

Congregation  
of the Carmelite Sisters  
Institute of Our Lady of Carmel

# CONSTITUTION



**ROME 2011**

## PREFACE

Dearest Sisters,

It is with great joy that I offer and hand over to you the new Constitution, which the Church through the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has given to us with its approval.

Revised and updated at the General Chapter of 2007, after the beatification of Our Founder, Mother Maria Teresa Scilli, which took place on 8 October 2006, the Constitution, although it conserves the essential constitutive features of previous Constitutions, has been enriched and corrected on the basis of the original version of her Writings. In addition, in the light of the most recent magisterium of the Church, expressed in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Vita consecrata*, and faithful to the charism of the foundation and the subsequent spiritual heritage of the Institute, we based ourselves on the original project and intentions of the Founder to rediscover more easily the essential elements of consecrated life (cf. VC, 36). Indeed, a creative faithfulness invites us to propose anew with courage the capacity, inventiveness and holiness of the Founder as a response to the signs of the emerging times in today's world (cf. VC, 37).

Drawing, therefore, upon the roots of our founding charism, we are convinced that we rediscover in it those essential values that help us to live in fullness the project of evangelical life drawn for us by the Spirit and which places us 'at the very heart of the Church' (VC, 3).

This Constitution points out to us the pathway to follow, it helps us to discern what is good and beautiful for our consecrated life and to know the will of God in relation to us; that will that constitutes the unceasing yearning of the Blessed Founder who was so careful to conform herself always and in everything to her beloved Spouse, Jesus. Indeed, as she teaches us, 'we are only on this earth to carry out the will of our heavenly Father and to strive to lead souls to him' (*Scritti, Autobiografia*). The will of God and the good of souls are two fundamental aspects to which we must refer the various expressions of our charism, which must mark out the thinking and the acting of each one of us.

May the Virgin of Carmel, the special patron saint of the Institute, help us to find in the observance of this Constitution the highest completion of our reality as women and as consecrated women completely directed towards self-giving, acculturating the founding charism of the Institute in the various continents of the world and taking part in the work of the new evangelisation of the Church.

13 November 2011

Memorial of the Blessed Maria Teresa Scilli

Sister Angelisa Spirandelli  
Superior General

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life

Prot. n. F. 23-1/2009

## DECREE

The Superior General of the Congregation of Carmelite Sisters Institute of Our Lady of Carmel, on behalf of the General Chapter, asks Your Holiness for approval of the Constitution of its Institute

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, after carefully examining the Constitution presented, by this decree approves it and confirms it, according to the text drawn up in Italian and presented by the letter of 11 July 2011, of which a copy has been conserved in its archives.

Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary,  
Vatican City, 16 July 2011.

Joseph W. Tobin, C.Se.R.  
Archbishop Secretary

Fr. Sebastiano Paciolla, O. Cist.  
Under-Secretary

## ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

CIC	Codex Iuris Canonici (1983)
ET	Evangelica Testificatio (1971)
GE	Gravissimum Educationis (1965)
G	Gaudium et Spes (1965)
LG	Lumen Gentium (1964)
MR	Mutuae Relationes (1978)
GIRM	General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2000)
PC	Perfectae Caritatis (1965)
PI	Potissimum Institutioni (1990)
SC	Sacrosantum Concilium (1963)
VC	Vita Consecrata (1996)
FLC	Fraternal Life in Community (1994)
Paenitemini	De paenitentiae disciplina (1966)
Rule	<i>REGULA ORDINIS FRATRUM BEATISSIMAE VIRGINIS MARIAE DE MONTE CARMELO</i> , Edizioni Carmelitane, Rome, 2007.
Scritti	<i>SCRITTI DI MADRE MARIA TERESA SCRILLI</i> , LEV, Vatican City, 2006.
Can.	Canon

The Biblical abbreviations are those commonly in use.

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## INTRODUCTION

Mother Maria Teresa of Jesus, Maria Scilli, Founder of the Congregation of the Carmelite Sisters Institute of Our Lady of Carmel, was born in Montevarchi on 15 May 1825. As a young girl onwards she had a great filial love for the Most Holy Mary. She was constant in ‘praying and reflecting on that, to which she brought love for God and service to Him’ (*Scritti, Autobiografia*, 53, p. 84). In order to follow Jesus she understood that she had to spend all her life pursuing ‘the will of God, the good of souls’ (*Scritti, Autobiografia*, 105, p. 143).

Mother Maria Teresa began the Institute on 15 October 1854. With her first companions she devoted herself to the education of girls. The Institute received diocesan approval on 13 December 1854. a community of brothers or sisters in Christ, in which God is sought and loved before all things.

The fortunes of the new Institution, because of the political, religious and social situation of its time, were fluctuating, and to such an extent that on 20 December 1859 it was dissolved. In 1875 the Mother Founder moved to Florence where she recreated the community. But specifically when the Institute was beginning to flourish again, the death of a number of young sisters reduced the number of her companions. When the Mother died in Florence on 14 November 1889, the Institute had just two sisters, a novice and a postulant.

The Institute received a strong impulse with Mother Maria Mosca (1862-1934), who is seen as the Co-Founder, who expanded the works of apostolate and responded to the needs of that historical moment. Under her direction the Institute was affiliated to the Carmelite Order on 31 March 1929 and by the decree of praise of 27 February 1933 it was recognised as being of pontifical right as well. Today it is present in Italy (1854), the United States of America, (1947), Canada (1949), Poland (1976), India (1978), Brazil (1985), the Czech Republic (1993), the Philippines (1999), Indonesia (2004), and the Holy Land (2005).

Since the beatification of the Founder, which took place in Fiesole on 8 October 2006 by mandate of the Holy Father Benedict XVI, the Institute has continued its journey of the enculturation of its charism in the various places where its members cooperate in the work of evangelisation of the Church.

## **1. CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE CHARISM AND THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE INSTITUTE: NATURE, PURPOSE, IDENTITY, MISSION**

‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me’ (Lk 9:23).

‘The Consecrated Life, deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to his Church through the Holy Spirit’ (VC, 1).

‘...if I had more, the more I would like to sacrifice for you; and for you, I want to forgo every glory of the world’ (*Scritti, Autobiografia*, 35, p. 66).

## 1.1 *The Foundations and the Spirituality of the Institute*

1. The Religious Family, called the Congregation of Carmelite Sisters Institute of Our Lady of Carmel, is a Congregation of pontifical right.  
It was founded by Mother Teresa Scrilli as a response to the call of the Lord ‘to lead souls to God...to cooperate with his Love’ (*Scritti, Autobiografia*, 53, p. 84).
2. The Institute is a Congregation of active life with especial attention paid to the contemplative dimension of life. Indeed, the Mother Founder, in the Constitution of 1854, which she herself wrote, expressed herself in the following way: ‘the life of this Institute is mixed; that is, it is contemplative and active; but the contemplative must only be of help to the active; never a hindrance; and the sisters must be careful, being overly attached to the former, not to be oppressed by the second, for this would be to deviate from the spirit of the Institute’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, [7], p. 183).
3. Jesus Christ is the centre of the history of salvation and of every human being. Like the Son, ‘whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world’ (Jn 10:36), each one of us, as a baptised woman, is called to follow Jesus, is consecrated, and is sent ‘into the world to imitate his example and to continue his mission’ (VC, 72; cf. LG, 44).
4. ‘The Institute...has as its purpose Culture, that is, the moral and civil instruction and education of the female sex from the earliest age until complete adolescence’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1859, 6, p. 219).  
The Holy Spirit, which placed in the heart of the Founder the concern ‘to lead souls to God’, made her perceive the urgent need ‘to attend to the spiritual need of our fellows, according to the charity ordered by God and concerning instruction’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1859, 6, p. 222).  
In addition, the Institute engages in its concerned action for our neighbours through the works of charity introduced by Mother Maria Mosca.
5. She who enters the Institute, therefore, chooses to live her baptismal vocation in religious life: consecrated by God, she gives everything to service to him ‘because...he alone has taken for his portion’ (*Scritti, Appunti personali*, 1, p. 166). And, in undressing herself of herself, she lives ‘to carry out the will of our Heavenly Father; and to strive to lead souls to him’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, [7], p. 183).
6. The spirituality of the Institute, experienced and willed by the Mother Founder, is grafted onto Carmelite spirituality, which is fundamentally based on union with God, on living in obedience to Christ, and on the imitation of the Most Holy Mary, integrating the contemplative life with apostolic life.
7. As Carmelite sisters, we contemplate Mary, Mother and Sister, Virgin of the Word, the praying Woman, called on her journey to give the Son to men, the model for everyone of us in being a mother (cf. LG, 56). Thus Mary, whom we venerate with the title ‘Our Lady of Carmel’, is the Principal Patron Saint of the Institute, and like her we allow ourselves to be guided, fully aware that God is the Present.
8. We pledge ourselves to spreading devotion to Our Lady, understood as study of the spirituality of Mary and imitation of her virtues, to inviting the faithful to wear the

Holy Scapular. For her we nourish a tender and filial devotion and we solemnly celebrate her feast day, when we renew, together, our vows.

9. The religious habit, described in the Directory and which we all wear, is a sign of our consecration to God, of belonging to the same Institute, and it is a testimony to poverty (cf. *CIC*, 669 § 1).  
The Mother Founder wrote for us: ‘the Religious of this Institute must robe themselves in the love of a Mother and the Religious habit must inspire in them that Holy Charity which at every step tends to the health of souls’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, [24] 6, p. 204).
10. The Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the expression of our membership of the Carmelite Family, is a constant reference to how Mary lived and how we, who wear it, want to live.
11. The small cross of wood, which we carry on the Scapular, has been a distinctive sign of a Sister of Our Lady of Carmel since the origins of the Institute and refers to the Scillian spirituality of the Cross.

## **1.2 Religious Consecration through the Profession of Evangelical Counsels**

12. All of us, sisters of the Institute of Our Lady of Carmel, make up a single family of consecrated women which is animated by ‘the spirit of the Institute; that is, a spirit of charity, a spirit of prayer’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, [8], p. 183).  
We are a gift of the Father to the Church through the Spirit because, free for him and for our brethren, we live a radical following of Jesus Christ at the service of the community.
13. Our commitment of consecration in the form of public vows of chastity, poverty and obedience is expressed in the specific charism that the Mother Founder received from the Holy Spirit and transmitted to her first companions; it finds the ‘beginning of its fullness’ in religious profession and it must develop throughout our lives.  
The Mother Founder observed: ‘A good woman religious loves her vocation and always recognises the great grace that God has given to her. The greatest of all, after the Redemption’ (*Scritti, Appunti personali*, 2, p. 166).
14. By the profession of evangelical counsels we make the chaste, poor and obedient Jesus, the Servant of the Father (cf. *LG*, 44), visible in the world; we bear witness to the Mystery of the Kingdom of God, which is here and not yet here (cf. *LG*, 44). Thus the vows that we profess are born from charity and are directed towards its full achievement. They are an expression of the three fundamental relationships that characterise human life: with the Absolute, with other people, and with things.
15. Chastity is a gift of God that we welcome with faith and it requires a free and responsible choice (cf., *PC*, 12).  
Through consecrated chastity we express the primacy of God as regards everything and the totality of our devotion to him.  
It is a nuptial gift to the Lord as a response to his love, which is renewed every day with joy, always bearing in mind the Kingdom, which is the absolute value that is cultivated and grows through fraternal life (cf. *FLC*, 44).

16. The evangelical counsel of chastity taken on for the Kingdom of Heaven, which is a sign of the future life and a source of a richer fertility in an undivided heart, involves the obligation of perfect continence in celibacy (*CIC*, can. 599).
17. By the vow of chastity we give ourselves over totally to the Lord who makes us free for others in friendship and communion with everyone, especially with those who share in our mission and our service.
18. In the use of means of communication we observe a necessary discretion and avoid everything that can injure our specific vocation and can endanger the chastity of a consecrated person (cf. *CIC*, can. 666).
19. The evangelical counsel of poverty is a clear and practical way by which we proclaim that God is the only true riches.  
In imitating the poverty of Christ (cf. *PC*, 13) who ‘rich as he was...made himself poor for your sake, in order to make you rich by means of his poverty’ (2 Cor 8:9; cf. Phil 2:6-7), we confess that he is the Son who receives everything from the Father and, in love, returns everything to him (cf. Jn 17:7-10).
20. The evangelical counsel of poverty, in addition to a poor life, which in deed and in spirit is to be led in an industrious sobriety that does not seek earthly riches, involves limitation and dependency in using and disposing of possessions, according to the specific law of the Institute (cf. *CIC*, can. 600).
21. The vow of poverty pledges us to a real detachment from ourselves and things so as to be ready to engage in solidarity and sharing.  
The Mother Founder teaches us: ‘everything should be conserved with all diligence; and more than that required by need should not be wasted’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, [6], p. 182).  
And she adds that the Institute ‘should be based on its own labour and divine Providence...the sisters should never be idle’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, [8], p. 184) and thus our poverty should always be industrious.
22. We lead simple lives following the example of the first Christian community, sharing spiritual and material goods (cf. Acts 2:44-45): everything that we receive from personal industry, from salaries, pensions, insurance and subventions (cf. *CIC*, can. 668 §3).
23. The evangelical counsel of obedience is obedience to God through welcoming the Word and carrying out his will (cf. *PC*, 14).  
Through listening and dialogue in fraternal communion we achieve unity to carry out the specific mission of the Institute in the Church.  
The Mother Founder writes on this point: ‘Do you know who goes to heaven with the strength of others? The true, the perfect, obedient person. O yes, one can be certain and calm about this; heaven is for that person even though it appears that he or she is doing nothing...Obedience, you should well understand, does not age or die’ (*Scritti, Lettere*, 5, p. 260).
24. Through the evangelical counsel of obedience, lived in the imitation of Christ (cf. Jn 4:34), we express the freeing beauty of our filial and not servile dependence (cf. Lk 15:18 ss). Rich in a sense of responsibility and animated by mutual trust, this is a reflection in history of the loving reciprocity of the three divine Persons (cf. *VC*, 21).

25. The evangelical counsel of obedience, received in a spirit of faith and of love to follow Christ who was obedient unto death, obliges the religious to submit her will to her legitimate Superiors, as representatives of God, when they command according to their Constitutions (*CIC*, can. 601; cf. *Scritti, Appunti personali*, 2, p. 168).
26. The vow of obedience makes us able to live the charism of service and to be witnesses to the non-contradiction between obedience and freedom. In the will of the Father we discover the meaning of every human life, its purpose and its true freedom.
27. As women religious we dedicate ourselves in a special way to service to God and the Church; each one of us, because of the sacred tie of obedience as well, is obliged to obey the Supreme Pontiff, our highest Superior (cf. *CIC*, can. 590).  
We show respect and reverence for all the Pastors of the Church in our apostolic endeavour (cf. *CIC*, can. 678).
28. Authority and obedience, which are complementary aspects of participation itself in the offering of Christ, who ‘even though he was God’s son...learnt through his sufferings to be obedient’ (Heb 5:8), are on the same level with the carrying out of the will of God, which we seek fraternally through an open and trusting dialogue (cf. *ET*, 25).
29. The model for each one of us is Jesus, the Servant who washed the feet of his disciples.  
‘I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another’s feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you’ (Jn 13:14-15).
30. We are gravely obliged to obey because of our vow when the Superior major commands something in holy obedience, in writing or in the presence of two witnesses.  
She, however, should only make use of this precept for truly grave reasons and after other means that charity and prudence suggest have proved ineffective.
31. In accepting ‘*sequela Christi*’, God consecrates us to him and we become his ‘possession’ that he loves, searches out and defends.  
The ‘yes’ that we say to Christ on the day of our profession must be repeated by us every day, in every circumstance. It is through faithfulness to the commitments that we have undertaken that we make ourselves more ready to help, and more generous, in relation to the requirements and needs of our brethren.
32. Called to this specific consecration in the Church, we take all care to persevere in our vocation and we dedicate all our energies to renewing ourselves, for a greater holiness of the Church and for the greater glory of the Trinity (cf. *LG*, 47).

### ***1.3 The Life of Prayer***

33. Jesus, the gift of the Father for the salvation of humanity, keeps alive in our hearts his own experience, and with the gift of the Spirit he also makes us capable of communion with the Trinity. From contemplation of this mystery springs our life of prayer and holiness.

34. Jesus Christ calls and summons us every day to receive his Word and to union with him and our brethren in the Eucharist to make us ‘increasingly into His living and visible Body, in whom the Spirit lives, on journey towards the Father’ (*FLC*, 12). The Gospel, lived in the Sacred Liturgy, and above all the Eucharist, nourish and reinvigorate our fraternal communion which fosters cooperation in the same apostolate, giving concrete witness to unity (cf. *PC*, 15).
35. In order to ‘live a life in allegiance to Jesus Christ and serve him pure in heart and stout in conscience’ (*Rule*, [2]), according to the original inspiration of the Carmelites, we cultivate a profound interior life through prayer and meditation in order to know, as the Mother Founder says, that ‘to which the love of God and service to him leads’ (*Scritti, Autobiografia*, 53, p. 84).
36. Mary, the perfect model of spiritual and apostolic life, guides us to be contemplative in action and helps us to make our lives a constant prayer. The Mother Founder writes on the subject: ‘I did not resign myself to the ending of prayer, but I was persuaded to leave God for God; that is, to leave God in the contemplation of Mary Magdalene, to find Him in the duties, the care of Martha... [God], indeed, is pleased that we allow ourselves to enjoy Him, to work for Him: and then return to rest in Him’ (*Scritti, Autobiografia*, 37, p. 67), ‘always perceiving that what belongs to the contemplative life is to fortify the spirit in a necessary abnegation of themselves’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1859, 9, p. 229).
37. Our lives are cadenced by prayer which for we Carmelite women religious is an absolute necessity. We cultivate a climate of silence in order to foster the life of prayer which involves becoming aware of the work of God who is Love in us, in our brethren and in the creation so as to open ourselves to praise and gratitude (cf. *Rule*, [21]).
38. According to Carmelite spirituality, prayer is an intimate relationship of friendship with God that involves the whole of our lives in a story of love. We nourish communion with the Lord through the Liturgy, especially the celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours (cf. *VC*, n. 95). The Mother Founder writes: ‘Where one does not put oneself, one cannot draw from. And it is in quiet indeed where the spirit must receive nourishment, strength and cognition’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, [16], p. 198).
39. Every day we are called to the table to break together the bread of the Word and the Body of the Lord, and thus from the Eucharistic Sacrifice, ‘a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity’ (*SC*, 47), we draw strength to love, giving all of ourselves united to Christ for the salvation of our brethren.
40. The Liturgy of the Hours makes us participants in the prayer of Christ and the Church. We celebrate communally at least the Lauds and Vespers, with faithfulness and care, according to the timetable of the community, so that our religious life draws from them due spiritual riches, that life being ordered to sanctifying time.
41. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, through encounter with the mercy of God, purifies and renews our hearts and, with recognition and penance for our sins, our relationship with him is made transparent.

‘The joyful experience of sacramental forgiveness, on the journey shared with one's brothers and sisters, makes the heart eager to learn and encourages growth in faithfulness’ (VC, 95).

To this end we draw near frequently to the Sacrament of Reconciliation (cf. CIC, can. 664).

42. Confident and humble recourse to spiritual direction supports our progress on the gospel journey and helps us to respond to the movements of the Spirit to direct ourselves decisively towards holiness (cf. VC, 95).
43. The Word of God is guidance and constant nourishment for our journey of answering the love of the Father, and for this reason we ponder ‘the Lord’s law day and night’ (*Rule*, [10]) and, engaging in prayer vigils, we practise in particular the *lectio divina*, which for we Carmelite women religious is a school of prayer.
44. The presence of Mary in Carmelite life invites us to a communion of life with her in virginity and tenderness, to travel the same journey of faith so as to become, like her, an icon of the maternal face of God.  
The life experience of the Founder leads us to see Mary as the Mother who is concerned and caring in relation to the needs of her children and exhorts us to follow her example.
45. We renew ‘daily...spiritual union with the Blessed Virgin Mary, reliving with her the mysteries of her Son, especially by saying the Rosary’ (VC, 95) and with those other Marian practices recommended by the Tradition of the Institute.
46. The practice of the *Via Crucis* helps us to accept and appreciate the value of our suffering so as to carry the Cross together with Christ and to reflect upon the great love that he, the Redeemer of humanity, had in perfectly carrying out the work that God the Father had sent him to perform.
47. The journey of asceticism, to be faithful to our vocation as followers of Jesus on the way of the Cross, involves acceptance of spiritual combat, wearing the armour of God so as to be able to resist the snares of the enemy (cf. *Rule*, [18]).  
Monthly retreats and annual spiritual exercises are pauses to be with him and then, internally strengthened, to return to serve our brethren.
48. Called to follow Jesus from closer to hand, in order to tend to perfect charity, we accompany our journey of conversion with the voluntary exercise of exterior actions of penance: persevering faithfulness to our duties, acceptance of the difficulties that come from human co-existence and work, and patient bearing of the trials of daily life and the profound insecurity that pervades that life (cf. *Paenitemini*, III, a, b, c).
49. The charity of Christ, which unites us beyond life on this earth, invites us to pray for the deceased. ‘The Church offers the Eucharistic Sacrifice of Christ’s Passover for the dead so that, since all the members of Christ’s body are in communion with each other, the petition for spiritual help on behalf of some may bring comforting hope to others’ (*GIRM*, 379).  
In our Institute we perform those suffrages laid down in the Directory, in particular for our deceased sisters, our benefactors, family relatives and friends.

#### **1.4 Fraternal Life in Community**

50. ‘...religious community is a gift of the spirit...It is therefore impossible to understand religious community unless we start from its being a gift from on high, from its being a mystery, from its being rooted in the very heart of the blessed and sanctifying Trinity, who wills it as part of the mystery of the Church, for the life of the world’ (*FLC*, 8).
51. ‘Communion is a gift offered which also requires a response, a patient learning experience and struggle, in order to overcome the excesses of spontaneity and the fickleness of desires. The highest ideal of community necessarily brings with it conversion from every attitude contrary to communion.  
Community that is not mystical has no soul, but community that is not ascetic has no body. “Synergy” between the gift of God and personal commitment is required for building an incarnated communion, for giving, in other words, flesh and concrete existence to grace and to the gift of fraternal communion’ (*FLC*, 23).
52. We share daily life together with our sisters because of the same ‘yes’ to God; we discover that following the chaste, poor and obedient Christ is lived in fraternity. United to him, and thus called to be united with each other, we are united in the mission to oppose prophetically the idolatry of power, of possession and of pleasure (cf. *FLC*, 44).  
To live in community is to live together the will of God according to the charismatic gift that the Mother Founder received from him and transmitted to us (cf. *FLC*, 45).
53. Following the example of the early Church, we pledge ourselves to be ‘one in mind and heart’ (Acts 4: 32).  
In our communities each religious realises herself, living that project of love that God has for each religious and which leads us progressively to pass from ‘me’ to ‘us’, from my commitment to a commitment entrusted by the community, and from seeking my things to seeking the things of Christ (cf. *FLC*, 39).
54. Experiencing the mercy of God, we are made capable of forgiveness and reconciliation, with the courage of self-renunciation, so as to welcome, accept and love each one of our sisters.  
The Mother Founder exhorts us: ‘in the way you treat each other there should be that cordiality and deference that allows no perception of a shadow of offence or dispute. And when you fall into that, do not go to rest without engaging in an act of reparation with each other. And God will bless such acts; with the giving of great peace to the soul; and help so as not to fall into it again’ (*Scritti, Regolamento alle sue Figlie*, 1, p. 246).
55. For we Carmelite women, religious fraternity and prayer are essential elements for personal and community growth; thus community life is cadenced with a timetable established by all the members of the community and which involves, in a balanced way, prayer, work and rest.
56. Our fraternal life is enriched, in addition to prayer, by the sharing of the *lectio divina*, by reflections on the Word of God, and by the communication of one’s own experiences of faith and apostolic concerns.

57. To become sisters, knowledge of each other and the broadest and deepest communication are needed, and thus we meet each other regularly to share joys, trials and the problems of the community, of the Institute, of the Church, and of society.
58. Gathered together in the name of a shared idea to be achieved together, in the community we promote open and sincere dialogue which has the purpose of fostering a family spirit and leading us to unity in charity (cf. *VC*, 51).  
For this reason, to fraternal meetings we bring a sincere wish for openness and listening: we express with simplicity our points of view and seek to understand those of others.
59. The means by which to engage in a fertile journey in fraternal life are: the community project, spiritual and community discernment, the revision of lives, and fraternal correction.  
The community project is a means by which to construct together our fraternal life. Community spiritual discernment helps us to seek and discover the presence of God, his will concerning our lives, and the mission of the community and of the Institute within the Church.
60. The religious community is the place and the natural setting of the process involving the growth of everyone, where each member becomes co-responsible for the growth of the others (cf. *FLC*, 43). We thus feel the need to reflect as a community, revising our fraternal life.
61. The Mother Founder, as regards fraternal correction, recommends that ‘the religious and also the novices correct each other, when they are moved by charity or the good of the house to do this. This should be done, however, with all meekness and sweetness, and self-abasement’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, [10], p. 189).
62. In order to foster the intimacy of life in common and the religious spirit, in every house we must always reserve some settings exclusively for the sisters (cf. *CIC*, can. 667 §1).
63. Elderly sisters should remain, as a gift, as long as possible in our apostolic communities, and they are stimulated to keep their joy, love and hope alive through our affection and our devotion.  
Their wise witness and their prayer encourage the younger religious in their spiritual and apostolic journey (cf. *FLC*, 68).
64. ‘In religious communities, authority...is placed at the service of the fraternity, of its being built up, of the achievement of its spiritual and apostolic goals’ in obedience to the incarnated Word in individual situations according to the spirit of the Institute (cf. *FLC*, 48).  
The Mother Founder writes ‘the materials of a building do not hold up if there is not someone who connects them and holds them: although this should be done by the way of love and not by force’ (*Scritti, Lettere*, 27, p. 282).
65. ‘Just as the Holy Spirit anointed the Church in the Upper Room to send her out to evangelise the world, so every religious community, as an authentic Pneumatic community of the Risen One, is also, and according to its own nature, apostolic’ (*FLC*, 58).

The experience of our encounter with the Lord leads us to preach the God of Jesus Christ, the Father who loves every man.  
This mission is engaged in principally more through our being than our doing.

### **1.5 *Apostolic Life***

66. The more a consecrated person lives solely dedicated to the Father, taken by Christ unto himself and animated by the Spirit, the more that person cooperates effectively in the mission of the Lord Jesus.  
The missionary task that consecrated men and women have is towards themselves and they fulfil it by opening their hearts to the action of the Spirit of Christ, contributing in an especially profound way to the renewal of the world.  
From their lifestyle must transpire the ideal that they profess, offering themselves as a living sign of God and as eloquent – albeit often silent – preaching of the Gospel (cf. VC, 25).
67. Fraternity and the apostolate are an expression of the only Love and testimony to our lives of adherence to Jesus Christ in the joys and sufferings of daily life, with all the riches of our person.  
‘A particular duty of the consecrated life is to *remind the baptized of the fundamental values of the Gospel*, by bearing “splendid and striking testimony that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the Beatitudes” (VC, 33).
68. Our evangelising mission is supported by the Word of God and by the Eucharist.  
The community is the agent of an authentic mission and the setting where each religious is entrusted with this task.
69. Called to cooperate for the cause of evangelisation we express in apostolic action our love for God and we strive to communicate with Christ, offering our services in his name.  
Aware that the fruitfulness of the apostolate depends upon vital union with Christ, following the example of the Founder, prayer and union with God remain the soul of our apostolate, certain that without Jesus we can do nothing.
70. Our religious family, faithful to the charism of the foundation, ‘attends to the spiritual need of our fellows, according to the charity ordered by God and concerning instruction’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1859, 6, p. 222), implements it and develops it in communion with the mission of the Church.
71. Since its beginnings the Institute has had as its ‘purpose Culture, that is, moral and civil instruction and education’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, p. 179) which, the Mother Founder writes, ‘tends to the good of those creatures given to us by God to cultivate, and never for our own satisfaction’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1859, 5, p. 239).
72. This ideal of charity, generated by the Spirit in the heart of the Founder and lived by her, illumines all of our apostolic and charitable action and makes us personally responsible for cooperation in the extension of the Kingdom of Christ, because ‘we are

on this earth only to carry out the will of our heavenly Father, and to strive to lead souls to Him' (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1859, 6, p. 223).

73. Our mission involves helping each person to become aware of himself or herself as a creature made in the image and likeness of God, loved and redeemed by him, so as to accompany that person on the journey of human maturation.  
Because of the charism of the Mother Founder, we promote the whole man who in Christ, the perfect Man, has an already actualised model.
74. In dynamic faithfulness to the charism of the Founder and of the Institute, we pledge ourselves, through the education of children and young people, by welcoming, care, instruction and formation, to respond to the signs of the times and in particular to the poverty that is expressed in the today of history. It is our pledge, therefore, to address these signs with professionalism and competence.
75. Schools belong to the salvific mission of the Church as settings for education in faith through teaching and life witness (cf. *GE*, 8).  
We work in them to form the person according to gospel principles and to cooperate responsibly in the building up of the Kingdom of God with an educational method that is expressed in the dimensions of personalised service and relationships.
76. Our apostolic service in local Churches is attentive to the needs of the local area in order to be a significant presence, the proclaimers of, and witnesses to, the Love of God.  
Called to offer our readiness to help, we cooperate in pastoral care, in catechesis, in the liturgy, and in charitable works in order to help people encounter Jesus Christ, the Lord.
77. In line with the charism of the Institute we feel the urgent need to accompany young people in discovering life as a vocation and to make the fundamental choice to be in the world in their right place according to the project of God.
78. Directed by the insight and the work of Mother Maria Mosca, we carry out with professionalism and competence our apostolate in settings of care – hospitals and rest homes – and take care of the sick and the elderly.  
We are at the side of the person who suffers with concern and respect; we pledge ourselves to give spiritual comfort, which springs from the Gospel (cf. *GS*, 66). We thus contribute to carrying out the mission of the Church, continuing ‘the ministry of mercy of Christ...at the service of the Gospel of life’ (*VC*, 83) and helping to give meaning to suffering so as to transform it into an instrument of redemption.
79. In order to serve lovingly and faithfully those who are in need, we cooperate in harmony and charity, adapting generously to the diversity of the customs of people and to changing situations.
80. Animated by the charism of the Mother Founder, we draw near to diverse cultures in the approach of Jesus, who ‘he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant’ (Phil 2:7), and with patient and bold striving for dialogue we establish fruitful contacts with the most varied peoples, proclaiming to all of them the way of salvation (cf. *VC*, 79).

In this way, we take part in the work of the enculturation of faith and of the evangelisation of cultures, and we spread in different cultural contexts the charism of the Institute.

81. Through a renewed spiritual and apostolic dynamism, we share our charism with the lay faithful whom we encourage to take part, in the most intense way, in the spirituality and the mission of the Institute with pathways of communion and cooperation.

A deeper synergy between women religious and lay people leads to a greater awareness that each one of us should be an expert in spiritual life. In their turn, the lay faithful offer us a valuable contribution of their secularity and their specific service.

Together we contribute to creating in the Church an effective promotion of lay people so that we and they come to be for the Kingdom 'in order to transform the world according to God's design' (VC, 55).

## **2. CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE ITINERARY OF FORMATION IN THE INSTITUTE**

‘I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. If you obey my commands , you will remain in my love... You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures’ (Jn 15: 9-16).

‘The formation of candidates...will primarily aim at assisting men and women religious realize their unity of life in Christ through the Spirit’ (PI 1).

‘I compared myself, given to God, to gold in the hands of a goldsmith, and to wax in the hand of His worker, ready to take any form that He wanted’ (*Scritti, Autobiografia*, 45, p. 75).

## 2.1 *The Founding Principles*

82. Formation for consecrated life helps in welcoming the divine gift of the call, begins the radical following of Christ, and seeks to achieve our unity with him through the Spirit by way of a gradual configuration to the Lord Jesus and an assimilation of the feelings of the Son for the Father.
83. Each one of us, responsible for her own formation, on a journey of continuous conversion and transformation, allows herself to be shaped and modelled by daily events, seeing in them, in a spirit of faith, the presence of God, who works in our histories and requires our '*fiat*'.  
The Mother Founder writes: 'Poor, very poor, is he who does not attend to himself, seeking to achieve his perfection; in the obligations of his life he will often fall by the wayside, and with great difficulty will he achieve his goal, **he** who on the pathway of the Spirit does not help himself and encounters difficulty in steeping forward, unless solicited and pushed by others' (*Scritti, Lettere*, 5, p. 260).
84. Formation embraces the various dimensions of our human-spiritual, religious and individual existence, specific to our charism, to promote the integral growth of the person, respecting that person's own times and rhythms.  
Formation helps in welcoming the riches that come from personal experiences, which vary according to age, culture and nationality.
85. We pay especial attention to the formation of those who provide formation, convinced that God the Trinity is the only and true provider of formation. He gives himself to us and with his Spirit makes possible the gift that we make of ourselves to him and our brethren.
86. In the itinerary of formation the Most Holy Mary is for us a model of full belonging and devotion to God, of glorious witness to following Christ, 'ever ready in obedience, courageous in poverty and receptive in fruitful virginity' (*VC*, 112).
87. The entire journey of formation, of initial and ongoing formation, is carried out according to the *Plan of Formation* which, starting from vocational discernment, expresses the various stages of formation and involves the aspirantate, the postulate, the novitiate and the juniorate, to then go on throughout life.  
The journey of formation aims at the totality of being a woman, a Christian and a sister of the Institute of Our Lady of Carmel.

## 2.2 *Vocational Discernment*

88. Jesus reveals the love of the Father, invites us to follow him to become his disciples, taking on the logic of the Kingdom, to make our lives a gift as a response to the love that has been received.  
Each one of us, therefore, helps young people to discover life as a vocation and to value all vocations so as to contribute to the building up of the Church.
89. In vocational discernment we help young people to base their lives on faith, to experience the power of the mercy of God, and to taste the depth of the joy that is born from self-giving.

### **2.3 *The Aspirantate***

90. A young woman who asks to enter the Institute engages in a period of aspirantate, according to the suitability of time and place, which is lived within a community. Accompanied by a sister, she begins a journey to come to an authentic choice for God, which is expressed in a lifestyle marked by a strong sense of responsibility. The Superior General or the Delegate accepts the aspirant or sends her back to her family, after listening to the opinion of her Council.
91. The aspirant, in order to be admitted to the postulate, must have reached the age of seventeen, enjoy physical and mental health, have intellectual capacities, a suitable character and maturity, and, if possible, she should have attended compulsory schooling in her country of origin (cf. *CIC*, can. 642).
92. The right to admit an aspirant to the postulate or to dismiss her, after hearing the opinion of the accompanying sister and the Superior of the house where she has engaged in the aspirantate, lies with the Superior General with the opinion of her Council or, in a Delegation, with the Delegate.

### **2.4 *The Postulate***

93. The postulate is a period of trial which is spent under the direction of a teacher and is designed to foster and assess the human maturity, general basic culture, emotional balance, and capacity to live in a community, of the young candidate. In the Institute the postulate lasts a year although the Superior General or the Delegate, after hearing the opinion of her Council, can reduce this to six months or extend it, but not for more than a second year.
94. The teacher of the postulants is appointed by the Superior General, after hearing the opinion of her Council, from the religious who have taken perpetual vows and who have the qualities required for such a position.
95. In the postulate the young woman commits herself to exercising herself in the human virtues and to appreciating their value; she learns to live according to the Gospel and to be rooted in faith, in hope and in charity.

### **2.5 *The Novitiate***

96. The novitiate is an initiation to the life of the Institute so that the novice can know better the divine vocation and the charism of the Institute; she experiences its lifestyle so as to form her mind and heart according to the Spirit of the Founder. The formation tests the intentions and the suitability of the young woman.
97. The novitiate is a privileged period of formation of the interior life and fraternal life in community which are characterised in Carmelite spirituality by a constant seeking for God so as to live in communion with him and with the sisters in spiritual familiarity with Mary according to the spirit of the Mother Founder.

98. The novice experiences God in silence and in an intense life of prayer; perceives his presence in daily life; and begins to know the apostolic mission of the Institute and to understand its needs and ecclesial dimension.
99. The right to admit a young woman to the novitiate lies with the Superior General with the consent of her Council, after examining the written report of the teacher of the postulants, after hearing the opinion of the Superior of the house in which the postulate took place, and after considering the vote of the Delegate with her Council in the case of Delegations (cf. *CIC*, can. 641).
100. In our Institute the following cannot be validly admitted to the postulate:
  1. Those who are not of adult age.
  2. Those who have married, during their marriage.
  3. Those who are currently linked by a sacred bond to an Institute of consecrated life or have been incorporated into a society of apostolic life, with the exception of what is laid down in canon 684.
  4. Those who enter the Institute induced to do so by violence, by grave fear, or by deceit, and those who are accepted by a Superior who has been coerced in the same way.
  5. Those who have concealed that they have been incorporated into an Institute of consecrated life or a Society of apostolic life (cf. *CIC*, can. 643).
101. In our Institute the novitiate lasts for two years. During the second year, at the discretion of the teacher with the consent of the Superior General or of the Delegate, the novice, for short periods, can be placed, in order to have apostolic experience, in a house of the Institute (cf. *CIC*, can. 648).
102. Absences from the novitiate that last more than three months, either continuously or with interruptions, during the canonical year, render the novitiate invalid. Absences for less than three months and more than fifteen days must be made up (cf. *CIC*, can. 649).
103. The Superior General, with the consent of her Council, establishes by written decree the location of the novitiate in a house of the Institute and when necessity so requires also creates various novitiates (cf. *CIC*, can. 647).
104. The Superior General is the first person responsible for the formation of novices. The formation of a novice is entrusted to a teacher and takes place according to the Plan of Formation, whereas the Superior of the community providing formation, where the novitiate takes place, is responsible for the whole of the house (cf. *CIC*, can. 650).
105. The teacher of novices is appointed by the Superior General, with the consent of her Council, for a three-year period, which can be renewed after it comes to an end. She must have passed at least five years of perpetual profession in the Institute. In addition, she must not have posts and positions which can impede looking after and forming the novices (cf. *CIC*, can. 651).
106. The teacher of novices is attentive to the discernment of the vocation of each young woman and helps in her gradual formation. This service requires from her perseverance, assiduousness, much patience, solidity, and faithfulness to the needs of religious life in the Institute (cf. *CIC*, can. 652).

107. The Mother Founder writes: ‘The teacher of novices should have a great deal of prudence and greatly love the Rule and the Institute; and she should strive to infuse love for them and esteem for it...She should treat them with charity and discretion: she should not be troubled or amazed at their defects; but go forward, correcting and mortifying gradually each one of them according to the strengths of the spirit that they have to bear such mortification. And she should see that it is much more important to acquire interior virtues and sincere love for the Institute than engage in much penance externally’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1859, 18, p. 236-237).
108. A novice during the novitiate can at any moment freely leave the Institute and she can be dismissed if she is thought not suitable.  
After the novitiate has come to an end, the novice, if adjudged suitable, is admitted to profession; when the contrary occurs, she is sent back to her family (cf. *CIC*, can. 653).

## 2.6 *The Wording of the Profession*

109. *I...  
To the glory of God,  
In the strong wish to consecrate myself more intimately to him,  
And to follow Christ more closely throughout my life,  
Before my sisters here present,  
In your hands, Mother...Superior General  
(or in your hands...Delegate of the Superior General),  
Take the vow for a year (or for my whole life),  
Of chastity, poverty and obedience,  
According to the Constitution of the Congregation of the Carmelite Sisters  
Institute of Our Lady of Carmel,  
Founded by the Blessed Maria Teresa Scilli,  
Who spent her whole life between contemplation of the divine mysteries  
And the education of young women.  
I entrust myself with all my heart to this family,  
So that with the grace of the Holy Spirit  
And the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel, our principal Patron Saint,  
I can achieve perfect charity,  
In living the specific charism of the Institute,  
In always carrying out ‘the will of God and the good of souls’,  
Cooperating faithfully with the mystery of the Redemption,  
In service to God and the Church.*

## 2.7 *The Juniorate*

110. Religious profession is the act by which one embraces the religious state: the person gives herself to God and comes to be a part of the Institute, undertaking to observe the Constitution, with the rights and duties that derive from it.  
The commitment that is made through public vows is to conform one’s life to chaste, poor and obedient Christ.  
By temporary profession one has an active voice and after perpetual profession a passive voice as well (cf. *CIC*, can. 654).

111. A novice, admitted to profession, takes for a year the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and wears the habit of the Institute.  
The period of temporary vows, which are to be renewed annually, lasts five years; it cannot be for less than three years or prolonged beyond a sixth year (cf. *CIC*, can. 655).  
The Superior General, after hearing the opinion of her Council, for good reasons, can allow the perpetual profession to be brought forward, but not by more than three months, and it can be postponed for a maximum of nine years (cf. *CIC*, can. 657).
112. The validity of temporary profession requires the following:
- a. The profession is preceded by a valid novitiate.
  - b. The novice is admitted by the Superior General with the consent of her Council.
  - c. The profession is expressed and made without coercion, grave fear or deception.
  - d. The profession is received by the Superior General or by her delegate (cf. *CIC*, can. 656).
113. During the juniorate, spiritual formation in a special way is attended to through study of the doctrine of the Church on religious life in its various aspects: the Biblical, the theological, the historical and the canonical. In addition, examination of the figure and the writings of the Mother Founder, her spirit and goals, and the study and the observing of the Constitution and the healthy traditions of the Institute, are the subjects of formation.  
The junior is accompanied by the teacher in her gradual journey towards perpetual profession.
114. The Superior General, with the consent of her Council, appoints a teacher for the juniors, from those sisters who have taken perpetual vows, for a three-year period. When this term has ended she can be reappointed.
115. The Mother Founder provides the outlines for the journey of every sister towards holiness in the following way: ‘Purity, purity of intention; seeking in everything to please God, the good of our fellows (this as well in God) and self-denial; everything should be connected to meeting the obligations of one’s own state; everything, enough to make a saint’ (*Scritti, Autobiografia*, 62, p. 95).
116. We profess the vow of poverty but we conserve ownership of possessions and the ability to purchase others; by temporary profession we make over the administration of our possessions to those we wish and we freely dispose of their use and earnings.  
Before perpetual profession we draw up a will and testament that is valid in civil law.
117. If we have failed to make such a making over or disposition or a will and testament, because we did not have any possessions, but such come to us thereafter, or if, after doing so, other possessions arrive, we repeat the making over described above, even though the profession has been made.  
The making over, the disposition and the will and testament can be changed with the permission of the Superior General.
118. The forgoing of patrimonial possessions is optional and we can do this only some years after perpetual profession by a request written by the religious herself that is accepted by the Superior General with the consent of her Council (cf. *CIC*, can. 668).
119. The validity of perpetual profession requires, in addition to what is laid down in art.

112, that it be preceded by at least a three-year period of temporary profession.

## **2.8 *Continuous or Ongoing Formation***

120. We live open to the Spirit and we engage in ongoing formation to welcome God who works in our personal history and our communal history.  
We improve our formation in continuous conversion towards that ‘more’ required by the call to religious life.
121. The Mother Founder emphasises: ‘My dear daughters! Reflect well, and well consider, that the materials that were put together were to form a building, and every day they do not need to be rearranged or supported; if this was needed, it would be impracticable.  
My beloved! Do not seek more than you need so as not to strive yourselves; I mean, do not believe that your salvation is in the hands of others, and blame others for your imperfections, as though others had to account for you’ (*Scritti, Lettere*, 5, p. 260).
122. We work to perfect and update, with diligence and constancy, our spiritual, doctrinal and technical formation (cf. *CIC*, can. 661), according to what is indicated in the Directory, in order to perform with diligence our specific mission in the Church and to respond more effectively to the needs of the times.

## **2.9 *Separation from the Institute***

123. As regards absence from the religious house, exclaustation, exit, and dismissal from the Institute, the rules of Canon Law and the Directory are to be observed.  
Dispensation from perpetual vows is the responsibility of the competent authority, following Canon Law. A sister who has received the indult of exclaustation does not have an active voice or a passive voice in the Institute (cf. *CIC*, can. 687).
124. The Superior General, with the consent of her Council and for good reason can allow a sister to live outside the religious house, but not for more than a year, except for health reasons, reasons of study or reasons connected with the exercise of the apostolate carried out in the name of the Institute (cf. *CIC*, can. 665).
125. The Superior General, with the consent of her Council, can grant to a perpetually professed the indult of exclaustation for not more than three years, and as regards further extensions the Apostolic See is the competent authority (cf. *CIC*, can. 686).
126. The Superior General, with the consent of her Council, always in a spirit of dialogue and of charity, should be attentive to observe fairness and gospel charity towards those religious who leave or are dismissed, assessing each individual case and helping them economically according to what the Institute can afford (cf. *CIC*, can. 702 §2).

### 3. CHAPTER THREE

#### THE ORGANISATION, GOVERNMENT AND ANIMATION OF THE INSTITUTE

‘Each one, as a good manager of God’s gifts, must use for the good of others the special gift he has received from God’ (1 Pt 4:10).

‘Authority has as its main task building in unity the brothers and sisters of “a fraternal community, in which God is sought and loved above all”’ (*FLC*, 50).

“[The Superior] should be completely and in relation to everything diligent, faithful and especially attentive to things concerning the worship of God, the Spirit of Religion, the Observance of the Rule, and the good of so many young maidens whom God himself has entrusted to her through Obedience, in order to secure their salvation and thus to promote the greater glory of God’ (*Scritti, Regolamento particolare per la Superiora pro-tempore della casa di Foiano*, 25, p. 251).

### 3.1 *Service to Fraternity*

127. All authority has its origin in God, the supreme Authority; thus we welcome service to fraternity as an act of love so as to build up with our sisters ‘[fraternal communities] in which God is sought and loved before all things’ (*CIC*, can. 619) and for the spiritual progress of individuals and the community.
128. Authority and obedience are understood as meekness in relation to the Spirit in order to seek together the will of God (cf. *PC*, 14) through personal and community discernment and to take necessary decisions with a view to the good of fraternal life and mission.  
Active and responsible obedience becomes a response lived by mature and free people who know the motivations for their behaviour and voluntarily choose to achieve what God wants.
129. The common project of the Institute involves each one of us, stimulates us to action, to innovation and to creativity, and develops union between us, making all of us co-responsible for the common good, the proclaiming of the Gospel and the building up of the Kingdom.
130. The Superiors should, in a spirit of service, exercise that power that they have received from God through the ministry of the Church. Meek, therefore, in relation to the will of God in carrying out their offices, they govern those beneath them as children of God, and, generating their voluntary obedience in a way that respects the human person, they should listen to them willingly and should also promote their harmonious cooperation for the good of the Institute and the Church, though their authority remains to decide, and command, what should be done (*CIC*, can 618).
131. The Superiors should carefully attend to their offices and together with the sisters entrusted to them should work to build up a fraternal community in Christ. They should themselves, therefore, frequently give to the sisters the nourishment of the Word of God and direct them to the celebration of the sacred liturgy. They should be an example to them in cultivating the virtues and in observing the laws and the traditions of their Institute; they should in a suitable way provide for what is personally necessary for them; they should visit sick sisters and obtain for them solicitously the care and treatment that is necessary; they should correct the restless, console the faint of heart, and be patient with all the sisters (cf. *CIC*, can. 619).
132. The Superiors ‘fulfil their duty of service and leadership within the religious institute in conformity with its distinctive character. Their authority proceeds from the Spirit of the Lord through the sacred hierarchy, which has granted canonical erection to the institute and authentically approved its specific mission’ (*MR*, 13).
133. Supreme authority in the Institute, by norm of Canon Law and this Constitution and the Directory, is exercised in an ordinary way by the Superior General with her Council and in an extraordinary way by the General Chapter meeting legitimately.
134. The General Chapter and the Superior General with her Council should faithfully carry out the tasks entrusted to them as regards governing and should be an expression of the participation and solicitude of all the religious for the common good.

### 3.2 *The General Chapter*

135. The General Chapter, which is the representative organ of the Institute, expresses at the highest level the responsibility and the participation of each religious as regards the life and the mission of the Institute.  
It is a sign of the common charismatic project entrusted to everyone.  
It fosters the renewal and the conversion of each religious and of the whole Institute in order to meet the expectations of the Church and the brethren to whom we are sent (cf. VC, 42).
136. The General Chapter, the highest extraordinary authority of the Institute, is a privileged time for the presence of the Lord and the outpouring of his Spirit to examine the journey of the Institute and its faithfulness to the charism so that its mission is increasingly affirmed and strengthened.
137. The General Chapter, above all else, has the tasks of protecting the patrimony of the Institute – its nature, purpose, spirit, character and healthy traditions (cf. *CIC*, can. 578); of promoting a suitable renewal; of electing the Superior General and her Councillors; of addressing questions of greater importance; and of issuing regulations that all the religious are obliged to observe (cf. *CIC*, can. 631).
138. The ordinary General Chapter is celebrated every six years and when, for whatever reason, the office of Superior General has fallen vacant.
139. The Superior General, with the consent of her Council, can, for good reasons, bring forward or postpone the celebration of the ordinary General Chapter, but not by more than six months.
140. The ordinary General Chapter is convened by the Superior General by a circular letter one year before its celebration.  
In this letter are indicated the place and the date of the celebration of the General Chapter, decided upon by the Superior General with the consent of her Council, as well as the prayers to be said for its success.
141. The celebration of the General Chapter is prepared for by a committee made up of five members helped by the General Secretary and appointed by the Superior General, with the consent of her Council, from the religious who have taken perpetual vows, one year before the celebration of the General Chapter itself.
142. The names of the members of the organising committee are communicated in the letter that convenes the General Chapter.  
The tasks of this committee are laid down in the Directory.
143. The following are members of the General Chapter:  
1. By right:  
The Superior General.  
The General Councillors.  
The General Secretary.  
The General Bursar.  
The Delegate Generals.  
Former Superior Generals.

2. By election: sisters elected as delegates according to the provisions of the Directory, who are at least equal in number, or greater in number, than the number of those members of the General Chapter by right.
144. A Superior General or a General Councillor who is not re-elected remains a member of the General Chapter that is being celebrated.
145. For the General Chapter to be valid at least two-thirds of the sisters who have the right to participate have to be present.
146. The Superior General, for relevant reasons, with the consent of her Council, can convene an extraordinary General Chapter (cf. *CIC*, can. 632).
147. In relation to the convening of a General Chapter, the procedure employed is the same as that indicated for an ordinary General Chapter.
148. When, for whatever reason, before the termination of the six-year period, the office of Superior General falls vacant, the General Chapter is convened by the Vicar General as soon as possible so that its celebration does not take place more than six months after the vacancy of this office, and it is to be considered as the beginning of the new six-year period.  
At this General Chapter the election of the General Councillors also takes place.
149. The sessions of the General Chapter are presided over by the Superior General of the time until the election of the new Superior General, who presides over the subsequent sessions.
150. From those taking part in the General Chapter are elected, by separate ballots, by secret ballot and by relative majorities, the secretary of the General Chapter and the two scrutineers, whose tasks are described in the Directory.  
The youngest members of the General Chapter of the first profession act as scrutineers for these elections.
151. After the preliminary sessions, the Superior General of the time, or when there is no such person, the Vicar General, presents to the General Chapter an exhaustive report on the government of the Institute and on its general state, on its disciplinary state, and on its state as regards membership.  
The General Bursar presents a report on the administration of the goods of the Institute and in general on the situation of the general treasury, starting from the previous General Chapter.  
The report of the General Bursar must be previously examined and approved with the consent of the General Council.
152. The General Chapter addresses the most important questions of the Institute as laid down in the Directory, which are decided upon by an absolute majority of the votes cast by secret ballot, with the exception of what is laid down in the next article. If at the second vote the votes are tied, the President of the General Chapter can decide on the question (cf. *CIC*, can. 119/2°).  
An examination of all the questions must take place before the elections.
153. The General Chapter can interpret the Constitution approved by the Apostolic See, which, can propose, for authentic approval, some changes, as long as they have

received in their favour at least two-thirds of the votes of those taking part in the General Chapter.

154. Every sister can express her wishes and send suggestions to the General Chapter. Each sister taking part in the General Chapter has the right to present proposals to the General Chapter; if possible she should do so in written form and in good time, so that they can be examined in all their aspects.
155. Those taking part in the General Chapter, meek in relation to the Holy Spirit, in the light of the Word of God, and united in prayer and fraternity, express and accept with freedom and trust, proposals of all the members of the Institute.
156. The decisions of the General Chapter remain in force until the next General Chapter, at which they can be confirmed, modified or abrogated.
157. The proceedings of the General Chapter, accurately described by the Secretary of the General Chapter, must be signed by all those taking part in the General Chapter or at least by the elected Superior General, by the scrutineers and by the Secretary herself, and they are conserved in the general archives.
158. The Superior General has the task of officially promulgating by a circular letter the results of the elections and the decisions of the General Chapter.
159. The Mother Founder advises: ‘They should elect for no other direct end than the spiritual good of the community’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, [5], p. 182). We thus allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit to designate for various tasks those people who have the qualities that are needed to perform them with passion and competence and who know how to face up to situations with faith and conjoin sweetness and firmness.
160. Those taking part in the General Chapter, animated by upright intent and in conscience before God, should vote for those sisters that they believe are suitable for their respective tasks.  
There should be an abstention from procuring votes for oneself and for others, directly or indirectly (cf. *CIC*, can. 626).  
It is advisable, therefore, to exchange information on the qualities of people to whom the various tasks are to be entrusted.
161. The vote must be free, secret, certain, absolute and clear.
162. For the elections that should take place in a General Chapter, the following is required:
  - An absolute majority at the first and second ballots.
  - On the third ballot a relative majority is sufficient; in the case of a tie, the most senior by profession is elected or by age if they are of the same profession (cf. *CIC*, can. 119).
163. When the electors wish to entrust a specific task to a sister who does not have all the pre-requisites to be elected validly, and there are impediments for which the Apostolic See usually provides a dispensation, the sister can be postulated (cf. *CIC*, can. 180ss).

164. A religious who has reached the age of thirty-five and ten years of perpetual profession in the Institute can be elected to the office of Superior General (cf. *CIC*, can. 623).
165. To be elected Superior General the candidate must win an absolute majority of the votes of those taking part in the General Chapter who are present. If on the first and second ballots no one receives an absolute majority, a third ballot will take place in which only the two candidates who have received the greatest number of votes on the second ballot will have a passive but not an active voice.
166. The Superior General is elected for a six-year period, at the end of which she can be re-elected for another consecutive six-year period.
167. If the Superior General who has been elected is not present at the General Chapter she is immediately summoned, the General Chapter is suspended, and her arrival is awaited.
168. After the election of the Superior General, if the elected person accepts she makes a profession of faith and takes the oath faithfully to exercise her office in accordance with Canon Law and the Constitution.
169. The Secretary of the General Chapter writes the minutes of the election that has taken place and these minutes, signed by the Superior General who has presided over the election, by the Secretary and by the scrutineers, must be conserved in the generalate archives.
170. The election of the four General Councillors and all the proceedings of the General Chapter take place under the presidency of the elected Superior General and according to the rules laid down in the Directory.
171. The election of the four General Councillors takes place by separate ballots and by an absolute majority of the votes of those taking part in the General Chapter who are present on the first and second ballots, and by a relative majority on the third ballot. (cf. *CIC*, can. 119).
172. Only sisters who have taken perpetual vows can be elected to the office of General Councillor, according to the rules laid down in the Directory.
173. The General Councillors are elected for a six-year period and can be re-elected for a second six-year period only.
174. If a General Councillor has been elected who is not present at the General Chapter she is immediately summoned but the General Chapter regularly continues its sittings.
175. After the election of the General Councillors, from the four that have been elected the Vicar General will be elected, who will deputise for the Superior General when the latter is absent from the Generalate House or impeded, or when her office is vacant. The four General Councillors elected in this ballot have only a passive voice and do not have an active voice.

176. The General Councillors can only be removed from office for grave reasons and in this case the Superior General, with the consent of her Council, proposes this to the Holy See.

### 3.3 *The Superior General*

177. The Superior General, a faithful custodian of the charism, in a spirit of service, ‘with all loving solicitude and maternal charity should watch over, reprimand, exhort, advise, correct...Nothing, therefore, should she hold back to ensure that the spirit and the fervour of her [sisters] does not deteriorate or weaken’ (*Scritti, Regolamento particolare per la Superiora pro-tempore della casa di Foiano*, 15, p. 250).
178. She ‘should always be animated by love of God and be unvaryingly steady in good principles; accompanied, however, by an unalterable sweetness, never unconnected with suitable gravity’ (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1859, 12, p. 234). The Superior General exercises full authority of government over all the houses and sisters, in accordance with Canon Law and this Constitution, in close cooperation with her Council.
179. The Superior General, meek in relation to the will of God in doing her duty, attends to the spiritual formation of each sister.  
At a local level she promotes cooperation between the Superiors and the sisters, with open and serene dialogue, to foster communication between all the religious.
180. The Superior General, in relation to spiritual needs and apostolic work, listens to the opinions of the communities and seeks suitable answers.  
After listening to the views of her Council, she can transfer a sister from one house to another.
181. The Superior General has the task of watching over the upright administration of the temporal goods of the Institute, without, however, taking the place, in particular, of the General Bursar and the local Superiors.
182. The Superior General, with the consent of her Council, when she thinks this suitable for the good of the Institute, can erect, modify or dissolve Delegations, which are based on their own statutes.
183. The Superior General, with the consent of her own Council and after obtaining the written consent of the diocesan bishop, can erect new houses, but she can dissolve them only after consulting him.
184. The Superior General, before erecting new houses, must bear in mind their usefulness for the local Church and the finalities of the Institute and that she should be able to allocate to them at least three sisters who have religious assistance and suitable economic support.
185. The Superior General habitually resides in the generalate house and it is not licit for her to move her residence elsewhere without the consent of her Council.  
A change in her residence must be communicated to the Apostolic See.  
She cannot have other offices, not even that of being the local Superior of the

generalate house.

186. The Superior General, during the six-year period, should personally visit, at least twice, each community in order to know about its state and provide for what she believes necessary and useful, in order to keep in force regular observance and in order to meet the needs of the sisters (cf. *CIC*, can. 628 §1).
187. The Superior General, after hearing the views of her Council, can appoint from the General Councillors or from those sisters who have taken perpetual vows her delegate for a special question or to visit a community.  
During a visit all the sisters are obliged to answer according to truth in charity (cf. *CIC*, can. 628 §3).
188. The Superior General can dispense individual sisters, and the whole of the community, from the observance of some disciplinary rule, but only for a specific period of time.
189. Should the Superior General, for grave reasons, believe that she should leave her office, after hearing the views of her Council she expounds her reasons to the Apostolic See, which has the task of deciding on the question.  
When, for very grave reasons, the Superior General has to be removed, the General Councillors will present the question to the Apostolic See whose decisions they must adhere to.

### **3.4 *The General Council***

190. The General Council is made up of the Superior General and the General Councillors.
191. The General Councillors have the task of helping the Superior General in the government of the Institute and of giving their consent or opinion in cases where this is required by Canon Law, by this Constitution and by the Directory.
192. The General Councillors, who work directly with the Superior General, carry out their tasks in relation to their sisters in a spirit of service for all the communities and encourage the sisters to obey in a spirit of faith.  
With their readiness to help, loyalty and prudent advice, they are of valuable help to the Superior General in seeking the common good.
193. The General Councillors diligently observe secrecy as regards everything that is addressed during meetings of the Council.
194. The General Councillors should, if possible, reside in the generalate house. Where this is necessary, they can reside elsewhere and also be local Superiors, as long as they have the possibility of taking part easily in the meetings of the Council, to which they must always be convened.
195. Should a General Councillor, for grave reasons, believe that she should leave her office, she should present her resignation in written form to the Superior General, who has the task, with the consent of her Council, of deciding on the question.

196. If, for whatever reason, the office of a General Councillor falls vacant, the Council should elect another from those religious who have professed with perpetual vows, and she takes the last position amongst the General Councillors.  
If the General Councillor who has resigned is the Vicar General, after electing the fourth General Councillor the Council then proceeds to the election of the Vicar General.
197. The Superior General convenes her Council if possible every month and every time that the interests of the Institute so require.  
Once a year she enlarges the Council through the participation of the Delegate Generals, who express their opinions.
198. At the meetings of the General Council the General Councillors express their opinions in full freedom and, if this is requested, they express their consent responsibly, after assessing the motivations presented by the other General Councillors and the Superior General. All of them, however, should seek to ensure that the decisions that have been taken are respected and observed.
199. The General Council gives its consent through proceedings envisaged by Canon Law, by the Constitution and by the Directory.
200. In cases where the consent of the Council is required, the Superior General acts in an invalid way if she does not request that consent. Otherwise, when an opinion is required, it is sufficient for the Superior General to ask for it, and although she is not obliged to follow it, she should greatly take it into account and she should not distance herself from it without a prevalent reason, which it is her task to assess.
201. The proceedings of each session of the General Council, written by the General Secretary, are read out by the General Secretary at the next session and are then approved and signed by the Superior General and by her General Councillors.
202. The Superior General has the task of communicating in written form the decisions of the General Council to the sisters concerned, who are obliged to observe them in a spirit of filial obedience (cf. *CIC*, can. 156).

### **3.5 *The General Secretary***

203. The General Secretary is appointed for a six-year period, from the sisters who have taken perpetual vows, by the Superior General after hearing the opinion of her Council. She should, preferably, be chosen from the General Councillors.
204. The General Secretary should be prudent and discreet, and must have the qualities that are needed to perform her task. She is obliged to maintain secrecy as regards everything that she learns because of her office. She resides in the generalate house.
205. The General Secretary has the task of giving her help to the Superior General, especially in dealing with official correspondence; of writing the proceedings of the General Council; and of keeping the various registers up-to-date: on the state of the personnel, on professions, on the principal events connected with the life of the Institute; and on the obituaries.

In addition, the General Secretary has the task of conserving in the general archives in an accurate way all the documents and proceedings concerning the Institute, and she should not give them or show them to anyone without the authorisation of the Superior General.

### **3.6 *The General Bursar***

206. The General Bursar is appointed for a six-period by the Superior General, after hearing the opinion of her Council, from sisters who have professed perpetual vows and have at least five years of such profession, preferably from the General Councillors. The General Bursar lives in the generalate house.
207. The General Bursar, if she is not a General Councillor, does not take part in the meetings of the General Council but she must be called to such meetings when economic questions are addressed.
208. The General Bursar has the task of administering the goods of the Institute subject to the supervision of the Superior General with her Council, according to the rules of Canon Law and the Constitution.  
She accurately notes what is deposited in the general treasury and everything that is taken from the general treasury.
209. The General Bursar examines and registers the sixth-monthly accounts that the local bursars send to her.
210. At the end of every six-month period the General Bursar provides an account of the whole of the administration to the Superior General and her Council, showing them the registers. The Superior General and her Council, after examining these registers, approve them and sign them.

### **3.7 *General Delegations***

211. The Superior General, with the consent of her Council, whenever she holds this to be advisable for the good of the Institute, can erect, modify or dissolve a General Delegation.  
The act of erection of a General Delegation must contain its finality and tasks in well-defined form.
212. Every Delegation must have its statutes approved by the Superior General with the consent of her Council and they can be revised every three years.
213. The Delegate General is the head of the communities created within a Delegation. She is appointed by the General Superior, with the consent of her Council, from sisters who have professed perpetual vows and where at least five years have passed since this profession, after consulting the sisters resident in the Delegation, for a three-year period, and she can be reconfirmed for another two consecutive three-year periods.
214. The Delegate General is helped by two Councillors who are appointed by the Superior General for a three-year period after hearing the opinion of her Council and they are chosen from sisters who have professed perpetual vows.

They can be reconfirmed for two consecutive three-year periods.

215. The Superior General, after hearing the views of the Delegate General and her General Councillors, appoints with the consent of her Council, from sisters who have professed perpetual vows and are resident in the Delegation, the secretary and the bursar of the Delegation, who can also be Councillors.  
The secretary and the bursar of the Delegation are appointed for a three-year period and can be reconfirmed.
216. The Delegate General holds a meeting of her Council every three months and every time that she thinks necessary, and sends the minutes to the Superior General.
217. The Delegate General has the task of:
  - a. Increasing, in the houses that are entrusted to her, faithful observance of religious life and the normal carrying out of activities.
  - b. Promoting pastoral care in relation to vocations.
  - c. Ensuring that the postulate, the novitiate, the juniorate and ongoing formation take place in accordance with the Constitution and according to the directives of the Apostolic See and the Superior General
  - d. Transmitting to the Superior General copies of the reports of the teacher of the postulants and of the novices, and of the teacher of the juniors, so that they can be borne in mind as regards the definitive admission of the candidates to temporary or perpetual profession, or the renewal of vows, uniting her vote to that of the General Council.
218. The Delegate General, in addition to the faculties that can be conferred on her by the Superior General herself, has, in virtue of this Constitution, the following faculties:
  - a. Accepting the aspirants or sending them back to their families, after hearing the opinion of her Councillors
  - b. Admitting aspirants to the postulate, after hearing the opinion of her Councillors and the opinion of the accompanying religious and the Superior of the house where the aspirantate took place.
  - c. Appointing the local Councillors from sisters who have professed perpetual vows, after hearing the opinion of her Councillors.
  - d. Transferring, with the consent of her Councillors, sisters from one house to another, within the sphere of the Delegation, with the prior consent of the Superior General.
  - e. Allowing extraordinary expenditure up to a sum established by the Superior General with the consent of her Council.

### **3.8 *The Local Communities***

219. A local community is the fundamental cell of the Institute to which each sister is allocated and realises her vocation in conformity with the charism of the Institute.
220. Each community of the Institute, including that of the generalate house, is guided by a local Superior who is assisted by her Council and the community itself.
221. The Superior, animated by fraternal life, ‘implements’, writes the Mother Founder, ‘all possible care and diligence to maintain and make grow in herself and in the sisters entrusted to her the true spirit of Holy Religion and observance of the Rule, of the

Common Acts and of all other practices' (*Scritti, Regolamento particolare per la Superiora pro-tempore della casa di Foiano*, 14, p. 249).

222. The Superior, as the Mother Founder exhorts, 'Ensures that there is between the sisters peace, concord, lovingness, compassion and charity, which is the tie of Christian perfection and much more Religious' (*Scritti, Regolamento particolare per la Superiora pro-tempore della casa di Foiano*, 17, p. 250).  
'With the love of a mother' (*Scritti, Regole e Costituzioni* 1854/1855, 16, p. 198), she evaluates the gifts of each one in order to foster unity with the riches of diversity, through sharing and the co-responsibility of all the religious(cf. *FLC*, 50).
223. A local Superior is appointed, after previous suitable consultation, by the Superior General with the consent of her Council, from sisters who have professed perpetual vows and where such profession took place at least three years previously, for a three-year period, at the end of which she can be reconfirmed for a second and third three-year period if the Superior General, with the consent of her Council, thinks that this is advisable (cf. *CIC*, can. 623).
224. A local Superior, during the three-year period, can be transferred or removed from her office for good cause with the consent of the General Council.
225. A local Superior cooperates with the Superior General or with the Delegate General in full harmony and keeps her informed on the state of the community and the functioning of the works.
226. A local Superior can dispense sisters, in particular cases, from the observance of a rule or rules for a specific period of time.
227. In houses which have at least six sisters there should be two Councillors. They are appointed for a three-year period by the Superior General after hearing the opinion of her Council, except in the case of houses of a Delegation, and after consulting the community concerned. At the end of the three-year period the Councillors can be reconfirmed.
228. A local Superior, when absent or impeded, is substituted by the first Councillor or, in her absence, by the Second Councillor, where they exist. Otherwise, she is to be substituted by the religious who is the most senior in terms of profession.
229. In every home there is a local bursar who is appointed by the Superior General, after hearing the opinion of her Council, from those sisters who have professed perpetual vows, for a three-year period, at the end of which she can be reconfirmed.
230. The office of the local bursar should, if possible, be separate from that of local Superior, unless, for good reasons, the Superior General, after hearing the opinion of her Council, does not decide otherwise.
231. The local bursar administers the goods of the house under the supervision of the local Superior and her Council.  
She has the task of noting income and outgoings and provides an account of her administration each month to the local Superior and to the community.  
Every six months she sends an account to the General Bursar.

### **3.9 The Administration of the Goods of the Institute**

232. The Institute and the individual houses have the ability to purchase, possess, administer and alienate their goods, according to Canon Law and this Constitution.
233. In purchases, alienation and the taking out of mortgages all the rules of Canon Law, of the Constitution and of the Directory are to be observed.
234. When goods are to be alienated, and their value is higher than the sum established by the Apostolic See, or when debts have to be incurred above this sum, or votive or valuable objects are to be sold, the consent is required of the General Council as well as the permission of the Apostolic See, otherwise the contract is invalid. In other cases, the written permission of the Superior General with the consent of her Council is necessary and sufficient (cf. *CIC*, can. 638).
235. Debts are not to be incurred unless it is ascertained with certainty that ordinary remunerations and income will be sufficient to pay the interest and to pay back the capital within a period that is not overly long, through a normal extinction of the debt (cf. *CIC*, can. 639).
236. The Institute and the individual houses are responsible solely for the acts of administration engaged in with the consent of the Superior, or of those who legitimately represent her, and only within the limits of the responsibilities entrusted to them. If a sister incurs debts and obligations without authorisation she is held personally responsible for them (cf. *CIC*, can. 668).

### **3.10 The Value of the Constitution**

237. All of us have as a supreme rule of life the following of Christ as proposed in the Gospel and expressed in the Constitution of the Congregation of the Carmelite Sisters Institute of Our Lady of Carmel (cf. *CIC*, can. 662).
238. Called by the goodness of God, in order to achieve perfect charity in service to him and the Church, in addition to faithfulness to our vows we must conform our lives to this Constitution which we strive to observe in a spirit of authenticity and responsibility, in order to be found faithful in everything (cf. *LG*, 47). The Mother Founder is an example for us and she was able to write about herself: ‘amidst so many tribulations it is of great comfort to me to think that, despite my great suffering, I loved none other but You; and I allowed myself to do nothing, but that which I believed pleased you, and I did nothing which I supposed could disgust you’ (*Scritti, Autobiografia*, 53, p. 85).
239. We pledge ourselves to read and to reflect upon the whole Constitution in community at least once a year.

## CONCLUSION

In the certainty that he who has called us is faithful, we pray to the Father that with the help of the Holy Spirit he will grant us to grow interiorly strong and wise, placing our trust in Christ, the faithful Witness.

From Mary, the first and most perfect follower of Christ, we learn to be faithful to the charism of the Institute so as to praise the Lord and foster, through our total response, the faith of our brethren. For this reason, in everything the teaching of the Mother Founder should always act as guidance and comfort: 'It sees to me that in the religious houses there should be obedience and exactitude in the smallest things, that there comes from this peace of soul, and the peace of exterior harmony, which attracts and makes love those who have been called to this state. And edifies any person who draws near.

These observances one cannot say with certainty are the root of the tree without whose health it weakens and shrivels; nor the foundation of a house without whose solidity the house cannot long stand up... Yet they are leaves and fruits that make the tree beautiful; they are the walls that give form to the house...

And for that house to have peace, harmony and beauty as above, may [the Lord] give to everyone a spirit of humility, of self-denial and spiritual concentration, and make them indeed lovers of his perfection, to take into account the least as well as the most important observances...

I cannot tire in recommending love and respect for each other. Holy humility, the teacher of the features of good manners as well, should be studied well. Blessed are those who make themselves the last. Because they will have peace' (*Scritti, Regolamento alle sue Figlie*, pp. 246-247).

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