

Secular Order members normally belong to a local community; although where no such group is within reach it is possible for them to become "isolated" members.

Daily Life of a Carmelite Discalced Secular

A member of the Order of Carmelites Discalced Secular (OCDS) undertakes:

1. To attend daily Mass if possible;
2. To recite daily Morning and Evening Prayer (Lauds and Vespers) of the Liturgy of the Hours – the official prayer of the Church – and, if possible, Night Prayer (Compline) before retiring;
3. To devote at least half an hour daily to mental prayer in an atmosphere of interior silence and solitude;
4. To wear, as a sign of one's devotion to Our Lady and one's membership in her Order, the brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Membership

The gradual introduction to the life of the Secular Order is structured in the following manner. There are two periods of Formation:

1. A twelve month aspirancy
2. Formation for First Promise, which lasts two years
3. And Formation for Definitive Promise, which lasts three years

The period of aspirancy formally starts when the Local Council invites an individual to begin the introductory study of the Carmelite Secular charism in preparation for acceptance into the community. The purpose of this stage is that the applicant might become more familiar with the community, the style of life and service to the Church proper to the Secular Order of the Teresian Carmel. This period also gives the community the opportunity to make an adequate discernment.

After the initial period of contact, the council of the community may invite the applicant to a more serious period of formation that usually lasts for two years leading up to the first promises. At the beginning of this period of formation, the scapular is given to the applicant. This is an outward symbol of membership in the Order, and the sign that Mary is both Mother and Model on this journey.

At the end of this stage, with the approval of the Council of the community, the applicant may be invited to make the first promises to follow the evangelical counsels and to live in the spirit of the Beatitudes for a period of three years.

In the last three years of initial formation there is a deeper study of prayer, the Scriptures, the documents of the Church, the Saints of the Order and formation in the apostolate of the Order. At the end of these three years the applicant may be invited by the Council to make the Definitive Promises to live the evangelical counsels and the spirit of the Beatitudes for life.

The minimum age for acceptance into the Order of Carmelites Discalced Secular in the United States of America is 18 years of age.

For more information, please contact:

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Meetings: Monthly on 1st Saturday's

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Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites



Discalced Carmelites

What is the Secular Order?

“You must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt. 5,48). In giving this command, our Lord implicitly revealed that everyone of God’s children is called to personal holiness; and the way provided for us to attain it is the following of Jesus Christ, who said: “I am the way...” (Jn. 14,6).

Some are called to follow Him in the priesthood of His Church; others in one of those many “schools of sanctity,” the religious orders and congregations; but the vast majority are called as lay men and women, living “in the world,” leading an ordinary life, married or single, and holding down, perhaps, a job which demands the greater part of their time and energy. Whichever of these ways we are called to follow, we can and must “do all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Col. 3,17) for God’s greater glory: that is the way we are to achieve the perfection we are called to realize.

For many centuries there have been lay people, and also some diocesan priests who, while continuing to live “in the world,” have felt drawn to associate themselves with one of the religious orders. The monastic orders admit such men and women as Oblates, while the mendicant orders, following the example of St. Francis of Assisi have instituted what are known as “Secular Orders.” (The word “secular” distinguishes these associations from groups of men and women, also affiliated to one of the older religious orders, who live in community and make some type of religious profession.)

Secular Orders are defined in Canon Law (Cn. 702) as “associations whose members, while living a secular life, strive after Christian perfection by observing a papally approved rule, under the direction and in the spirit of a religious order.”

Until quite recently the aim of secular members was widely regarded as leading in the world a life as close as possible to that of the religious of the respective parent Orders – the male religious or cloistered nuns – with which they are associated. Since Vatican II, however, and the emphasis this Council placed on the role and dignity of the laity in the Church (as witnessed in Ch. 4 of the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, and in the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*), attempts have been made to redefine the member’s life in uncompromisingly secular terms. The Secular Order members are not asked to lead a watered-down version of religious life: they must rather make use of the resources made available – the Rule of Life, the spiritual ideals and traditions of the parent Order, the example and teaching of its saints, the guidance of the appointed directors, the fraternal bond that exists between each member of the Order – to make their lives as grace-filled and as fruitful as possible in every way for the whole Church. They are called upon to carry into the world the witness, the message, and the example of the parent Order.



The Order of Carmelites Discalced Secular

The Carmelite Order developed from a single community of hermits, whom we first hear of living “after the example of that holy man and solitary prophet Elijah” on Mount Carmel, in Palestine, in the early years of the 13th century. They were Latin (i.e., European) Christians, and about the year 1210 they were given a Rule of Life by St. Albert, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Their chapel, and therefore, according to the feudal mentality of that age, their whole institute, was dedicated to Our Lady. Carmelites have always regarded themselves, then, as sons and daughters in a very

special way of the Blessed Virgin, and also of Elijah, whom scripture associates intimately with Mount Carmel (Cf. 1 Kings 18).

From about 1238, hermits from Mount Carmel began establishing communities in various parts of Europe; and in 1247 their Rule of Life, now solemnly confirmed by the Holy See, was adapted to meet the needs of an Order spreading throughout Christendom. In the course of the second half of the 13th century, circumstances conspired to lead the Carmelites ever further from their hermit origins, and they finally became a mendicant Order, modeling themselves in many ways on the Dominicans, though the old hermit way of life was not forgotten and never completely died out; indeed it was ever present to them in their rule.

In 1562, however, a Spanish Carmelite nun, known to us as St. Teresa of Avila, assisted by another great Carmelite, St. John of the Cross, established what was to become a completely new branch of the Carmelite Order: the Discalced Carmelites. (“Discalced” comes from the Latin word meaning “unshod,” and they were so called because the most distinctive thing about their appearance was that, in token of their more austere way of life, they wore rope sandals of the poor in place of leather shoes.) The Discalced Carmelites, both nuns and friars, aimed at a more retired and contemplative form of life in keeping with the spirit of the original 13th century rule.

Thus it is that today there are two branches of the Carmelite family: the Ancient Observance (O. Carm.) and the Discalced (O.C.D.). Each branch has Secular Order members.

The Order of Carmelites Discalced Secular (OCDS), as its Constitutions state, “welcomes those of the faithful who, by special vocation, undertake to live, in the world, an evangelical life of fraternal communion imbued with the spirit of contemplative prayer and apostolic zeal according to the example and teaching of the Carmelite saints” – of whom perhaps the best known of all is St. Therese of Lisieux, the “Little Flower,” who died in the Discalced Carmelite Monastery of Lisieux, France, in 1897.