

Secular Carmelites – An Introduction

Who are we?

Discalced Carmelite Seculars come from all walks of life, from every level of education and from every type of work. We are Catholic laypersons over the age of 18 (married or unmarried) or ordained diocesan priests or deacons.

There are more than 45,000 Discalced Carmelite Seculars worldwide and more than 6,000 in the United States. We gather in canonically erected communities or recognized Study Groups under the guidance and leadership of the Order.

Discalced Carmelite Seculars are practicing members of the Catholic Church who, under the protection of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and inspired by St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross, make the commitment to the Discalced Carmelite Order to seek the face of God for the sake of the Church and the world.

The charism of the Teresian Carmel is present in the Church and the world in various ways. Thus we find in the great family of the Teresian Carmel, the Discalced Carmelite Friars, Nuns and the Laity of the Secular Carmel. The Laity of the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites (OCDS) are juridically dependent on the Discalced Carmelite Friars.

The lay members of the OCDS seek to live the Teresian Carmelite charism in the midst of the world, in the family, in their work and the normal circumstances of civil life, by managing temporal affairs and ordering them according to the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and in conformity with the charism of Saint Teresa of Jesus. They follow Teresa's guidelines on prayer and try to live it as friendship with God, there where they are, so that "the real lover everywhere loves and remembers the beloved;" but they also live prayer in the liturgy, in listening to God's Word, in the sacraments and in devotion to Our Lady of Mt Carmel, their model for a life that is Christian and Carmelite.

They seek to live in fraternal friendship in the community to which they belong and attend and which is governed by a council, elected every 3 years. This council takes care of their training and admission to the promises. The cultivation of human virtues and the climate of trust in the community allows sharing and fosters growth in charity and friendship with the others. They collaborate in the apostolate by their witness of a Christian life and assist the sanctification of the world, by means of their life of faith, hope and charity and according to the personal talents of each member.

The Secular Order is governed by its own Constitutions (2003) in which are condensed their style of life, their identity, values and commitments in following Christ Jesus and in their search to live in intimacy with God, fraternal communion and apostolic service. At present, secular Carmelites number around 25 thousand members throughout the world. There are 1,736 communities in 75 countries. We could say that the seculars live the spirit of Carmel in the heart of the world and enrich the religious life of Carmel by their secular state.

Courtesy: Discalced Carmelite Website

www.carmelitaniscalzi.com