

Manual for Priests and Spiritual Directors of Carmelite Tertiaries

The following is taken from The Manual of the Order of Our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus, the Vade-Mecum for Tertiaries, and The Way of Perfection for the Laity.

Spirit of Carmelite Tertiaries

“Ideal: the union of the soul and God, a union more intimate than that of the window and the ray, of the coal and the fire. Wondrous means: surrender of the soul to the action of God by prayer, 'holy meditations and contemplations,' in a word, Love and its pursuit, those are the spiritual arms of the Order of Carmel. Its motto is that of Saint Paul, 'Ambulate in dilectione' (walk in love). The child of Carmel 'knows only one means to reach perfection... Love'; nothing troubles him, nothing affrights him—nothing is wanting to him. God alone is sufficient for him.

“Following the beautiful programme of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, his life must be a continual communion, 'he awakes in Love—the whole day is lived in Love in doing the will of the Good God—then, when evening comes after a dialogue of love which has never ceased in his heart, surrendering to the fire of love which consumes all his faults and infidelities, he sleeps again in love 'under the gaze of Our Lady, the sweetness and glory of Carmel.'”-Rev. Father Eliseus of the Nativity, O.D.C.

“Abide in My Love” — Invitation of our Saviour in His discourse of love at the Last Supper.

“My sole business is Love” — St. John of the Cross, Doctor of Divine Love

“My Vocation is Love” — St. Therese of the Child Jesus

“The object of our Third Order, following the example of the friars and nuns of the Order, is to give glory to God, to honor our Blessed Lady of Carmel and to aid our holy Mother the Church by their prayers.

“The means proposed for the attainment of these ends are contained in the Rule, which, if faithfully observed, will lead the Tertiaries to the attainment of sanctification and the possession of eternal life.” (Rule, Chapter 1)

“In this Rule of the Third or Secular Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and of the Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus, you will find clearly and distinctly laid down all that is necessary for you to live holily in the world, according to the spirit of Carmel, whether you live in community or whether leading your life individually, isolated in the world” (Very Reverend Father Luke of the Blessed Virgin, Superior General of the Order)

“The Rule, then is the plan, the framework we must hold to it absolutely, since we are to be sustained by it. Yet it is but a means, it is the letter which must be quickened by the spirit. *‘Littera occidit, spiritus autem vivificat.’* (II Cor. III, 6.) **The spirit is the interior life of the Order.**

“Let us now study this interior life which we should desire to possess, since it is for this purpose that we have come to Carmel.

“When there is question of examining anyone who presents himself for the religious life in the Order of St. Benedict, the Saint requires that it be found out if truly he seeks God, “an vere quaerit Deum.” Our Holy Mother St. Teresa wishes that in addition to this we enquire if the person desiring to enter religion be possessed of **sound judgment**; and this appears to her of capital importance, not only because it is **well to exclude from an Order those who lack balance and stability, but because by judgment she means the right understanding of supernatural realities.**

“... The Christian possessed of right judgment understands that creatures are but creatures, and therefore he will not become attached to them. Following this knowledge of what a created being truly is and having the supernatural virtue of faith infused into right judgment, he will place God above all, in the first place.

“Understanding that God alone is necessary, and that created things are to be used only in so far as they lead unto God, or at least in so far as they do not impede our going to Him, the soul will more easily become detached from all things, it will no longer halt on the way.”
(Vade-Mecum for Tertiaries)

“All of us who wear the holy habit of the Carmelites are called to prayer and contemplation. This was the object of our Order, and for this we came here. Our holy Fathers of Mount Carmel sought in solitude and utter contempt of the world for this treasure, this precious pearl (of contemplation) of which we speak, and we are their descendants.” (Our Holy Mother St. Teresa of Jesus, Interior Castle)

“We cannot meditate too carefully on the following passage of an old French author of the 17th century, Father Stephen of St Francis Xavier, Carmelite of the Reform of Touraine. In his book “The Third Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, explained for the Brothers and Sisters who profess the same,” he says: **“What is the spirit of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel? It is contemplation.**

“The Order originated in mountains, in deserts, in solitude. From its earliest traditions it receives the inclination and even the obligation to foster a life wholly interior, retired and hidden. Since St. Elias, the Patriarch of Carmel, lived always in God’s presence, and had for motto those beautiful words: “The Lord liveth, before whose face I stand” (III Kings); since, according to the opinion of several doctors, he saw the divine essence on earth, as the blessed see it in heaven, he has inspired his religious with the spirit of contemplation, and though, by the authority of the Church, they be occupied in assisting their neighbor, he does not fail to preserve contemplation as the principal and essential aim of their Order.

“He regards exterior occupations as accidental to their state; they apply themselves to prayer as the one and only thing necessary. We give ourselves to prayer, not because it is a means of practicing the religious virtues, of becoming proficient in the profession we have embraced, but as the very end which we propose to ourselves. And, as prayer is our whole life, we are not satisfied with praying at any one hour of the day, but we continue to pray unceasingly, we never interrupt our prayer...” (Vade-Mecum for Tertiaries)

On the Admission of Tertiaries

Although the state of Tertiaries united into a Congregation is preferable, it is not essential. Persons may still belong to the Third Order though not attaching themselves to any Congregation, as Tertiaries living their own lives independently in the world.

In order to belong to the Third Order in this manner it is sufficient to be admitted by the Superior and to receive the habit from him, or any other duly authorised priest; and after a year of novitiate to make profession in the hands of the same, or any other priest holding the necessary faculties.

These Tertiaries will be governed by the same Rule in all things that concern them more particularly, under the direction of their own confessor. (Nos. 7-9)

On the Faculty of Admitting to the Third Order

The Very Rev. Father General can give the habit of the Third Order and in due time admit to profession in any place whatsoever; the Revv. the Fathers Provincial can do the same thing within the limits of their own provinces, and local Superiors in their respective districts.

Moreover, the Very Rev. Father General or his Vicar can delegate for the purpose all priests, whether secular or regular (of whatever Institute) at his discretion, irrespective of time and place; the Rev. Father Provincial or Vicar Provincial can confer these faculties only upon their own religious within the limits of their own province during the time of their office; local Superiors can only delegate their own subjects in their own district and for the period during which they remain in authority. (Nos. 10–11)

Conditions Necessary for Admission to the Third Order

Persons of either sex and of all conditions—ecclesiastics, and lay-people, single, married or widowed—may be admitted to the Third Order, provided they fulfil the following conditions:

- (a) That they are not bound by vows either perpetual or temporary in any Religious Institute;
- (b) That they do not belong to any other Third Order either as professed members or novices;
- (c) That they may be of exemplary life, constant and firm in their profession of the Catholic Faith, and steadfast in their obedience to the Holy Roman Church;
- (d) That they be actuated by a sincere desire of leading a more perfect life by the fulfillment of their duties both general and particular, and the intention of serving God and Our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel more faithfully;
- (e) That they be of good repute and, either possessed of adequate means, or capable of earning a livelihood by their own honest labour;
- (f) That they have attained the age of twenty-four years; the Superiors and Directors, however can dispense from this last condition in the case of those whose good character seems to justify the dispensation, provided they have attained the age of twenty. (No. 12)

The Habit

Without prejudice to the laudable custom that exists in some places of wearing a more elaborate habit on Solemn Feasts, and when taking part in sacred functions, nevertheless the real and distinctive habit of the Tertiaries consists of a scapular of brown cloth, or in summer of brown serge, composed of two equal parts about 10 inches in length and about 7 inches in width.

This is to be worn day and night over the shoulders so as to cover the breast and back; nor may a smaller scapular be substituted in its stead except for reasons of health or other just motives sanctioned by the confessor.¹

This scapular must be blessed by a priest holding the necessary faculties when received for the first time; subsequently, when replaced by others, no further blessing is required. (Nos.13-15)

Admission to the Third Order, The Clothing

Although the Superiors or Directors can receive into the Third Order all persons fulfilling the conditions stated above, nevertheless, generally speaking, it will be found highly conducive to the well-being of the Congregation, and provide an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with the dispositions of the postulants, if all those who seek admission are presented to the respective councils some time previously.

The Superior or Director will therefore be very careful never to propose any person whom he does not consider called to this state of life, and who he has reason to believe will not be looked upon favourably by the majority of the Congregation; this will obviate the danger of differences of opinion and the consequent weakening of charity.

Before postulants are admitted to the Clothing a probationary period of two months must elapse, during which they should be carefully instructed in all that concerns the obligations they assume in joining the Third Order.

They will prepare themselves for the Clothing by a few days of recollection and retreat under the direction of their own confessor.

On the day fixed for the ceremony they will receive Holy Communion: then, at the appointed hour, after a brief exhortation at the discretion of the Superior or Director, the Habit will be given according to the ritual prescribed.

Where monthly meetings are held, the Clothing will take place at one of these in the oratory destined for the purpose: in other cases the ceremony will be performed before the Altar of our Blessed Lady but without publicity, as being a private function.

¹ It should be noted that the customary medal, with the effigy of the Sacred Heart on one side and that of Our Lady on the other which is considered as a substitute for the small Brown Scapular, or for any of the others cannot validly take the place of the Scapular of the Third Order. Tertiaries must always wear this scapular.

Postulants, being clothed with the holy Habit, become novices, and will then for the space of a year give proof of their vocation by the exact observance of the Rule: they will dispose themselves by prayer and the practice of Christian virtue the grace of profession.

It is left to the discretion of the Superior or Director to prolong the period of the novitiate in the case of those whose temperament inspires doubts of their possessing the requisite qualities of piety and constancy, as also those who manifest lack of firmness in their vocation.

During their novitiate, Tertiaries should present themselves at least once a month, unless otherwise hindered, to the Superior or Director to be instructed in their duties, afterwards every now and then, for example, every two months. Novices are always at liberty to choose their own confessor.

Should the novice be in danger of death, the Superior or Director may admit him to profession before the termination of the year of novitiate. These vows, however, will be valid only in the event of death. Should the novice recover they are not held to be binding, and must therefore be renewed in due course of completion of novitiate. (Nos. 16-25)

The Profession

Towards the end of the year of novitiate—the novice having completed his twenty-fifth year, unless a dispensation has been obtained—the Superior or Director, being assured of the divine nature of his vocation to this state of life and of his perseverance in his good intentions, may admit the Tertiary novice to profession.

Having fixed with the Superior or Director the day upon which the profession is to be made, each novice will prepare himself by making the Spiritual Exercises, or by other pious practices according to the advice of the Director, not omitting on the day itself to receive Holy Communion.

Apart from certain modifications of the ritual and prayers indicated in the ceremonial, the ceremony of the profession will be performed in the same manner as the clothing.

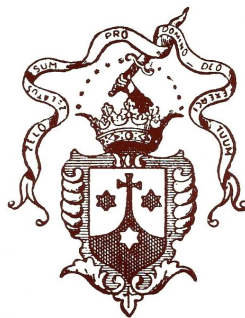
It will be made in the hands of the Superior or his Delegate in the following terms:

I, N. N. make my profession and promise to God, to Our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel, to Our Holy Mother S. Teresa and to the Superiors of the Order, obedience and chastity, according to the Rule of the Third Order, which I purpose to observe with all perfection possible to me, until death².

Twice a year, that is, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the 14th of September, and on the feast of Epiphany, the Tertiaries will renew their vows in the presence of the Superior or Director, or, if this be not possible, they will make the renewal privately after Holy Communion.

The vows of Obedience and Chastity according to the Rule of the Third Order have not the same binding force as Religious vows, and expire upon leaving the Order; they are intended to bind the Tertiary to a perfect observance of the holy Law of God and of Our Holy Mother the Church, and while elevating to a higher degree the practice of Christian virtue and increasing its value and merit they do but give a more sacred sanction to the duty incumbent upon all the Faithful of humble submission to lawful authority and of preserving in whatever state of life purity of soul and body.

Therefore, should it be found necessary to dismiss a Tertiary from the Order in punishment for his misdeeds, or should he leave it of his own accord—which should not be done without the advice of the Superior or Director—he would be no longer bound by these vows and the other obligations of the Third Order. (Nos. 26–32)



² The complete ceremony is available in the Manual or separate PDF with the Rituals of the Carmelite Tertiaries.