

## HISTORY OF THE ORDER

The Carmelite Order developed from a single community of hermits living after the example of Elijah on Mt. Carmel in Palestine in the early 13th century. Circa 1210 they asked for, and were given, a Rule of Life by St. Albert, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Their chapel and community were dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Carmelites have always regarded themselves as sons and daughters, in a very special way, of Mary and also of Elijah, whom Scripture intimately associates with Mt. Carmel (1 Kings: 18).

By 1238 the Saracens had overrun Mt. Carmel, forcing the Carmelites to move to Europe, where they began establishing communities. In 1247, the Rule of Life was adapted to meet the needs of an Order spreading throughout Christendom. During the second half of the 13th century, circumstances led the Carmelites ever further from their hermit origins and they finally became a mendicant Order, though the eremitical way of life (embracing solitude and community) was not forgotten; indeed, it was ever present in the Rule.

In 1562, a Carmelite nun in (Avila) Spain, St. Teresa of Jesus, instituted a reform of the Carmelite Order, assisted by St. John of the Cross. Together they established a new branch of the Order: the Discalced Carmelites. "Discalced" comes from the Latin word meaning "unshod"; they were so-called because, in keeping with their more austere way of life, they wore the rope sandals of the poor in place of leather shoes. This was a sign to the world of their poverty of spirit and simplicity of life, also symbolizing a deep humility in the presence of God. Both Carmelites are now Doctors of the Church, renowned for their wisdom and counsel on the life of prayer.

Carmelite friars and nuns strive for a more retired and contemplative form of religious life, in keeping with the spirit of the original Rule of Life. Today there are two branches of the Carmelite family: the Ancient Observance (O.Carm.) and the Discalced (OCD). Each branch has its own Secular Order. Although updated by Vatican II, the Carmelite way of life remains the same today as centuries ago: to live simply and always in the presence of God at the service of the Church.



## LEARN MORE

Practicing Roman Catholics, who are in full communion with the Church, may be admitted to Formation in the Secular Order provided they are:

- at least 18 years of age
- able to provide documentation of Sacraments received
- are not already members of any other group that requires promises or vows
- living the Catholic faith for a minimum of 18 months after Baptism

The Washington Province consists of approximately 3,800 members in 145 communities located in 23 states, DC and the Virgin Islands. To find out more about the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites, and the location of the OCDS community nearest you, we invite you to visit our comprehensive website. You may also contact the OCDS Main Office.



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Our Lady of Mount Carmel  
OCDS Community, Gaylord  
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## SECULAR CARMELITES WASHINGTON PROVINCE

*The members of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites are faithful members of the Church, called to live in allegiance to Christ "through a friendship with the one we know loves us" and in service to the Church.*

*Under the protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, in the biblical tradition of the prophet Elijah and inspired by the teachings of St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross, they seek to deepen their Christian commitment received in baptism.*

(OCDS Constitutions, 3)

## LIFE OF AN OCDS

### LITURGICAL PRAYER

We seek, within the limits imposed by the secular state, to participate in daily Mass whenever possible. Joining in the liturgical prayer of the Church, we commit to praying Morning and Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours in union with the universal Church each day.

### MEDITATION

We practice mental prayer at least 30 minutes each day in an atmosphere of interior silence and solitude. This is our time to be alone, and strengthen our relationship, with God so we can be true witnesses to His presence in the world. Daily spiritual reading, including Scripture and *Lectio Divina*, is highly encouraged.

### MARIAN

We practice devotion to the Virgin Mary, Mother of God. She is our model, *par excellence*, of the contemplative life and what it means to be a true disciple of the Lord. We wear the Brown Scapular (or medal) daily and engage in Marian devotions (rosary, Angelus, Litany of Loreto, etc.) We practice and promote special devotion to St. Joseph, Protector of Carmel, as St. Teresa highly recommended.

### MEETINGS

Faithful attendance at the monthly community meeting is of paramount importance in the lives of Secular Carmelites. It is here that we receive our lifelong Formation in the Teresian Carmel as well as spiritual nourishment, support and opportunity for growth among our fellow OCDS. Community meetings are normally held on a weekend and are around 4 hours in duration. Participation in an annual retreat and day of recollection is also expected, whenever possible.

### APOSTOLATE

“Individually, or as a community, and above all as members of the Church, apostolic activity is the fruit of prayer.” (Const. 25) “Secular Carmelites, in response to the Church and the Order, are to set about spreading Carmelite spirituality ... to address the need in the Church for authentic spirituality and prayer as found in the teachings of St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross and St. Thérèse.” (Statute 25)



Fr. Leonard Copeland, Provincial Delegate, and Fr. Saverio Cannistrà, Superior General, with the St. Teresa of the Andes OCDS Community, Danvers MA

## WHO ARE WE?

The Discalced Carmelites are a Roman Catholic religious community of priests, nuns, brothers, deacons and laity serving the Church through lives of contemplative prayer and ministry in a fraternal setting appropriate to their state in life. The Order of Carmel traces its roots to the prophet Elijah, who lived and prayed on the holy Mount of Carmel and whose words are the motto of the Order: “With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts.” (1 Kings 19:10) Of Hebrew origin, the word “Carmel” means “garden.” Mount Carmel’s charm was such that it was compared to the beauty of the bride in the Song of Songs. (7:6) To have the “splendor of Carmel” was to be truly blessed. (Isaiah 35:2)

Members of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites (OCDS) live their vocations “in the world” rather than in a monastery. They share the same universal call to holiness and Teresian Carmelite charism and traditions as those in religious life. They come from all walks of life: single, married, widowed, deacons and diocesan priests. Having the freedom to be physically present to others in their families, workplaces, neighborhoods and parishes, they bring the fruit of their prayer to the world. Whatever their situation, they strive to live in the presence of God and promote awareness of God’s love and mercy to all they meet.

## FORMATION

### VISITOR

A person discerning a vocation to Carmel should attend a minimum of 3 meetings prior to application for the Aspirancy. This allows the individual to become familiar with the community and the OCDS lifestyle, while also providing the community opportunity for discernment of an individual’s possible vocation.

### ASPIRANCY

The Aspirancy lasts a full year (12 sessions) and includes a basic introduction to the Discalced Carmelite Order: its history, charism and OCDS legislation. Upon completion and discernment on the part of both the candidate and the community’s Council, a candidate may be admitted into the Formation Program via a Clothing ceremony, during which the candidate receives the habit of the OCDS: the ceremonial Brown Scapular. This large Scapular is worn only at community meetings and other designated occasions.

### FIRST PROMISE

Preparation to make the First Promise entails 24 sessions, with the objective of deepening the life of prayer and knowledge of the Teresian Carmel. The candidate now embarks on a study of the authoritative structure essential to our way of life as well as the apostolate and introduction to the writings of St. Teresa. Upon completion of the 2-year program, a candidate may apply to make the First Promise, making one a full member of the OCDS for 3 years.

### FINAL PROMISE

The Secular Carmelite now embarks on a 3-year study of our Carmelite Doctors of the Church: St. Teresa of Jesus, St. John of the Cross and St. Thérèse of Lisieux, preparing for a lifetime commitment to Carmel and a promise to live the evangelical counsels and spirit of the Beatitudes for life. At the end of 36 sessions, the candidate may apply to make the Final Promise.

### ONGOING FORMATION

Ongoing Formation is a lifelong program with the goal of continuing and deepening the Carmelite vocation through communal study at the monthly meetings. The Fully Professed are free to tap the riches of Carmelite spirituality through the writings of our saints and other spiritual authors as well as Church documents and contemporary books of interest.