

February 17, 2023



Dear OCDS Communities of the Washington Province,

Greetings of joy and peace in the Lord! It is with great pleasure and excitement that we announce the completion of the new OCDS National Formation Program. The new program has been officially approved by Fr. Ramiro Casale, OCD, the General Delegate to the Secular Order, along with the General Definitory of the Discalced Carmelite Order in Rome.

The program is intended to be utilized by all three OCD Provinces of the United States: Washington, California/Arizona and Oklahoma. The composition and arrangement of the program is the result of many years of hard work and dedication of the task force members. A brief history will help you to understand the creation of the task force in the United States.

Recognizing the importance of nurturing strong and mature communities of Carmelite Seculars, a proposal was made at the 2017 OCDS Congress, San Antonio, TX by the OCDS Generalate (Fr. Saverio Cannistra, General Superior and Fr. Alzinir Debastiani, General Delegate to the OCDS) to develop a single formation program for all Carmelite Seculars in the USA. A task force consisting of two members from each province was created in 2017: Jim Dowd (CA-AZ), Marion Gilmore (CA-AZ), Susan Gores (WASH), Angela Vel (WASH), Claire Bloodgood (OK), and Jill Parks (OK) -- resulting in one cohesive formation program from Aspirancy to the Definitive Promise.

This formation program is developed to convey the transformative process of human formation in the context of a Christian and Discalced Carmelite charism of prayer. The program itself is divided into different modules to accommodate each stage of formation described in the OCDS Constitutions:

Aspirancy - An introduction to the community and the style of life proper to Carmelite Seculars. This period extends to one year, consisting of 12 sessions. The Syllabus for Aspirancy is designed to aid the Aspirant to discern the vocation in Carmel.

Formation I - This period prepares the candidates for the First Promise in two one-year cycles, Years A and B, with 12 sessions each.

Formation II - The Final Promise period prepares the candidates in three one-year cycles, Years A, B, and C, with 12 sessions each.

Initially, the program was released to our Provincial Council members and the Provincial Delegates. We have read through each syllabus and the appendices. The contents of the program are beautifully written and were well received by all. The program is clear, user friendly, all-inclusive, and abundant in the spirit of Carmel. When reading through the pages, one is readily able to sense the collective spirit of the three Carmelite doctors of the Church – our Holy Mother St. Teresa, our Holy Father St. John of the Cross, and St. Thérèse of Lisieux. This is truly a remarkable labor of love and dedication to the entire Carmelite charism, fellow Seculars and all those to come.

The link to the Program is posted on the Washington Province website in the opening page banner and under “Resources/Formation”: <https://www.ocdswashprov.org/national-formation-program>. A link to the Constitutions, referred to in the documents, may also be found on this page, as well as the “Foreword” letter written by Fr. Ramiro Casale, OCDS General Delegate.

Shortly, further information on the actual implementation and timeline of the new National Formation Program will be forthcoming from our OCDS Provincial Delegate, Fr. Leonard Copeland, OCD. This will allow everyone to have access and be able to view the new Program on the OCDS website for review and reflection.

We thank all members of the task force for bringing their detailed and impressive work from the initial formation to its conclusion. Their work will continue in the future to accommodate the ongoing formation of the Seculars. We also take this opportunity to extend our deep gratitude to the former OCDS General Delegate, Fr. Alzinir Debastiani, and the present OCDS General Delegate, Fr. Ramiro Casale, for their unwavering support and assistance to the members of the Task Force in creating this new OCDS National Formation Program.

We hope that you will be as excited as we are to begin using the new program in our communities and we trust that the new Program will help you to meet the growing needs of your candidates' formation as they discern a vocation to Carmel. The lay vocation implies a dedication to building up the Kingdom in the midst of the world (LG 31-32). Go forth and bear fruit!

Fraternally in Carmel,

Fr. Leonard Copeland, OCDS Provincial Delegate

OCDS Provincial Council Members:

Michael Alley, OCDS

Laura Iwan, OCDS

Theresa Lemke, OCDS

Wendy Palanza, OCDS

Mary Valenti, OCDS