 654

²⁸ PI 58-59

²⁹ Can. 660, §2; PI 62

³⁰ Can. 660, §2; PI 62

The major superior has the right to receive first profession and renewal of vows, or, provided the major superior has made no other arrangements, to the local superior who, in turn, may delegate.

154.

For a valid reason, the major superior may allow first profession to be anticipated by a period not exceeding 15 days.³¹ Similarly, for a valid reason, he may permit first profession to be made outside the novitiate house.

155.

§1. Temporary profession shall be made for a period of three years. The Provincial Statutes can stipulate that temporary profession may be for a period of one year, to be renewed yearly for three years.³²

§2. If appropriate, this period can be extended to up to six years, during which the candidate shall renew his temporary vows.³³

In special cases however, the major superior may grant a further extension of the period of temporary profession, but this shall not exceed three years.³⁴

§3. For a valid reason, and with due respect for the provisions of article 657, §3 of the Code of Canon Law, the major superior may allow the renewal of temporary profession to be anticipated, by no more than a month.

4. Solemn Profession

156.

Solemn profession shall be preceded by approximately one month of spiritual preparation.³⁵ Candidates shall spend this month in prayer and recollection, reflecting and meditating on the importance of this decisive and crucial act by which religious consecrate themselves forever to God.

157.

§1. For a solemn profession to be valid, the following conditions must be met:

- a) the candidate must have reached the age required by canon law, i.e. he must be at least 21 years of age;
- b) the candidate must have completed at least three years of temporary profession; for a valid reason, the major superior may

³¹ Can. 649, §2

³² Can. 655

³³ Can. 655

³⁴ Can. 657, §2

³⁵ PI 64

permit solemn profession to be anticipated, but by no more than three months;³⁶

c) the major superior shall admit candidates to profession, with a deliberative vote of his council and a consultative vote of the chapter of the candidate's community.

§2. Through solemn profession, candidates are definitively incardinated into the Order, with all the rights and obligations that this implies.

158.

With respect to the material possessions of the professed, the norms laid down by canon law are to be observed.³⁷

5. Formation for various ministries

159.

The various ministries in which Carmelites engage, each according to his personal vocation, grow out of the strength of a living brotherhood, and at the same time bear witness to that brotherhood among the faithful.

160.

In addition to a Carmelite formation, our religious must receive an appropriate human, professional, scientific and technical education, according to their legitimate desires and capabilities, and in keeping with the needs and plans of the Province and of the Order, so that they may fulfil their tasks with real competence, for the good of the people of God.³⁸

In order to promote the international character of the Order, and to foster an attitude of openness towards other cultures and other ways of thinking and feeling, candidates will be expected to learn a second language during the period of formation.

Special attention shall be given to those subjects which are specifically Carmelite or in any way related to those ministries which are most akin to our charism and to our spiritual heritage.

161.

Religious who do not feel called to priestly ordination shall be encouraged to engage in academic work, possibly leading to a higher degree, in order to be able to meet the needs of the people and of the Province they serve. They shall be given the opportunity to attend courses in theology and especially in biblical studies. Care shall be taken to provide them with a thorough Carmelite formation, so that

³⁶ Can. 657, §3

³⁷ Can. 668

³⁸ MR 26; PI 65

their evangelical life may grow day by day and they may transmit to others the knowledge they acquire.

162.

§1. It is the function of those who have received priestly ordination to co-operate with their Bishop; to spread the Word of God; to administer the sacraments; to provide leadership in the community; and to be Christ's instruments in forming the people of God and in building the Gospel community. It follows that those of our religious who wish to receive Holy Orders should prepare themselves appropriately, completing their studies and their spiritual and pastoral training, in accordance with the norms established by the Holy See, by the episcopal conference of each country, and by the *RIVC*.

§2. Solemn profession must precede reception of the diaconate.

163.

Religious who attend courses of study outside their houses shall be assisted by brethren who are experts in the academic field and who can help them to direct their higher education into an integrated Carmelite formation.

In our houses of formation, candidates shall be helped to integrate their theoretical, practical and professional studies into other aspects of Carmelite life.

164.

National and international co-operation are recommended for the novitiate and for initial formation.

165.

In each house, and especially in every house of formation, there shall be a well-furnished and up-to-date library, since this is an indispensable aid to learning and to the study of Carmelite authors.

166.

There shall be international study centres within the Order to promote internationality, to undertake in-depth studies of Carmelite spirituality and of the history of our Order, and to train formators and other specialists. St. Albert's Centre in Rome is such a structure - an expression of the unity of the Order. This Centre shall have its own specific statutes, and shall be under the direct jurisdiction of the Prior General.

167.

The Institutum Carmelitanum, to be located in Rome, has the task of making known the spiritual heritage of Carmel throughout the Order

and throughout the modern world. It shall include competent scholars chosen from the entire Order.

6. Ongoing Formation

168.

Ongoing formation is a response to the call of God, who calls each of his own at every moment and in new situations. The grace of a vocation is a seed which constantly grows and develops; to follow Christ is to undertake an ongoing journey.

Hence, formation is never finished; and it requires us to be particularly attentive to the signs of the Spirit in our times, allowing ourselves to grow in awareness and in sensitivity, so that we may offer suitable responses to the problems of our contemporaries.³⁹ This will enable us to live our Carmelite identity today.

169.

Ongoing formation includes every undertaking which is designed to help us live our charism with dynamic faithfulness through the various stages of our lives. Thus, ongoing formation is not an option, but an essential component of our growth.⁴⁰

170.

We are each responsible for our own ongoing formation - for making space in our lives for a sense of the living God, in order to accomplish our ministry following Christ in a way that is ever more profound and contemporary.

171.

It is very important that the Order should offer each of its members the opportunity for ongoing formation, at every level and at every stage of their lives,⁴¹ in accordance with that which is set out in the *RVC*.

172.

Major superiors shall provide adequate means for ongoing spiritual, theological, doctrinal and professional formation. They shall encourage young members to undertake higher studies in order to raise the overall academic level of the Province and of the various ministries and activities.

173.

Our international, inter-provincial and provincial centres shall offer all the brethren opportunities for personal renewal and for the renewal of their gift of Carmelite life and apostolic activity. Periodically

³⁹ PI 66-67

⁴⁰ PI 68

⁴¹ PI 69, 70

every Carmelite shall be given the opportunity to take part in international courses on Carmelite spirituality, in other formation courses, especially Carmelite, or at other levels.