



OFFICE OF THE PROVINCIAL DELEGATE
Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites



April 13, 2021

Dear Secular Carmelites,

We received several responses to the “Visitation” email that was issued last Saturday which leads me to believe that there is some confusion re: the recently approved “Visitation Program” and the status of allowing Visitors to attend monthly community meetings in person. Allow me this opportunity to explain the difference between the two:

Visitation Program. The email dated 4/10/21 addressed the *Visitation Program*, which was established and approved in the last triennium. According to that Program, Trained Visitators (OCDS) would be appointed and assigned a community in order to conduct Visitations as described in our legislation (Const. 42, Statute 97) and the process approved by the Provincial Delegate. The purpose of the Visitation is to encourage our members in living out the Carmelite vocation, including the functioning of community life expressed within the Community. This would include a fraternal review of a community's Formation program, Council interaction, finances, etc. **This is the Program that has been put on hold, with no Visitations taking place until further notice.**

Visitors are those individuals who are interested in the OCDS vocation and would like to visit a community in order to learn more about the Secular Carmelite way of life. In order for a Visitor to apply for the next Aspirancy Class in any given community, s/he must first complete a total of 3 *in-person visits* to the community. (**Transfers** are required to visit a community in person for anywhere from 3-12 months; Statute 83.) To date, in-person visits to communities have not been prudent due to strict COVID gathering guidelines at the state and church level. However, with the numbers of vaccinated individuals increasing daily, communities have begun to meet in person for the monthly meetings (in-person attendance is still optional). *The first and foremost concern must always be for the health, safety and well-being of all our members. This is of primary importance.*

I recognize that different parts of the country now have very different scenarios when it comes to COVID rates of infection. Some states are still struggling with strict limitations on large gatherings while others have “opened up” considerably. Therefore, I am issuing the following policy for the Province, effective immediately and until further notice: *IF* your community can safely and accurately fulfill, and adhere to, all the local church and state regulations with regards to social distancing, food preparation and the wearing of masks, you may invite Visitors and Transfers to attend the monthly meeting in person. *The state and church guidelines re: COVID protocols must be strictly observed. There should be no community or individual exceptions to any of these guidelines.*

In-person attendance at the monthly meeting will still be on a voluntary basis for everyone; members cannot be marked absent if they choose not to attend the monthly meeting in person for any reason pertaining to the COVID pandemic. In those cases, Formation classes should still be offered virtually or by conference call so that the members will not fall behind or miss out on Formation. Because there are still serious and varied concerns re: the COVID pandemic, no one should feel pressured to attend in person if they are not comfortable doing so.

Asking the Lord to bless each of you with good health and peace in these challenging times and with assurance of my prayers, I remain your brother in Carmel,

Fr. Leonard R. Copeland, OCD
OCDS Provincial Delegate