

# CARMEL CONNECT

Newsletter of the OCDS Main Office



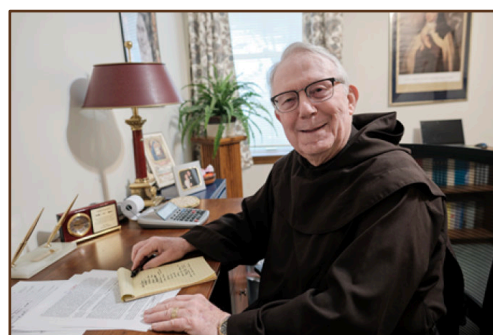
WASHINGTON PROVINCE  
SECULAR ORDER OF DISCALCED CARMELITES

[ocdswashprov.org](http://ocdswashprov.org)

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## From the Desk of the Provincial Delegate (Fr. Leonard)

The Lord be with you! As you know most states and dioceses have greatly relaxed, if not eliminated entirely, the mask mandates, social distancing protocols, restrictions on food provisions, etc. Coping with the pandemic during the past year has presented many unforeseen challenges and changed almost every aspect of our lives, including the ability to gather and worship God in our customary manner. The same concerns also affected our OCDS, community meetings, Formation classes and the joy of gathering together to share our Faith and fraternity. However, it was not all darkness; there were some silver linings amidst the clouds. "Necessity is the mother of invention" and most communities learned to use technology in a very practical way, holding Formation classes and Council meetings virtually, via Zoom and conference calls. Using this technology enabled many of our Extended Members to participate in community meetings and Ongoing Formation classes for the first time, with the added benefit of being able to be introduced to other members in the community whom they had never met before! I would encourage communities to continue all means of communication re: reaching out to our Extended Members and those who cannot legitimately attend a monthly meeting in person due to circumstances beyond their control.



Naturally, this brings up the subject of required attendance at the monthly meetings for Active Members. In recent weeks, the bishops of our country have begun to lift the dispensation from obligatory Mass attendance in view of the tremendous progress made regarding the Covid pandemic. In addition, most states have eliminated, or greatly mitigated, Covid restrictions. It seems reasonable to assume that OCDS communities will follow the guidelines of the bishop of their diocese and state authorities with regards to the safety, health and food protocols for individual and group (community) meetings. I feel it is appropriate to reinstate in-person meetings of OCDS communities based on the guidelines for your diocese and state. Adherence to the guidelines for mask-wearing and social distancing should continue to be followed according to local church and state regulations. The pre-pandemic attendance policy is now in effect based on the criteria of the diocesan and civil authorities. However, sensitivity should be given to persons who might still be concerned about the Covid pandemic and its effects. So, for the next 6 months, a person who is seriously concerned about this, should be granted permission not to attend meetings in person and therefore, not marked absent. If possible, the community should provide Formation classes for these individuals. May we continue to pray for one another and remember in a special way those most affected by the virus and those that care for them. Let us give thanks to God for his loving care and concern for us in sending his Son who walks with us on our journey of life. As he dwells among us, he greets each of us with a big smile and bids each one SHALOM!

From my heart to yours - peace.

Fr. Leonard Copeland, OCD

## “PROJECT CE” DOCUMENTATION -- COMPLETED !!!

As mentioned in the last issue of the Carmel Connect, the Main Office has been hard at work obtaining official, definitive documentation for all communities who identified themselves as being Canonically Established on the annual Roster. As per Statute 57, “There are three types of groups recognized by the Order in the Washington Province,” namely: a Group in Discernment (GID), a Recognized Community (RC) and a Canonically Established (CE) Community.

In order to complete this project, communities were first asked to submit to the Main Office photocopies of their CE documents, if they had access to them. For communities who thought they had CE status, but no actual proof for that claim, Fr. Alzimir Debastiani, our OCDS General Delegate in Rome, was asked to assist. He was kind enough to scan all of the official Canonical Establishment documents that he could find in the OCDS archives for the missing communities and send them to us electronically. For some communities, if he could not locate an actual document to scan, he provided us with a “Certificate of Documentation” stating that the community in question had, indeed, been granted Canonical Establishment. In these Certificates, he took great care to include the exact date of the Canonical Establishment, the name of the Superior General in office at the time of establishment, and the location in the official OCDS Register in which this documentation can be found at the Generalate archives in Rome.

All images of the official documents have been scanned and uploaded to the Provincial website for everyone’s viewing pleasure and downloading/printing, if desired. A link to the scanned document can be found on the page listing all the communities in the Province. (Under “Organizations,” then “Community Information.”) The breakdown of our 146 OCDS communities is as follows:

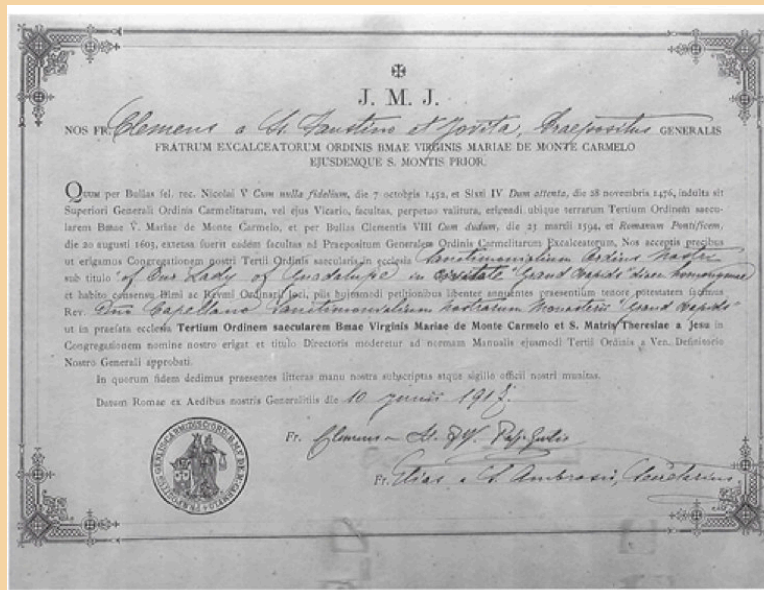
- 88 communities are Canonically Established
- 42 communities are Recognized Communities
- 16 communities are Groups in Discernment

Thus, once and for all, we have “set the record straight” on the issue of Canonically Established Communities.

### OTHER INTERESTING “CE” FACTS ABOUT OUR COMMUNITIES...

**The oldest Canonically Established community in the Province is  
Grand Rapids, MI (June 10, 1917)**

**The most recent community to be granted CE status is  
Deephaven, MI (June 19, 2020)**



Photocopy of oldest OCDS Canonical Establishment document: Grand Rapids, MI (June 10, 1917)

## “CE” Documentation Continued.....

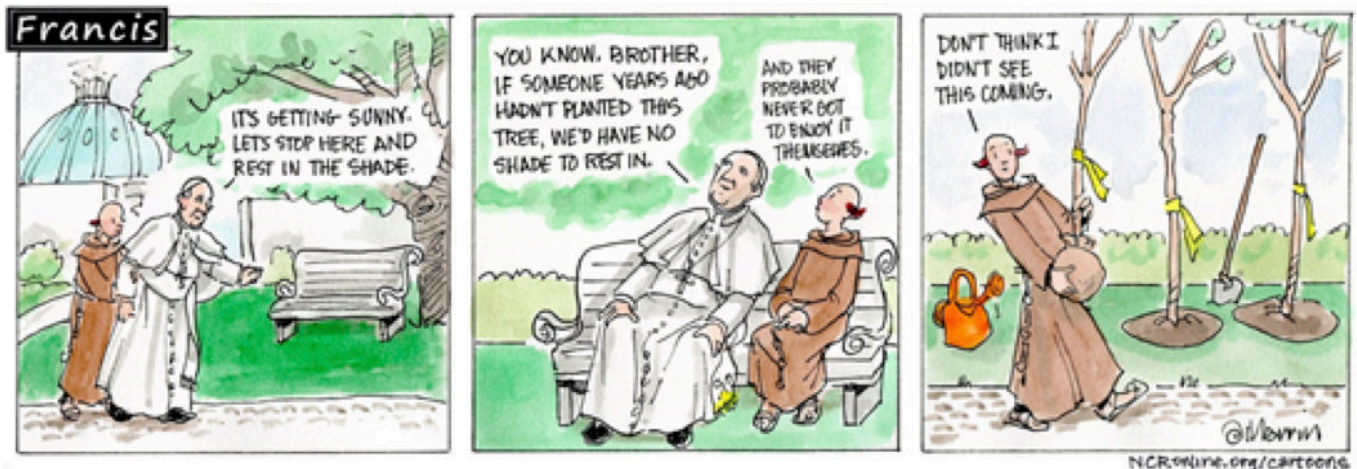
### WHICH BEGS THE QUESTION ...

#### How does a Recognized Community seek Canonical Establishment in Rome?

The process for Canonical Establishment is described in Constitution 48 (in the BOD), though the wording in the Constitution is, admittedly, a bit misleading. The Constitution reads, “For the establishment of a new community it is necessary to present to the General Secretary of the Secular Order the following documents ...” The phrase “establishment of a new community” is what causes confusion, as most people would assume this does not refer to CANONICAL Establishment (a status only granted by the OCD Superior General in Rome) but simply to a GID, as we commonly refer to it. The process (described in Const. 48) involves a lot of time, effort and paperwork and must be done with the approval, supervision, and assistance of both the Regional Assistant and the Provincial Delegate. The required paperwork, when fully completed and assembled, is then submitted to Rome by the Main Office for evaluation and, hopefully, approval. Basically, here is the procedure:

- After fulfilling all the requirements in Statute 57c (including having been a Recognized Community for at least 5 years, holding at least one triennial election and having stability), a community would ask the Regional Assistant for permission to begin the process to apply for Canonical Establishment.
- All paperwork listed in Const. 48 must be assembled and printed in duplicate.
- The Main Office has found from experience that, in order for permission to be granted by the Ordinary of the (arch)diocese, a written history of the community goes a long way in showing evidence of the stability of a community.
- The Regional Assistant then submits the original paperwork to the Ordinary of the (arch)diocese for permission to establish the community canonically in his diocese. (Copies are made for the community.)
- Upon approval by the bishop, the paperwork is submitted by the Main Office to Rome.
- If approved, an official document of Canonical Establishment is issued. The community keeps the original, with the Main Office retaining a photocopy.

Please do not contact the Main Office yet about having your Recognized Community apply for Canonically Established status. We are in the process of first researching the dates at which a community’s status was changed from a Group in Discernment to a Recognized Community. (There were no forms available for documentation of this change in status, so this could prove challenging.)



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## CLARIFICATION ON EXTENDED MEMBER STATUS

There seems to be some confusion as to when a Council may grant Extended Member status to a community member. Guidelines:

- Extended Member status is to be granted **ONLY TO DEFINITELY PROFESSED MEMBERS** and for the following reasons:
  - age (please do not ask us to define this -- ha! ha!)
  - illness (of an ongoing, debilitating or permanent nature that would cause undue hardship and impair one's ability to attend meetings. Some examples would be: severe arthritis, mobility issues, macular degeneration, PTSD, etc. No questions asked.)
  - distance (meaning, one has moved to/is living in a location more than an hour's commute one way *with no other OCDS community nearby*)

**Extended Member status is not to be granted simply because a member is moving out of state!** In that case, a member should be retained on the Active Roster of the original community and given up to 10 months to transfer to another community near their new domicile. It is expected that a member would make every effort to transfer as soon as possible to a local community close to her/his new residence. **IF** there is no OCDS community within an hour's commute of the new residence, then Extended Member status may be sought and conferred. It is the responsibility of both the original community's Council and the member to ensure that the transfer process is completed in a timely mannerr.



**Fr. Leonard, Louise and Loretta (and Holy Mother, too!)**

## FIRST OFFICIAL "VISITOR" TO THE MAIN OFFICE

On June 3rd, Louise Desilets (President of the Fredericksburg, VA Community) made a visit to the Main Office. She and her husband, Paul, were in the Boston area to attend a Baby Shower for their daughter, Andrea, and also visit their six grandchildren. Now that Covid restrictions have relaxed and people are "fully vaccinated," we can welcome everyone to visit us at the Main Office in Brighton! (Thanks to Paul for serving as photographer for this historic event!)



**Br. Raphael of the Divine Mercy, Fr. Philip Thomas (Novice Master) and Br. John Joseph of the Immaculate Heart.**

## ... AND ANOTHER HAPPY OCCASION !!!!

On May 30<sup>th</sup>, Noah Scheibmeir and John Morris received the habit of the Order at Holy Hill and began their novitiate. They will spend the next year in prayer and continued discernment, living the life of a Carmelite friar and deepening their study of our Discalced Carmelite spirituality. Please keep them in your prayers.

Please Notice This



From the  
Main Office

## “THERE’S A FORM FOR THAT!”

Why does the Main Office provide so many different forms on the website? This is necessary to **accurately and definitively document significant occasions in the life of a community or member.**

Forms provide:

- Definitive documentation
- Uniformity of data reporting
- Consistency in record-keeping
- Instructive guidance re: procedures necessary for any given event
- Best practices

The long term benefit is to make it easier for everyone by having accurate records on hand, thus saving significant time and effort should any questions arise in the future. (The recent Canonical Establishment project is a good example.) Fillable forms help by providing a quick and reliable means of obtaining accurate data.

### SIGNATURES REQUIRED ON ALL FORMS

Several communities have asked if a signature is really required on the new “fillable” forms found online. (An individual can now type in the information instead of manually writing, thus eliminating the possibility of error with poor/indecipherable handwriting and making it much easier for data entry.) The answer is yes, as otherwise it would allow for fraud: anyone could fill out a form and send it in to the Main Office as an official document. Without the signature of a President or Formation Director, we have no way of knowing if the information is authentic or that the individual involved has actually applied for, or been granted, a Transfer/Voluntary Withdrawal/Leave of Absence, etc. Therefore, the document needs to be saved on your computer, filled in, printed out, SIGNED and then scanned and sent electronically to the [ocdsforms@gmail.com](mailto:ocdsforms@gmail.com) address.

... AND SPEAKING OF FORMS ...

**ALWAYS USE THE FORMS THAT ARE POSTED ONLINE AT THE TIME YOU NEED TO SUBMIT THEM.**

Many times we edit the forms when notified by the OCDS themselves of “loopholes” or items that need clarification or forms that are missing a place for additional information. The “new and improved” forms are then updated and posted to the website. **Do not pre-print or electronically store current forms in order to use them in the future;** the forms may be obsolete by the time you need to use them and the Main Office will **only accept the most recently updated form** (as indicated by the date in the lower right hand corner).

**NEW ON OUR WEBSITE - SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT -**

**“YOU ASKED, AND SO ...”**

... we provided! As you may have noticed, there is a new “Spiritual Enrichment” category on the OCDS website. The Main Office will no longer provide the personal emails or phone numbers of Presidents to the general public nor publish a list that could become public due to security concerns. In the recent past, several communities were asking the Main Office to help them advertise upcoming events (virtual or otherwise) to other OCDS communities. To best respond to such requests while still respecting privacy and security issues, we will provide communities (not individuals) free publicity via the website. Though this takes a bit of time, effort and money, we felt it was in the best interests of the OCDS and wanted to respond to a real need. Community submission requests must be made a month in advance and include specifics of the event (date, time, cost, etc.), contact information and directions on how to register.

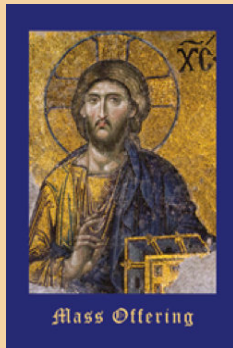
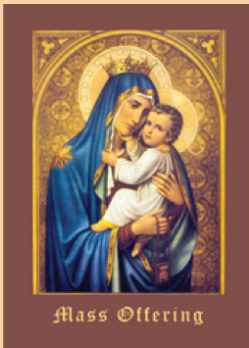
# FROM THE FRIARS of BRIGHTON ...



## GREGORIAN MASSES AVAILABLE ...

... as well as single Masses and Pious Mass Unions. The friars of the Brighton Carmelite Monastery of the Espousal of Mary and Joseph are accepting requests for Gregorian Masses: thirty consecutive Masses celebrated for the individual soul of a deceased as s/he prepares to enter the kingdom of God in heaven, as recommended by Pope St. Gregory the Great. For more information, please visit their website at <https://brightonfriarsocd.org/mass-cards>.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our friars — and of the Holy Souls.



## UPDATE ON NATIONAL OCDS FORMATION PROGRAM

We have received inquiries about the status of the OCDS "National" Formation Program that is currently in progress. In the interests of transparency, we would like to set the record straight and bring everyone up to date on this herculean project. In 2017, at the San Antonio Congress, Fr. Alzinir Debastiani (General Delegate to the OCDS) floated the idea of creating ONE Formation Program for the OCDS that would be uniform for all three Provinces in the United States. A Formation Task Force was instituted, composed of two OCDS members from each Province, for a total of six Secular members. Susan Gores (St. Paul MN) and Angela Vel (Hampton VA) were appointed to serve on the Formation Task Force as representatives of our Washington Province. So far, the Aspirancy, Formation I (Years 1 & 2) and Formation II (Year 1) Programs have been completed -- **but not yet approved for use**. Despite rumors to the contrary, the Formation Program is nowhere near ready for use and it is anticipated that it will not be operational for another 3-5 years. This is because, once the Program is completed, it still has to be reviewed/edited by the three Provincial Delegates, the OCDS General Delegate and finally approved by Father General in Rome. This is a massive undertaking, so please be patient and pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance in this. We will keep you abreast of this project.

**Until the national Formation Guidelines are officially approved and disseminated, all communities must adhere to, and use, ONLY the current Formation Program as described in the Book of Documents (pp. 277-294) or found on the OCDS website.**



## ON THE SUBJECT OF THE APPOINTMENT/ REAPPOINTMENT OF SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS

Here are some questions that have arisen as a result of the new policy on the re/appointment of Spiritual Assistants to OCDS communities.

### **Is it *required* that each community have a Spiritual Assistant?**

No. While a Spiritual Assistant (SA) is a valuable asset to a community, OCDS communities are not required to have an appointed SA. It is recommended, if possible, for every community to have a Spiritual Assistant. However, with the shortage of clerical and religious vocations this is not always possible. Thus, when it is time for the annual Ceremonies (Clothings/Promises/Vows), the community can simply ask the Provincial Delegate for delegation for a priest or deacon to conduct the ritual. The "Request for Delegation" form is on the OCDS website. Please submit the form at least two weeks prior to the date of the Ceremonies.

### **Can we still apply for a Spiritual Assistant if we missed the June 1st deadline?**

As was stated in the letter of March 19, 2021, "Any Community that has not submitted the form by that date will be considered as not having a Spiritual Assistant." Therefore, as of June 1st, any community that did not submit the "Request for Appointment-Reappointment of a Spiritual Assistant" Form is to be considered as not having a Spiritual Assistant; the position is vacant unless, and until, a community sends in the Form requesting one and it is approved by the Provincial Delegate. In the meantime, should a community need delegation for upcoming Ceremonies, the "Request for Delegation for Ceremonies" Form (found on the OCDS website) may be used and sent in electronically to the Main Office. All appointments of Spiritual Assistants are valid until July 1, 2023, once issued. Councils should know they have complete freedom when deciding whom best to choose as a Spiritual Assistant for their community.

### **Who/What is an "Ordinary"?**

An ordinary (from the Latin: ordinarius) is an officer of a church or civic authority who, by reason of office, has ordinary power to execute laws. Diocesan bishops are known as "Ordinaries" in the Roman Catholic Church. The Ordinary (or bishop) is the only one authorized to provide a Letter of Good Standing (also known as a Letter of Suitability) for a diocesan priest, attesting to the priest's good character and suitability for ministry in the diocese. The Ordinary grants faculties to a priest in order that he may perform priestly ministry within the diocese. For members of religious orders, the Provincial/Religious Superior would be the legitimate authority (Ordinary) to issue these documents.

### **Can a diocesan priest or deacon also be a member of the OCDS? Is their formation in the OCDS different from that of a layperson?**

Yes, a non-religious member of the clergy can be a member of the Secular Carmelites. In fact, there are 18 OCDS communities whose members include diocesan priests and/or deacons! Diocesan priests are not members of religious orders and therefore do not fall into the category of "religious," so they are free to make the Promise in the OCDS. Any priest or deacon interested in becoming a member of the OCDS must complete, in person, the full six-year Formation program -- no exceptions. They are expected to attend all monthly meetings and all Formation Classes in person. Although a priest or deacon has undergone extensive formation in the seminary with regards to Church doctrine and spiritual matters, **formation to become a member of the Secular Order can only be accomplished in an OCDS community.** As we all know, being an active, engaged member of a community is an integral part of the OCDS vocation; attendance at the monthly meetings is a serious determining factor when discerning a true vocation to the Order. This holds true for ALL candidates -- both lay and clerical.



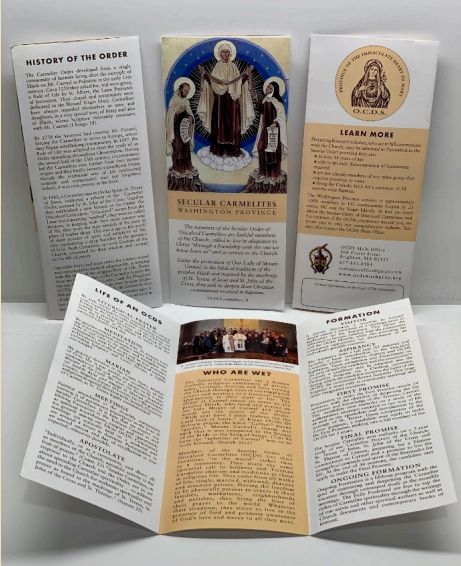
**On the Subject of Spiritual Assistants continued...**

**Can a layperson serve as a Spiritual Assistant to a community?**

We checked with Fr. Alizimir Debastiani, our OCDS General Delegate in Rome, and -- after he consulted others -- he told us the answer is no.

**Why was the process for approval of a Spiritual Assistant changed? In the past, we just submitted names and always received approval. Where in the legislation does it say these "Letters of Good Standing" are required?**

In this day and age, with the serious issues that have taken place within our society, the Church and the world, the bishops' conferences of the universal Church have mandated that a series of documents be provided by every person performing any ministry within their diocese. Part of the mandated due diligence is the requirement that the person must be able to provide a current letter of suitability and good standing to the Ordinary of the diocese in which s/he will be performing any ministry. A priest must also ask for faculties to perform priestly ministry in any diocese for which he does not have faculties. These documents imply that a background check has been fulfilled at the diocesan and/or provincial level. It only seems reasonable due diligence and good sense that we, the OCDS of the Washington Province, also seek verification of a potential Spiritual Assistant's good standing to serve in this special capacity from the individual's legitimate authority for the wellbeing of our members and to fulfill the mandates required by the bishops of the dioceses in which we live our Carmelite vocations. Our Constitutions (42-44 BOD) make it very clear that only the Provincial or his Delegate can legitimately appoint the individuals to serve in the very important ministry of Spiritual Assistant.



**NEW VOCATION BROCHURE AVAILABLE !!!!**

What you have all been waiting for: a brand new [OCDS Vocation Brochure](#) **chock-full** of information on the life of a Secular Discalced Carmelite, based on YOUR feedback and recommendations. Space on the back so you can "customize" by providing contact information for your community. They are affordably priced and available for purchase on the OCDS website ([ocdswashprov.org](http://ocdswashprov.org)) [in our online "STORE."](#) Buy in bulk and save! (This brochure would never have been possible without the technical expertise and design skills of Mary Stewart, OCDS, who is also the Webmaster for our beautiful OCDS website. How blessed are we that she shares her time, talents and gifts with the Order so generously!)

**UPDATE: In only 10 days (June 17-27), we SOLD OUT the first printing of 5,000 brochures! But don't worry: we already have more on hand and are ready to accommodate your orders. THANK YOU for spreading the good news about Carmel to a world desperately in need of it!**



Articles by Loretta L. Gallagher, OCDS  
OCDS Logos designed by Mary K. Stewart, OCDS  
Newsletter graphic design by Ann T. Bouchard, OCDS