

Summary of Carmelite Tertiary Duties

This summary is pulled from the following sources—The Carmelite Tertiary Rule, The Vade-Mecum of the Tertiaries of Carmel, and The Way of Perfection for the Laity (A detailed explanation of the Discalced Carmelite Third Order Rule by Fr. Kevin, OCD)¹.

The following are the strict obligations as laid out in the Rule.

Daily:

— To wear the habit night and day, as laid down in Paragraph 13 of the Rule, and not to substitute in its stead a smaller scapular, without a serious reason nor without dispensation (Nos. 13-14).

—The scapular can be worn over underclothes. It is generally suggested to be worn outside of clothing on the following: during monthly meetings, and at the Mass for such days, during the days marked for the General Absolution and within the octaves of those feast days², other Carmelite religious ceremonies, and at the monthly procession.

—An indulgence of 500 days may be gained by kissing the holy scapular with devotion.³

—To observe the Vow of Obedience. The Vow of Obedience made by our Tertiaries at their profession obliges only to such things as are commanded by the Superior in conformity with the Rule. (No. 33)

— To observe the Vow of Chastity. The Vow of Chastity made in accordance with the Rule of our Third Order obliges under a new title, namely, that of a vow, to that degree of continence which is consistent with the state of life, present or future, of the person who makes such a promise to God. (No. 37)

— The members of an Order, whose glory it is to render them in a special manner the children of the most pure and Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, should be most sensitive to all that concerns holy purity in thought, word and deed, and in their entire comportment should scrupulously shun everything calculated to dim the lustre of this beautiful virtue. (No. 38)

—Our Tertiary Sisters, while studiously avoiding the exaggerated fashions of the day and the pomps and vanities of the world, should dress modestly and becomingly in a manner suited to their position in the world. (No. 39)

¹ Originally published with an imprimatur of 1945. Beware of updated editions or reprints, most commonly available as a 1962 edition and contains modern changes. The original edition is highly recommended for all Tertiaries as it explains each point of the Rule in detail.

² The dates for the General Absolution are listed in Part II, Chapter X of the Manual.

³ Additional indulgences, privileges, and indults are listed in the appendix of the Manual.

—Tertiaries who are able to read will, unless prevented by some reasonable cause, recite daily the “Little Office of the Blessed Virgin” in the form approved by the Church; that is, the Inviatorium and Nocturn of the current day with Lauds, the four Hours, Vespers and Compline. (No. 41)⁴

—An indulgence of 500 days for each hour of this Office. An indulgence of 10 years for the recitation of the whole Office. A plenary indulgence on the usual conditions for the daily recital of the complete Office for a whole month.

—Those who cannot read or are otherwise prevented from reciting the Office will say each day twenty-five times the Pater and Ave Maria; that is seven times for Matins and Lauds, and thrice for each of the other Canonical Hours, namely, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. (No. 43)

—Our Tertiaries, belonging as they do to an Order whose primary scope is the contemplative life, should endeavor to dispose themselves for the practice of Mental Prayer. (No. 47)

—Each day they (the Tertiaries) will make half an hour’s meditation, a quarter of an hour in the morning and a quarter of an hour in the evening, or all at one time, according to the duties of the day permit. Tertiary priests will make half an hour in the morning, and half an hour in the evening. (No. 48)

— Spiritual reading. (No. 49)

—Tertiaries should never fail to make the daily examination of conscience with due care and contrition for their sins; this is one of the most efficacious means of preserving purity of heart and advancing in perfection. (No. 50)

—They should also endeavor to apply themselves earnestly to the practice of the presence of God, especially the frequent use of ejaculatory prayers. (No. 51)

—Everyday if possible, the Tertiaries will hear Mass with lively faith and recollection. (No. 52)

—Frequent Communion, at least once a week, daily if possible. In addition they will communicate on the first Friday of each month, on the principle feasts of Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, on the feasts of the Founders and Patrons of our Order, on the anniversary of their profession, on the day of the Renovation of Vows, and whenever they learn that any member of the Order is dangerously ill or has died. (Nos. 54-56); and Spiritual Communion, at least daily. (No. 57)

—Tertiaries, following the advice of St. Paul, should be sober and earnest in the practice of piety, and avail themselves of all means calculated to foster it in their souls. (No. 58)

—In their homes they should be charitable, patient, good-tempered and exact in fulfilling the duties of their state, thus rendering religion and piety attractive to the eyes of others. (No. 59)

—The observance of silence and avoidance of idleness. (Nos. 69-72)

⁴ The Divine Office may be substituted for the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary as specified in (No. 42)

Weekly:

—All Tertiaries should be exact in the observance of the fasts and abstinences prescribed by the Church, and never seek to be dispensed without grave and sufficient cause. (No.64)

—Besides the fast days prescribed by the Church they shall fast using the foods and condiments permitted by the Church on ordinary fast days in their respective countries on the vigils of the following feasts: Corpus Christi, Our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Holy Mother St. Teresa, Our Holy Father St. John of the Cross, and the Immaculate Conception. (No. 65)

—They shall also abstain from meat besides the days prescribed by the Church on all Wednesdays of the year, all Saturdays in Advent, the vigils of the feasts of the Purification, Annunciation, Visitation, Our Holy Father St. Elias, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and on the feast of All the Saints of the Order. (No. 66)⁵

—The obligation of fast and abstinence ceases when any of these vigils falls on Sunday. Abstinence on all the Wednesdays of the year and on the Saturdays of Advent is not of obligation, but only of counsel.

Monthly:

—Once a month they will, if possible, set apart a day of recollection, even at home and while giving themselves to their ordinary duties. The first Friday of the month could very well be chosen for this retreat. (No. 60)

—Attendance at the monthly conference, as far as possible; (for those members who are not isolated).

Yearly:

—Once a year they will make the Spiritual Exercises (of a retreat). (No.60)

— Twice a year, that is, on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, the 14th of September, and on the feast of the 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. (No. 30)

—They should have greatly at heart devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the Holy Patriarch St. Joseph, and the Saints of the Order. (No. 61)

—To foster these devotions, they are recommended to make, either together or in private, a daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and to observe the Novenas, or Triduums, in

⁵ Dispensations are listed in Nos. 67–68.

preparation for the principle feasts of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother, of our Holy Founders, and Patrons, and of other Saints, according to their devotion. (No. 62)

—When occasion offers, the practice of charity towards the sick and the suffrages of the dead. (Nos. 73-81)

—To help the clergy in parochial works. (No. 72)

—After the Octave of Epiphany (13th of January), the Octave of Easter and the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, they will recite the fifteen decades of the Rosary in union with the suffrages offered at these times throughout the Order for the departed members; they will also receive Holy Communion for the same intention. (No. 80)

—On the 15th of November, the Commemoration of the deceased members of the Teresian Order, they will recite the entire Rosary and will receive Communion. (No. 81)

Tertiaries should not be too ready to ask for, or even desire, dispensations, especially in regard to the important points of the Rule; let them rather bear in mind that their merit and reward will be the greater in proportion to the sacrifices involved in the faithful accomplishment of their vocation. (No. 90)

Indeed, to belong to an Order so singularly favoured by Our Blessed Lady, to wear a habit rich in so many inestimable promises, to share in the prayers, fastings, mortifications and other good works performed by so many friars and nuns of the Carmelite Order vowed to a life of the highest perfection—this is a privilege to be greatly prized, even though it be bought at the cost of some little sacrifice. (No. 91)

