

# HISTORY OF THE ORDER

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The following pages offer an outline of Carmelite History. Merely an outline. As such, it is bound to be sketchy and incomplete. I hope that, despite the drawback, two purposes will be served: first, seculars in charge of formation programs will have a handy source of information as well as a frame to drape their instructions over; second, any secular can catch at least a glimpse of the beauty, the value, the interest and the vicissitudes of our Carmelite vocation as it has existed in God's Church down through the centuries. To accomplish these purposes we will explore three general areas: the history of Carmel in general, the Secular Order in Carmelite history, and the Order's Marian tradition.

## II. ORIGINS

The very name 'Carmelites' tells you where our spiritual family and its tradition began. It began on Mount Carmel in Palestine, a mountain celebrated in the Scriptures for its verdant beauty. One of the prophets describing his vision of the future mother Jerusalem, the holy city of God and God's people, can think of nothing better to say than: "the beauty of Carmel has been given her" - words that have been used in the Saturday votive Mass of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

So, Carmel stands for beauty. That is the Carmelite's hope - to catch sight of God's beauty, the very Beauty that is Jesus Christ, God's Son and Image. We try to catch sight of Him and become like Him through contemplative recollection and union of will in this life and, above all, through the beatific vision and rapture of the next life. Such is the way St. John of the Cross, would present the Carmelite vocation in his *Spiritual Canticle*.

To see Christ, who is Beauty, go atop the mountain - yes. But it is a mountain and a long, hard climb up. Thus for the same St. John of the Cross, this time in his *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, the arduous climb of the holy mountain becomes a symbol of the other side of the Carmelite life: a thorough program of renunciation and meditation that leads one into the mystery of God.

The precise date of the first Carmelite settlement on the holy mountain is uncertain, although it dates back to the turn of the thirteenth century. The crusades had freed the Holy Land from Moslem hands and Christian pilgrims were free to visit the places of the Bible. Many with the Christian armies as chaplains, stayed on in the land of Jesus to devote their lives to their Lord in this "kingdom on earth" of His. One of the outstanding holy places of pilgrimage was Mount Carmel. Besides being a biblical symbol of divinely given beauty and abundance, it was also the scene of Elijah's great moment, the time he had, like a new Moses, brought the people back to Yahweh and renewed the covenant between them and their God.

Here amidst the beauty of Mount Carmel, a group of Christians from the West settled and took up an eremitic life of renunciation and prayer. They made their settlement near the so-called 'spring of Elijah' in imitation of the great man who is pictured to us in the book of Kings as the forerunner of the monastic life by reason of his total consecration and devotion to God and his life in solitude and poverty.

In the early years of the thirteenth century, the hermits on Mount Carmel asked St. Albert, the Latin-rite patriarch of the Holy Land to give them a written Rule of life. St. Albert came to the East in 1206 and was killed in 1214, so the giving of the Carmelite Rule must have been between those years. The Rule the saintly bishop wrote for the hermits was brief but remarkably substantial and balanced. Although it was written with only the original community of Mount Carmel in view, it has served every Carmelite community the world over as an inspiration, ideal, and framework of life.

The Rule of St. Albert was a simple, substantial, flexible, truly evangelical rule of daily life. Ever more, it was the original and providential expression of the Order's spirit - a spirit we shall notice again and again in our saints and outstanding members even when their own times and circumstances found them living a daily life more or less different from that of the hermits of Mount Carmel to whom St. Albert's Rule was addressed.

Although every religious is a consecrated servant of Jesus Christ, the hermits of Mount Carmel, in particular, were to serve their Lord by taking up a solitary life of constant poring over God's Word and communion with Him through prayer. Most of their time would be spent in their individual hermitages but they were to gather together around Jesus each morning at Mass and have a meeting every Sunday to discuss the spiritual and temporal welfare of the community.

Each hermit was to join in the Church's daily prayer at the hours appointed for the Divine Office. Meals would be taken with fasting prescribed from September to Easter and meat given up altogether, except for the sick. Manual work, silence, all the traditional monastic virtues, were prescribed. The saintly bishop told the hermits he was offering them the program as a minimum undertaking in the service of Jesus Christ. "If any one can do more, our Lord Himself will reward him at his coming," he assured them.

All of Carmel is in the Rule of St. Albert. However, we may not notice it unless we refer to certain historical facts attendant upon the founding of that first community which are not expressly mentioned in the Rule. First of all, it is necessary to remember that the hermits of Mount Carmel - indeed, everyone in the Holy Land at that time - were full of the spirit of the Crusades. The whole Church was pervaded by it, just as it is at present by what we call the "spirit of renewal" or "the spirit of Vatican II." The Holy Land was thought of as our Lord's "kingdom on earth," the special domain of the King of all.

The Crusades were the most eminent form of service to the King, aimed at freeing the holy places sacred to Him from pagan hands so they could be used once more to render Him worship and prayer and pilgrimage. Every one who had come from Europe to the

Holy Land was coming to serve the King: some by arms (and their death in battle was considered a genuine martyrdom); some by a religious life, active or contemplative.

The point is, all were making their own distinctive contribution to this great undertaking of the Church in the service of Christ the King. Today we would say it was an "apostolate" for every one. Thus, the hermits of Mount Carmel, though their life was a solitary one of prayer and renunciation up on a slope of Mount Carmel, were every bit as apostolic as St. Teresa's nuns in their hidden, cloistered life of prayer and sacrifice at St. Joseph's three and a half centuries later.

Another trove of "buried treasure" hidden below the surface of the Rule concerns the hermits' relationship with Elijah, the Prophet. The Rule is addressed to the hermits "who dwell by the spring on Mount Carmel." The bare phrase might not mean much to a Western reader but anyone who lived in the vicinity would know "the spring" was the famous one sacred to Elijah. The fact that the hermits chose precisely that sacred spot to undertake their life of solitude for Christ could only mean they saw in the prophet a real patron, a real model and inspiration. Carmelites have always looked to Elijah as their "dux et pater - leader and father," even their founder.

Admittedly, we cannot today claim that great prophet of the ninth century BC "founder" of our Order in the same juridical sense as St. Francis did the Franciscans. Nevertheless, the pages of Holy Writ present him to us as the originator of a way of life among God's people that was later taken up in Christ's Church by the early monks of the fourth century AD, and later still by the hermits of Mount Carmel at the time of the crusades.

He is forever the prototype of the man totally devoted to his God, living alone with Him in solitude and renunciation of this world's life, ready to go and serve Him among humanity with utter zeal. The words on our Order's shield: "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord, God of Hosts," will always remind us that we have a vocation to be spiritual descendants of Elijah.

A third, even more important, factor in the vocation of the first Carmelites was their relationship to Mary, Jesus' Mother. The early Father's great devotion to Mary does not appear explicitly in the Rule but it was there. We know because St. Albert directed the hermits to "put up a chapel in the midst of the hermitages." When they did so, faithfully carrying out this prescript of the Rule, they named the little chapel St. Mary's.

The title given a holy place had, in medieval times at least, a great significance. It meant that the whole undertaking associated with that place was being put under the patronage of the person it was dedicated to. The Carmelites were expressing their conscious wish of placing their entire project of a solitary life of communion with Jesus on the holy mountain under the patronage and at the service of Mary.

"Patroness" and "queen" and "lady" were the words they loved to use for her. Perhaps it is not going too far to say that all the implications of the holy, voluntary slavery of love later preached by St. Louis de Montfort as "true devotion" were already present in the

relationship the hermits of Mount Carmel had with God's mother. Even today, our favorite titles for her are "Our Lady of Mount Carmel" and "Queen and Beauty of Carmel."

So, solitude and renunciation for the sake of a life of communion with Jesus, undertaken together as a brotherhood, under the patronage of Mary, with the aim of devoting themselves totally to Christ, the Lord, in the spirit of The Crusades: such were the features of the vocation given to the hermits of Mount Carmel who began living under St. Albert's Rule in the first decade or so of the thirteenth century.

### III. MIGRATION FROM MOUNT CARMEL

The foundation on Mount Carmel did not last very long. In the course of the 1200's the Saracens gradually took over all of Palestine once more. The last Christian stronghold to fall was, in 1291, Acre, the city of the foot of Carmel. The Carmelite hermits were massacred. After living some eighty years on the mountain under St. Albert's Rule, the mother community of our Order came to an end - for the time being.

Such an outcome had been foreseen, however, and settlements had been made back in Europe, beginning as early as 1240 or so. This is where the Order's future development lay. Foundations were made in England and France, on the islands of Cyprus and Sicily, and elsewhere. Circumstances were different in Europe, naturally, so it is not surprising to find the hermits encountering difficulties at first, some of which even threatened their very continuance. Although they survived as a distinct Order in the Church, they modified their way of life considerably.

In resettling to Europe, the Fathers were faced with two major difficulties. Their first difficulty was to establish their legitimacy as a religious order. Some 30 years earlier, in 1215, the Fourth Ecumenical Council of the Lateran had outlawed the foundation of any new orders. The bishops were surprised to see these somewhat strange looking men with long, striped capes. The capes were later changed to the white mantles we are now familiar with among Carmelite friars and nuns. These strange men were asking leave to found monasteries. Many bishops said: "No," feeling this would be in contravention of the Council's decree. Eventually, the Carmelites were able to show that Bishop Albert had given them their Rule by 1214 at the latest.

There was another problem. Even when the refugees from Mount Carmel were allowed to settle in a diocese, poverty became a problem. Mount Carmel had been a famous, easily accessible place of pilgrimage where the constant stream of visitors would leave something for the hermits living on the slope. In Europe, however, they were unknown and they lived in forests or out-of-the-way places that no one had any reason to visit.

Both of these factors prompted the hermits to send an emissary to the pope with a request for approval of the Rule and, at the same time, to permit certain modifications in it. On October 1st, 1247, Pope Innocent IV promulgated the revised Rule of St. Albert, the one

all Carmelites, Calced and Discalced, have lived by ever after. The original wording of St. Albert was changed in seven places.

Perhaps the most significant point was the express permission to make foundations not only in out-of-the-way spots, but also in and around towns and populated areas. The revised Rule was still a rule for hermits; but because they now began moving into the towns, a radical change occurred in their lives. People started frequenting their services and asking for the sacraments and guidance. As a result we find the Carmelites gradually taking on the apostolic ministry from the year 1253 onward.

There had been a cenobite, or communal, side to the Carmelite life ever since its beginnings on the holy mountain under St. Albert's original Rule. This was extended much further by the revision of 1247. The canonical hours and the daily meals were now to be had in common instead of alone in the individual hermitages. Indeed, the "hermits of Mount Carmel," who had formerly lived in separate hermitages scattered along a slope of the mountain now had individual rooms, all under the single roof of a friary.

In any case, these two great changes in the Carmelites' way of life - the extension of the common life and the taking on of a clerical apostolate - effectively turned them from a strictly contemplative and eremitical order into a mixed order of friars, somewhat similar to the Dominicans and Franciscans who had started up around the same time and who were extremely widespread and popular.

So, the Carmelites began moving into the towns and cities. In these friaries the way of life combined contemplation and action. The eremitic life was still led at the early foundations that had been made in out-of-the-way places. Vocations were many and the Order spread to new countries in Europe.

In time an internal conflict arose between those who wanted to return to an exclusively solitary life and those who advocated the mixed life of prayer and apostolate. A notable expression of this conflict was the booklet: *Fiery Arrow*, written by Fr. Nicholas, a superior general who resigned in 1270 because he thought the Order had lost its identity changing from hermits to friars. Father Nicholas' view did not prevail, however; and the Carmelites continued on their already adopted course. By the end of the 1200's, in fact, no strictly eremitic houses remained.

One of the most severe criticisms leveled at the friars by Fr. Nicholas was that they were theologically uneducated and, therefore, unprepared to carry out the apostolate they were rushing into. Fr. Gerard of Bologna tried to remedy this after his election as general in 1297. Gerard, himself, just two years earlier had been the Order's first doctor of theology with a degree from the celebrated University of Paris. During his long term of twenty years as general he promoted a high caliber of academic study among the friars. By 1324 there were eight international colleges throughout the Order, with more to come, and the Carmelites were a respected, full-fledged order in Europe. The Fourteenth Century is sometimes called the Golden Age of the Order but this is a dubious notion. It is true that the Order continued to grow numerically during this century - there were thirty or so

provinces by now with between two and three houses - but even in this respect the Black Death, a great plague, took a frightful toll. It is true also that the intellectual life of the Order and the apostolic contribution the Carmelites were making to the Church had improved vastly. At the same time, however, there were many serious abuses of their religious life and tragic failures to live up to their fundamental calling as contemplative saints.

Even as the Order grew in numbers and prestige, a spiritual decline had set in and got steadily worse. One thing that aggravated it beyond measure, and that was hardly the friars' fault, was the Black Death. This plague which started on the battlefields of Hungary and swept westward even to the British Isles in the years 1348 to 1350, is thought by some historians to have carried off as much as 40% of the population of Europe.

We can imagine the effects on Religious Orders such as the Carmelites. One Sunday you might have had fifty or sixty friars in the sanctuary and choir carrying out the solemn High Mass. The next week only half a dozen remained. The rest were dead or dying. The several that survived were exhausted from caring for, and burying the dead. It is understandable that they could carry out very little of the Carmelite observance - the hours of prayer, the fasting, the solitude of their rooms and so on. And this scene was re-enacted in city after city, all across Christendom. It was really a pitiful state of affairs. The effect on vocations was drastic, too. It took a long time to fill up the depleted ranks and often, in a desperate haste to do so, candidates were accepted too young and untested. This inevitably led to a further lowering of the standard of religious life.

The year 1432 was a symbolic one. It was the year of the Mitigation so often mentioned over a century later in the letters of St. Teresa. The Carmelite General Chapter petitioned the Holy See for a relaxation of the Rule in regard to abstinence from meat and solitude in the room. The petition was granted. The significance of this relaxation of the Rule was not so much the change in the precise points mentioned, as in the official and quasi-final acceptance of a general observance less austere and generous - a far cry from the original observance of life given the hermits of Mount Carmel by St. Albert or that handed the early Carmelite friars of Europe by Pope Innocent IV.

As ailing as the religious life of Carmel and, we might add, the spiritual life of the whole Church, was from about 1300 to 1550, there were signs of God's wonderful and saving grace all over. In 1370, a work called *The Book of the Institution of the First Monks* was published by Fr. Philip Ripoti, the Provincial Superior of Catalonia in Spain. Soon this book became the manual of training in Carmel throughout the Order. It contains one of the most beautiful and stirring expressions of the Carmelites' vocation ever written:

"There are two aims to this life (of Carmel). The first...is to offer God a holy heart, free from all stain of actual sin. We reach this when we become perfect in charity. The other aim is to taste in our heart and experience in our minds, not only after death but even during this mortal life, something of the power of the divine presence and the bliss of heavenly glory. The first aim, purity of heart, can be achieved, with the help of God's

grace, by toil and virtuous living. The second is experiential awareness of the Divine Power and heavenly glory, by purity of heart and the perfection of charity."

The presence of God's Mother was a redeeming reality all during this time, too. We shall save a look at the development of Carmel's devotion to Mary for special treatment later, but she needs to be mentioned here, for without a doubt, it was due to her patronage and merciful intercession that Carmel not only survived but contributed abundantly to the Church.

Another sign of the Holy Spirit's work in Carmel, was the constant call to reform repeated by every General Chapter, by general after general, and embodied in several concrete movements of reform within the Order, especially in Italy. One of these, the so-called Mantuan Reform, deserves a special mention.

It grew out of a house of reformed observance established in the wooded mountains outside Florence in 1413. The first novice of this holy friary was the Blessed Angelo Mazzinghi. From St. Mary of the Woods, as the friary was appropriately called, came other foundations, and eventually, a network of over 50 houses juridically organized as the Congregation of Mantua. This Congregation remained under the General Chapter of the Order and under the Prior General as well. Its most celebrated member was the Blessed Baptist Spagnoli, an outstanding poet and representative of renaissance humanism as well as a saint.

#### IV. THE DISCALCED CARMELITE REFORM

The most important event of these centuries for Carmel was the beginning of the Second Order of Carmel, our cloistered contemplative nuns. The first convents were begun in Italy and Holland in 1452 under the supervision of the Holy Superior General, Blessed John Soreth, whose term of offices lasted from 1451 to 1470. The nuns in Holland soon spread to Belgium, France, Germany and Spain. Their spread in France was accelerated by the patronage and eventual entry of the widowed duchess of Brittany, the Blessed Frances D'Amboise. A great revival of the pristine fervor of Carmel was soon to come from the nuns, but not in France.

The Discalced Reform came from our Spanish Holy Mother, St. Teresa of Jesus. It was she who gave Carmel its most successful and lasting reform. Born in 1515, just two years before the beginning of the Protestant Revolt from the Church, she made her vows as a Carmelite nun at the convent of Our Lady of the Incarnation in Avila at the age of twenty two. It was not till she was around forty that she really began to live up to her vocation and give herself entirely to God. Several years after her 'conversion' she undertook, at our Lord's command, the opening of a new reformed Carmelite convent in Avila. The convent was St. Joseph's, and the date August 24, 1562, the year after the closing of the Ecumenical Council of Trent, the Catholic answer to Protestantism.

St. Teresa herself describes her thoughts when the idea of such a convent came to her:

"I would wonder what I could do for God and it occurred to me that the first thing was to follow the vocation for a religious life which His Majesty had given me by keeping my Rule with the greatest possible perfection. And although in the house where I was living there were many servants of God, the Rule was not observed in its primitive rigor but, as throughout the Order, according to the Bull of Mitigation."

Some nine months before St. Joseph's was opened, the saint wrote to her brother, Don Lorenzo, about it:

"This task which is the foundation of a convent ...they will live in the strictest enclosure, never going out, and seeing no one ...and the foundation of their lives will be prayer and mortification."

Years later, in writing her Way of Perfection, St. Teresa recalls her intentions at the time of the convent's founding, telling us how grieved she had been at the news of Protestantism spread in France, with the attendant desecrations of the Blessed Sacrament and the breaking away of enormous multitudes of people from the faith of Rome and, consequently, from union with Christ:

"This troubled me very much. I wept before the Lord and entreated Him to remedy this great evil... I would have laid down a thousand lives to save a single one of all the souls that were being lost there... My whole yearning was, and still is, that as He (Our Lord) has so many enemies and so few friends, these last should be trusty ones. I determined to follow the evangelical counsels as perfectly as I could and to see that these few nuns who are here should do the same. I should thus be able to give the Lord some pleasure. We should do everything we can to aid the Lord who is so much oppressed by those to whom He has shown so much good. Oh, my sisters in Christ! ...Help me to entreat this of the Lord, who has brought you together here for that very purpose. This is your vocation." St. Teresa's intention was to found a single, new community of reformed Carmelite life where she and her companions might serve our Lord whole-heartedly. John Baptist Rubeo, the Father General of the Order, visited St. Joseph's four years after its opening and was so impressed with what he saw that he urged the Mother to found as many convents as she could. And so, over the last fifteen years of her life, St. Teresa got to know all the roads of Spain. She founded seventeen Carmels in her lifetime and wrote several classics of spirituality. She had an outstanding partner in the work: St. John of the Cross, a 26 year old Carmelite priest, half the Mother's age when she met him. He was the main figure in a reform of the friars life and he became one of the wisest, bravest, and holiest of the saints before his own death in 1591 at the age of 49. Indeed, these two great saints of Carmel are gifts of God to the whole Church. Both have been declared Doctors of the Church because of their profound explanations of prayer and mystical experiences.

The reformed friars and nuns were officially known as "contemplative Carmelites" at first, but the nickname "Discalced" or "barefoot" because of their bare or sandaled feet, was given them by the public and it stuck. Now the Order stemming from the Teresian reform is known as the Discalced Carmelites.

Carmel's traditional love and devotion towards Mary was part of the Discalced Reform, too. St. John of the Cross probably bespoke the feelings of all the Nuns and Friars one day when he was shown a lovely statue of Our Lady at one of the convents. He exclaimed: "If only I had the statue and a desert, I'd be the happiest man alive!"

St. Joseph's Carmel had been founded in 1562; Duruelo, the first reformed friary in 1568. After that there was almost one every year. By 1581, all the Discalced houses were united in a single province under the first Provincial, Fr. Jerome Gracian, an admired and trusted friend of St. Teresa.

There had been serious trouble between the new reformed religious and the Carmelites who did not follow the Reform - they came to be called "Calced" in contrast with the "Discalced" - and a separate province seemed the solution. Some years later it was a Congregation, on the model of the Mantuan Congregation, comprising several provinces but still within the Order. Finally, it became a new Order when, at the General Chapter of 1593, the Discalced delegates petitioned for total juridical independence and received, first the Chapter's approval, then that of Pope Clement VIII.

There had been troubles with the Calced friars up until the establishment of the separate province in 1581. It was not long before disagreements and divisions began among the Discalced themselves. Fr. Gracian's term as provincial ended in 1585, when he was succeeded by Fr. Nicholas Doria.

Doria remained in charge first as provincial, later as Vicar General, right up to the separation of 1593. He was a hard man, quite opposed to Gracian's policies on two matters above all. One was the nature and extent of the friar's apostolate. Doria wished it drastically reduced, whereas Gracian appealed to the mind of St. Teresa in favoring a fuller contribution to the apostolic activity of the Church, including even foreign missions.

The friar's authority over the nuns proved to be another bone of contention. Doria was ready to change the Constitutions devised by St. Teresa herself in order to give the friars more control over the internal life of each convent even down to minutiae of daily living.

Again, it was Gracian, along with a few of the nuns who had been collaborators of St. Teresa, that stood in Doria's way. Even St. John of the Cross was perceived as part of the opposition. One of the great disgraces of the early Discalced Reform was the expulsion of Fr. Jerome Gracian engineered by Doria in 1592, just a year or so before the Reform became an independent order and only two months after death had removed John of the Cross from the scene.

Doria expected to become the first General Superior of the new Discalced Carmelite Order but died on the way to the Chapter that would probably have elected him.

The first Discalced friary outside Spain was founded in 1584 at Genoa, Italy. From here a foundation was made in Rome, at the famous friary of Santa Maria della Scala, in 1590,

at the invitation of the Holy Father himself. The pope thought very highly of the Discalced friars in Italy and wanted to avail himself of their service for the good of the Church throughout Europe. However, the General Superior in Spain resisted any plan to spread the Order outside Spain.

As a result, Pope Clement VIII, the same pope who four years earlier had approved the separation of Calced and Discalced into two orders in the Church, now in 1597, decreed the establishment of an Italian Congregation of Discalced Carmelites as an Order separate from the Spanish congregation. These two Discalced Orders continued to exist distinct and independent down to 1875 when they were once more fused into the single Order of Discalced Carmelites we know today.

## V. LATE HISTORY

The friars of the Italian congregation spread to all countries of Europe: France in 1608, Belgium in 1610, Germany and Poland shortly after. The first foreign mission was sent out to Persia in 1605. In 1615, missionaries were dispatched even to England where, of course, the Catholic faith was outlawed, and they risked death.

Although the early Italian Congregation could boast of a number of outstanding men, perhaps the most significant was the Venerable Father Thomas of Jesus. It was he who brought the Order to France, Belgium and Germany. He also wrote a work on the theory of foreign missions which became the handbook for the then Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in which, incidentally, various Discalced Carmelites played major parts beginning with none other than the expelled Fr. Jerome Gracian who later found himself in Rome and there proposed the idea of such a department of the Holy See to Pope Clement VIII. Another distinguished Discalced Carmelite institution that we owe to Fr. Thomas of Jesus, was that of the Holy Desert. Fr. Thomas had conceived the idea while still a young friar in Spain under the vicar-generalship of Doria, who gave his approval for the opening of the famous Desert of Bolorque in 1592. A strictly eremitic contemplative life was lived in the desert in imitation of the original life led by the Hermits of Mount Carmel with the Discalced spiritual energy as a source of deep union with God. This ideal was never reached but once there were many deserts throughout the Order and they were held in great veneration. Today, only a handful remain. St. Teresa's nuns also began to spread across Europe. In 1604, the Venerable Mother Ann of Jesus led a party of six Spanish sisters to France where the first Discalced Carmel was opened at Paris. Soon there were Carmels all over France. Differences developed between the Spanish foundresses and their French patrons over the approach to Carmelite life and soon the Spanish mothers left France for Belgium. Ann of Jesus founded a Carmel at Antwerp in 1606.

Later, when Fr. Thomas brought the friars to Belgium, Mother Ann and the nuns came under the jurisdiction of the Italian Congregation. And here we meet up once again with our old friend, Fr. Jerome Gracian, whose life followed an interesting course. Years earlier he had been accepted into the Calced. Now in Belgium, he collaborated with Mother Ann of Jesus on publication of the writings of St. Teresa. History is stranger than

fiction. The Italian Congregation eventually grew by the end of the 1700's, to over 200 friaries with perhaps 4,000 religious.

It may be of interest to note that a community of French Discalced came over to what was then the French territory of Louisiana in 1720 with a commission to find a house there. They stayed around Mobile, Alabama, for only two years and then returned.

Later in this century, a Discalced friar from Germany, Paul of St. Peter, came over as a chaplain for some French mercenaries aiding General Washington in the Revolutionary War. Present at the surrender of Cronwallis, he went back to France for his mustering out but returned to the United States of America in 1784, where he served as a missionary around Cahokia in East St. Louis and finally ending up in Louisiana, at St. Gabriel, dying there in the 1820's. Unfortunately, he left no Carmelites after him and the story of Carmel in the United States does not begin until later.

The nuns of the Order in Belgium founded a second convent in Antwerp in 1619, destined exclusively for English - speaking candidates. This became the mother house for another English - speaking house in Hoozstroeten, Holland in 1678. Next century in 1754, when a catholic girl from the colony of Maryland wanted to be a Carmelite nun, this is where she entered, to be followed by two nieces. These three, together with an English nun from Antwerp, opened the first American Carmel near Baltimore in 1790: Port Tobacco. By that time the nuns of St. Teresa had spread all over the Church.

Then, disaster befell. The French Revolution that began in 1789 and the subsequent revolution that swept Europe in the first half of the 1800's almost wiped Carmel out, Discalced and Calced alike. Friaries and convents were closed and the religious disbanded; property, libraries, archives were confiscated, often entailing the loss of valuable historical records we might now long for. Many religious were executed, others entered the diocesan clergy, others returned to their families and lived their vows as best they could, still others gave up religious life altogether.

The nuns fared somewhat better than the friars who could count only a half-dozen or so provinces left in Italy by the 1840's. Virtually nothing at all remained of the Spanish Congregation after the government suppression of 1835. We can say the nuns did better, as far as general survival goes, but not without the well-known guillotining of the sixteen Carmelites of Compiègne on July 17, 1784, during the fearful Reign of Terror. Perhaps it was their blood that brought a new life for many of the French Communities in the 1800's. One of these was the Carmel of Lisieux founded in 1838. Fifty years later, young Thérèse Martin was to enter here and become, according to the pope who canonized her, "the greatest saint of modern times."

Beginning in the 1840's, the old Discalced Provinces in France, Belgium, Germany and Spain began, little by little, to build themselves up again and in 1875 after a General Chapter held in Rome, the Italian and Spanish Congregations were united. It can be said that the modern history of the Discalced Reform dates from this chapter about a century ago.

## VI. THE CALCED CARMELITES

A word should be said about the course of history followed by the rest of the Carmelite family in the church just before and then following the division into two Orders in 1593.

The Order in Europe other than Spain and Italy was hard hit by the Protestant revolt. Many left the Church and in some areas the Order was suppressed by authorities with Protestant allegiance. In eastern Europe, Turkish invasions took their toll. Two great reforming Prior Generals, Fr. Nicholas Ander, in from 1524 to 1562, and Father John Baptist Rubeo, General from 1562 to 1578, did a great deal to bring about reforms. Remember that it was Rubeo who had favored St. Teresa in the early days of the Discalced Reform in Spain and it was he who gave the first "contemplative Carmelite friars" at Duruelo their constitution.

The always recurring ideal of reform was revived again during the pontificate of Pope Clement VIII and the generalship of Fr. Henry Silvio. The Holy Father carried out an apostolic visitation of the Carmelite friary of Transpontina in Rome, laying down a certain program of observance. Silvio, elected Prior General in 1598, visited all the provinces time and time again applying the program of Clement VIII everywhere.

Silvio came on visitation to France in 1602 and found there were some friars of the province of Touraine who were intensely eager for reform, notably Fr. Philip Thibault. The Father General's decree for the province became the basis for the so-called "Reform of Touraine," which was inaugurated on April 21, 1608, at the friary of Rennes. Their Constitutions, outlining a life of prayer and holy reading, poverty and community life, solitude and unworldliness, were published, and eventually adopted by the General Chapter of 1645 as the Rule for all reformed friars throughout the Order. The unreformed religious, called the "Old Observance," had their own Constitution. This arrangement remained until 1904, when Fr. Pius Mayer promulgated new Constitutions for the whole Calced Order.

A pair of exceptional and saintly friars who represent this Reform of Touraine were the blind lay brother, the Venerable John of St. Samson (1571-1636), one of the great mystical teachers of the Church, and the Venerable Fr. Michael of St. Augustine (1621-1684), one of the main writers on Mary produced by Carmel. No one in the centuries old Carmelite family, Calced or Discalced, ever loved God's mother more than this friar of Thent for whom she was "amabilis et super-amabilis mater" - the mother lovable beyond words. The Calced friars and nuns were decimated by the same social catastrophe that reduced the Discalced and, indeed, all Catholic religious orders to ribbons at the turn of the last century. But again, God did wonders with nothing. In 1841, there was one last Carmelite in Germany at the friary of Strasbourg. Then some novices came, the Order grew and, in 1864, two priests from Strasbourg made a foundation in Leavenworth, Kansas. This was the beginning of the eventual province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary, the "Chicago Province" of the Calced Carmelites, set up in 1890, and now the largest in their entire Order. The New York Province was started by fathers from Ireland in 1889 and established in 1931

## VII. CARMEL AT PRESENT

The current history of Discalced Carmel begins about a century ago. After the "Chapter of the Union" in Rome in 1875, the province gradually re-built in Europe and South America, in the United States and in the missionary countries of Asia and Africa, to about 31 provinces according to the last published statistics in 1987. There are, at present, about 3,592 friars staffing some 460 houses. Marvelous to tell, the province of Navarre in Spain, that had only a single monastery left about a hundred years ago, is now the largest in the Order with 51 houses and over 265 religious in perpetual vows.

As far as the United States goes, the province of Washington has 80 friars in final vows in 7 houses, while the Oklahoma province has 5 houses with 25 religious, and the provinces of California and Arizona has 37.

It may be interesting to turn back for a moment and take a look at the origin of the Provinces of the United States. It was on June 5, 1906 some Discalced friars from the Bavarian province founded at Holy Hill, Wisconsin. In 1918, a house was opened in Washington, D. C. by fathers from the province of Catalonia. In time these two houses became the nucleus of the present Washington Province established in 1947 and dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In 1914 and 1916 a group of Spanish Carmelite missionaries from the province of Aragon-Valencia, exiled from Mexico by a new anti-clerical government, settled at Pittsburgh and Hartshorne, Oklahoma. Foundations followed in the 1920's in Oklahoma City, Dallas and San Antonio. Finally, the Province of St. Therese was erected, the first province of the Order dedicated to the saintly young Carmelite nun who had recently been canonized in 1925.

The Discalced presence in California and Arizona, known as the Province of St. Joseph, traces its beginning back to foundations at Tucson in 1919 by Catalonian friars, and at Alhambra in 1924 by friars from the Anglo-Hibernian province in Ireland. It was established in 1983.

Turning now to the spread of our nuns in this country, the first foundation was, as we have seen, that at Port Tobacco, Maryland (near Baltimore) in 1790. It was not until 1862 that these nuns founded a second convent in St. Louis. New Orleans followed from St. Louis in 1877, and Boston from Baltimore in 1890, the centenary year of the coming of Discalced Carmelite Nuns to the United States. Philadelphia from Boston in 1902, became the fifth convent, the first of this century. There are now about 70 Carmels in our country.

As for the Church at large, so for Carmel in the Church. The second Vatican Council of 1962-1965 called for a return to living the Gospel in a truly Christ-like way, a revival of the founder's spirit and aims, and a thorough revision of laws. It should be plain from this outline that for Carmel this means a real poverty of life, a free and whole-hearted devotion to Jesus and constant union with Him by prayer.

As far as revision of Rules goes, our Discalced Carmelite Order began the task in a Special General Chapter in 1968, wherein the principles, style and substantial content of new legislation was formulated. Working from this, a new rule for the Secular Order was issued in 1975, a fresh set of Constitutions and Directory for the friars in 1976, and Declarations for the nuns of our Order in 1977. The last document is still in the process of being set in final form.

These are what the Order lives by in God's Church at present. They express in beautiful and moving way the age old spirit and ideals of Carmel in the past, from the hermits who dwelt at the summit of Mount Carmel to the Reform of St. Teresa in Spain of the 1500's and 1600's, to the order struggling to survive and begin again.

## VIII. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Please refer to the [OCDS Rule of Life](#), Foreword; Articles 1 and 2.
2. Journey to Carith, Peter-Thomas Rohrbach, OCD.
3. The Third Order (Secular) of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Father Benedict Zimmerman, OCD.
4. Three-Dimensional Living, Father Phillip Folsy, OCD.

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## ADDENDUM TO HISTORY OF THE ORDER

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### CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

1. 1097 Monks were living on Mt. Carmel. There is no definite proof of when this residence began.
2. 1206-1214 Patriarch of Jerusalem, Albert, wrote the first rule.
3. 1247 Pope Innocent IV promulgated the revised Rule of St. Albert. The original wording of St. Albert was changed in seven places.
4. 1251 The Blessed Virgin gave St. Simon Stock the brown scapular.
5. 1253 The Carmelites became a mendicant Order.
6. 1265 The death of St. Simon Stock.
7. 1274 The Second Council of Lyons declared that all Orders founded after 1215 were subject to the rule of local bishops. The Carmelites, however, were permitted to remain in their present state.
8. 1287 Substitution of the white mantle for the traditional striped mantle was made in the Carmelite Order. Also, the terms "habit" and "scapular" were used interchangeably.

9. 1291 In May of this year, the Saracens massacred all monks on Mt. Carmel.
10. 1299 Pope Boniface VIII approved religious exemption for the Carmelites.
11. 1317 Pope John XXII issued the bull Sacer Ordo Vester in which he granted the Carmelites full rights of religious freedom and exemption enjoyed by the mendicant orders.
12. 1309-1376 The Papacy went politic! Pope Clement V took up residence in France and moved the Papacy to Avignon in 1316. Only in 1376 did Pope Gregory XI, by the imploration of St. Catherine of Sienna, return the Papacy to Rome.
13. 1322 Pope John XXII issued the Papal bull Sacratissimo Uti Culmine, in which he reported a vision to himself, in which the Blessed Virgin promised that scapular wearers would be liberated from purgatory on the Saturday following their death.
14. 1340-1453 The Hundred Years War. This included the years of the black death and a decadence of the Carmelite Order. Oppression was everywhere as a result of the skirmish and pillage of the English and French armies.
15. 1357 The Constitutions stated that the scapular "is to be regarded as the special habit of the Order."
16. 1369 The penalty of excommunication was leveled against any Carmelite who attended Mass without wearing the scapular.
17. 1370 The Book of the Institution of the First Monks was published by Fr. Philip Ripoti and soon became the manual of training in Carmel throughout the Order.
18. 1378-1417 The Great Western Schism, Pope Urban VI excommunicated Clement VII and Clement VII excommunicated Urban VI. The Council of Pias deposed them both and elected Alexander V, who died one year later. Pope John XXIII was elected but was deposed in 1414 by the Council of Constance. The Schism ended in 1417 when Pope Martin V became the universally acknowledged pope.
19. 1411-1430 John Grossi was elected general of the whole Order. He tried to pull the Order out of decadence.
20. 1432 The Carmelite General Chapter petitioned and was granted a relaxation of the Rule in regard to abstinence from meat and solitude in the room.
21. 1451-1470 Bl. John Soreth was elected general of the Order. In 1462 he issued new constitutions stressing the obligations of poverty, solitude and fidelity to religious vows. His most enduring accomplishment was the foundation of the Carmelite Nuns and the Carmelite Third Order.

22. 1452 The bull Cum Nulla of Pope Nicholas V established the 2nd Order.
23. 1455 John Soreth composed a rule for the Third Order.
24. 1479 Arnold Bostius wrote De Patronatu Et Patrocinio B. V. M., a careful exposition of Mary's relationship to the Carmelite Order. This molded "scapular doctrine."
25. 1513 Bl. Baptist Spagnoli was elected general of the Order.
26. Pope Clement VII issued the authentic bull Ex Clementi Sedis Apostolicae which stated that the Blessed Virgin would help the conferrers of Carmel after their deaths "with her continued intercession, with her prayers and with special protection to insure their speedy release from purgatory."
27. 1562 Foundation of the first reformed Carmel, St. Joseph's.
28. 1581 The Calced and Disclaced became separate provinces.
29. 1591 Death of St. John of the Cross.
30. 1593 The Discalced Carmelites became a new Order.
31. 1613 Pope Paul VI said that "especially on Saturdays, the day dedicated to the Blessed Virgin by the Church, she will help after death the sodality who die in charity. They must have recited the Little Office or abstained from meat on Wednesdays and Saturdays."
32. 1883 Another, newer, Third Order Rule was composed.
33. 1890 Pope Leo XIII granted authority to commute the obligation of recitation of office or abstinence into other prayers or good works to obtain the Sabbatine Privilege.
34. 1913 A revised Third Order Rule was composed.
35. 1921 A revised Third Order Rule was composed.
36. 1959 Pope John XXIII attributed to Pope John XXII the paternity of the Sabbatine Privilege. "So precious and dear to those who wear the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel."
37. 1959 Pope Paul VI reaffirmed the religious exemption for mendicant orders.
38. Now, an even newer rule for the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites is in effect. It closely resembles that of John Soreth and St. Albert!