

THIS IS THE WAY TO HOLINESS AND GOODNESS:  
A COMPANION TO THE RIVC  
(RATIO INSTITUTIONIS VITAE CARMELITANAE)



CURIA GENERALIZIA DEI CARMELITANI

**THIS IS THE WAY TO HOLINESS  
AND GOODNESS:  
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INTERNATIONAL FORMATION COMMISSION

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*For internal use of the Carmelite Order*

## ***A FOREWORD BY THE PRIOR GENERAL***

Over the last number of years, the Carmelite Order has laid great emphasis on the fundamental importance of formation in helping us to better understand our identity as Carmelites and to offer the best possible service to the people of God. In other words, to know our charism and give it its full meaning in the Church and in the world of today. As I have pointed out on many occasions, formation is not something that is only academic or intellectual, important as these aspects undoubtedly are. Formation is an attitude, a way of being in the world, a demand of our vocation – that gift that we received at some particular time - on which we must constantly reflect.

As an outcome of that interest in formation, the Carmelite Order in recent years has produced a number of studies and reflections of a very high theological standard. Moreover, in 1988, the General Council approved the RIVC (*Ratio Institutionis Vitae Carmelitanae*). This was a well written and important document, which would serve in the years that followed to give direction and shape to formation programmes in the different provinces and entities of the Order. The RIVC set out the fundamental criteria that Carmelite directors of formation would follow in the different stages. Later on, the need to write a new Ratio arose, due mainly to the fact that the Church had published a number of very important documents on consecrated life, which had to be included in what is always intended to be a basic document for formation. In this way, and with the very hard work of the International Commission for Formation, in the year 2000, a new RIVC appeared, which has proved to be an extraordinary tool for the work of formation, and, indeed a very important text for our reflection as Carmelites. The RIVC has found appreciation among experts and has been valued greatly in places beyond our Order.

A new edition of the 2000 *Ratio* appeared recently in 2013. As I said in the introduction, this is not a new *Ratio*, but more a revision of the 2000 text, dealing with a number

of specific points (the vows, silence, the protection of minors, etc.) This latest version of the *Ratio* has been translated into the three official languages of the Order, and translation into other languages is underway.

Two years have passed, and now the International Formation Commission offer us this “companion” as an aid to our deeper reading of the RIVC, to be used also for our own reflection as individuals and in community. This implies that the RIVC is to be used not only in our houses of formation, or only by those who have a particular responsibility for formation, but by all Carmelites. Perhaps, as the authors suggest, it might be a very helpful subject for our reflection as we celebrate the year of Consecrated Life which is beginning to draw to a close.

As I have done on other occasions, I would like to point out that even though this document has been written specifically with the friars in mind, it can be very helpful (making the necessary adjustments) to other members of the Carmelite family who wish to go more deeply into the life of Carmel and its vocation, each in accordance with their own state.

I would like to express my gratitude, on behalf of our Order, to Fr. Benny Phang Khong Wing, O.Carm., the Councilor General in charge of formation, Fr. Noel Rosas, O.Carm. the Executive Secretary for formation and Frs. John Welch and Rico Ponce, both O.Carm., who were more directly involved in the work of producing this companion. My gratitude goes also to all the other members of the International Formation Commission for the excellent work they have done.

As the Prior General, I invite each of you to make use of this work, hoping that it will truly be a help to everyone to take to heart the formation and transformation that the *Ratio* describes.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Star of the Sea, be our true guide and companion, lighting up the way that leads to Christ.

FERNANDO MILLÁN ROMERAL, O.CARM.  
*Prior General*

## FOREWORD

*This is the way to holiness and goodness* (R. 16). These were the meaningful words of St. Albert of Jerusalem inscribed into the *Formulae Vitae* which he handed on to the hermits on Mount Carmel over 800 years ago. As descendants in faith of those hermits, we Carmelites of today are in the opportune time to introspect and appraise our lives on how far we have become holy and good by living the Carmelite Rule.

### *A Humble Offer*

To guide every Carmelite and every community in this introspection and appraisal, the International Formation Commission offers this booklet: *This is The Way to Holiness and Goodness: A Companion to the RIVC (Ratio Institutionis Vitae Carmelitanae)*.

It was not thought that this *Companion* would come out at this time while Holy Mother Church declared 2015 as the Year of the Consecrated Life. Thus, we are blessed and even have more reasons to revisit deeply our vows, our life of prayer, our life in community, and our life of service as Carmelites. This *Companion* will help us to assess our attitudes towards formation and our association to children and vulnerable adults who are in our fields of ministries.

It was observed that the past editions of RIVC, although imbued with wisdom and awash with Carmelite spirituality, were not widely discerned, used, and reflected upon both in the personal and community level. That is why during the first meeting of the International Forma-

tion Commission at Curia Generalizia in Rome on May 20-24, 2014, it was agreed that the new edition of the RIVC has to have a “*companion*” to make the Ratio form part of the references of every Carmelite and community.

This *Companion to the RIVC* is the product of the collaborative efforts of two experts, Fr. Rico Ponce, O.Carm., from the Philippines, and Fr. John Welch, O.Carm., from the United States of America, and the International Formation Commission. Indeed, the Commission is grateful to the availability of these two Carmelite experts from the East and the West regions of the world that deeply thought about the RIVC and posed profound guide questions to help every Carmelite and every Carmelite community to reflect and discern about Carmelite life through the RIVC.

### ***A Guide to Use***

This *Companion to the RIVC* is divided into five major themes:

1. Called to follow Christ: *“In Obsequio Jesu Christi Vivere”* (RIVC 1-24)
2. Called to the Carmelite Life: *Fraternity in the Midst of the People* (RIVC 25-58)
3. Agents and Intermediates of Formation: *Obedient to the Action of the Spirit* (RIVC 59-71)
4. On-going Formation: *A Continuing Journey* (RIVC 123-127; 131-135)
5. Safe Environment for Children and Vulnerable Adults: *A Concern of Initial and On-going Formation* (RIVC 130 and 157).

Every number has a focused theme and a set of questions. The questions do not exhaust the entire question on Carmelite life, knowing fully that there are still many



meaningful questions to ask and to reflect upon. Therefore, additional reflective questions are welcome. The questions provided here are just guide to how the Ratio can lead us deeper into examining our lives that we profess to love.

Every community and every Carmelite has the liberty to choose how and what form the sessions one might wish to have around the RIVC, one of which for example might be *Lectio Divina* form. It is not necessary to cover all the questions, it is sufficient to pick and choose the themes that are needed to be focused on. It is also not necessary to go from number to number and do it in just five sessions. It may take longer.

This booklet can also be used as a personal or reflection guide for a retreat or recollection. Creativity in using this booklet is well appreciated. This *Companion* stands until the present RIVC is revised.

On behalf of the International Formation Commission, we hope every Carmelite and every community will have a meaningful reflection around our RIVC. A blessed Year of Consecrated Life to everyone!

FR. ROBERTO NOEL ROSAS, O.CARM.  
*Administrative Secretary for Formation*

FR. BENNY PHANG KHONG WING, O.CARM.  
*General Councilor for Formation*

**A. CALLED TO FOLLOW CHRIST:  
“IN OBSQUIO JESU CHRISTI VIVERE”**

**Read RIVC n. 1 (Called to Communion with God)**

“The RIVC recognizes that it is God who loved us first. We recognize his call in the experience of his love. “As we journey towards Mount Carmel God leads us to a desert. The living flame of God’s love transforms us, stripping away all that is not of him and all that obscures his gift, allowing the “new creature,” the new human being in the image of Christ, to emerge and shine forth in us.”

**Questions:**

What brings me to Carmel? Am I following a deep desire I have not been able to name? Do I experience a call, or does something else bring me to Carmel? Did some experience prompt my decision to consider entering Carmel? What is my motivation? When did I feel that I was called to a Carmelite way of life? Do I have an attraction to Carmel and its ideals? Have any Carmelites been part of my call to Carmel? How would I characterize them? Do I understand this time in Carmel as an exploration? Which particular events in my life make me say God loves me so much? Have I had experienced transformations since I entered Carmel? How did I deal with these transformations and how are they manifested in my life? What kind of stripping do I need to do for a new creature to be born in me?

### **Read RIVC n. 2 (A call to community and mission)**

“The RIVC acknowledges that we journey with others who have received the same gift and the same calling. Together we strive to build a community modeled on that of Jerusalem; a community centered entirely on the Word, the breaking of bread, prayer, the holding of all things in common and service.”

#### **Questions:**

What gifts do I see in myself that I am able to share in the building of my community? Do I also recognize the giftedness of others? What is the quality of my relationship with each member in the community? How much am I willing to share with others, and how much am I willing to receive from them?

### **Read RIVC n. 3 (The world in which we live)**

“The RIVC recognizes that the world in which we live in must be a challenge for us because it is a world rich in possibility and opportunity, in a state of constant growth and evolution - but it is also a world full of contradictions. The RIVC exhorts that we belong in this world, we participate in its contradictions and we rejoice in its accomplishments. We are challenged to share in the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of our times.”

#### **Questions:**

What is my own assessment of the world in which I live? Is it true that it is in a state of constant growth and evolution? What are their manifestations? What contradictions do I see? How do I show my concern to the world? How

do I express my solidarity with brothers and sisters? What can I do to bring hope to others?

### **Read RIVC n. 4 (Unity in diversity)**

“The RIVC promotes unity in diversity. There must be at all times an intimate link between the unity derived from identification with the essential aspects of Carmelite charism and the pluralism derived from the different cultures, which enriches the charism’s many expressions.”

#### **Questions:**

Am I willing to live in a community consisting of different cultures and nationalities? What is distinctly unique from my culture that may help enrich the expressions of Carmelite charism? What elements in my culture need to be challenged and purified by the Carmelite charism?

### **Read RIVC n. 5 (Called by the Father to follow Christ in the Spirit)**

“The RIVC teaches that the Father – who through the action of the Holy Spirit, calls us to a spiritual experience of deep attraction to and love for Jesus Christ - the chaste, poor and obedient One - is the source and goal of religious life and therefore of Carmelite life.”

#### **Questions:**

Am I able to pinpoint one or two spiritual experiences in my life wherein I developed a deep attraction to and love for Jesus Christ, which also became the source of my Carmelite life? What are those experiences and how did it happen?

### **Read RIVC n. 6 (Discipleship)**

“The RIVC admonishes that the commitment to follow Christ is a commitment to live in him, allowing him to guide our thoughts, our feelings, our words, our deeds, our fraternal relations and the use of things, so that everything may come from his word and be done in his word. Carmelites feel drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ and invited to a deep, constant, personal and living relationship with him, to the point of taking on his spiritual qualities and personality.”

#### **Questions:**

What is the status of my personal relationship with Jesus? Do I have a personal and living relationship with Jesus Christ? How do I nurture my relationship with him? Is prayer for me an occasional attention to God, or do I have a steady routine of prayer? Is Jesus more an idea or an article of faith than a companion? Would I like to come to know the Lord better? What are my hopes for life in Carmel? How far do I allow Jesus Christ to live in me? How far do my thoughts, feelings, words and actions, quality of relating with my brothers and sisters reflect those of Christ's? What kind of images and qualities do I have of him? Do I embody his view points and standpoints?

### **Read RIVC n. 7 (Called within the Church)**

Carmel is a community within the Church, which is simultaneously the Body of Christ, and a human institution. The Church can be inspiring; it can also be disappointing. Membership in the church requires a personal

maturity which can help a person remain faithful in stormy times. “The RIVC recognizes that our vocation as Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel is a form of religious life which belongs to the Church. It flows from the Church and participates in its mystery.”

### **Questions:**

What inspires me about the church? What has disappointed me about the church? What is my relationship to the institutional Church? Have I been engaged in the church, or have I been on the periphery of church life and activities? Do I feel belong in my Church? How do I express my being part of the Church? What can I do to deepen my participation in the Church?

### **Read RIVC n. 8 (Following Christ in his mission as a community)**

Carmel is a community on pilgrimage. We share the journey with others. For the Carmelite, “Love of neighbor” means learning to live with others who share our dreams. It also means learning to accept my brothers with all their limitations, as I challenge them to accept me. How we treat one another is part of our witness as a religious community. “The RIVC admonishes that we follow Christ in his mission as a community. We are called to share his life in community, the eloquent sign of ecclesial communion. We are called to give concrete expression to the mission of evangelization in union with the Lord and with his Church so that all may receive the Gospel message and become part of God’s family.”

**Questions:**

What is my understanding of “community”? Have I experienced community in some form in my life? What have been the benefits of sharing life and values with others? What have been the difficulties? What, for me, will be the difficult aspects of community life? Do I actively take part in community discernment-reflection sessions on what kind of ministry-apostolate I should engage in? Is my community aware of what am I doing? Do I take time to listen to the stories of my brothers and sisters about their work and involvements?

**Read RIVC n. 9 (The journey in human development)**

Formation in Carmel involves not only the spiritual life, but the entire psycho-social dimension of an individual. Carmel cannot be an escape from human maturation. “The RIVC believes that growth in the knowledge of the uniqueness of each person’s experience helps us to understand how persons change and grow in the course of their entire life and thus how God’s grace is active in their life. God’s grace can be discovered at work within the structures of psychosocial development. The vocational journey of each Carmelite contains the psychological challenges, crises and tasks of human development, which present the opportunities and invitations to transformation of the person in Christ.”

**Questions:**

How would I judge my maturity? What evidence of maturity can I show? Where do I think I need to grow as an

adult? What strengths of personality do I bring to Carmel? Strengths may have shadow sides; what aspects of my personality have the potential to disrupt community, or undermine ministry? Am I able to see God's loving presence in my life, not only in happy and beautiful events but also in difficult and very challenging moments? Do I recognize the potential of professional psychological help and process in the development of my personality? Am I compassionate enough to journey with people who are undergoing psychological challenges and deep personal crises?

### **Read RIVC n. 10 (Love as the driving force)**

“The RIVC believes love is the driving force in Carmel. The call to Carmel is a journey of ‘pure, naked, dark faith’ and Carmelites as people of faith respond to and integrate these experiences into their adult lives, describing them as both a natural development and as a surprisingly grace-filled event.”

### **Questions:**

Do I feel being loved? Am I a loving person? Am I a person capable of giving and receiving love from others? How much love I can give and take?

### **Read RIVC n. 11 (Profession of the evangelical counsels)**

The three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience form a deep structure for life in Carmel. Initially, vows appear to place limitations on one's life. Ideally, the vows help us be available to God. “The RIVC teaches that the evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty, and chastity, publicly pro-



fessed, are a concrete and radical way of responding to the loving invitation of Christ to follow him as our model.”

**Questions:**

Looking at my own experience, can I really say that it is a radical way of responding to Christ’s invitation to follow him? Have I really given up much or enough just to follow him? What have I given up just to become a follower of Christ?

**Read RIVC n. 12 (Obedience - open to what God asks of us)**

The vow of obedience challenges a Carmelite to move from an unhealthy self-reliance to a place of availability to God. The vow of obedience helps us to loosen our control, and listen to the guidance of the Spirit. This guidance comes, among other sources, from the Carmelite community, superiors, God’s people, and events in life. “The RIVC teaches that the call to follow Christ is realized obediently by attentive listening, by an openness to what God asks of us, leading to a radical journey based on the life and teaching of Jesus....Obedience is realized through a process of discernment and dialogue and it finds its ultimate expression through our surrender in joy and pain.”

**Questions:**

Do I submit my mind to God’s will or do I cling to my own will? Do I allow the world’s way of thinking to form the way I think, act and speak? Do I ignore God’s will through indifference to or lack of discernment of his will? Am I willing to leave my comfort zone and jump into the un-

known? What is my normal process for discerning God's will in my life? What is my capacity to trust others? How do I usually respond to authority and authority figures? Can I detect subtle forms of ego-control when challenged to change? What examples do I have in my life of having to let go my own will? Has coming to Carmel been the result of a "listening heart"?

### **Read RIVC n. 13 (Poverty - to live in freedom)**

The vow of poverty helps us to live simply and share generously. A "pure heart" is a Carmelite way of speaking about a heart free for God, a heart unattached to idols in life. "The RIVC teaches that we profess the vow of poverty in order to live in freedom. We call nothing our own, but to have everything in common. We share our lives with our brothers and sisters in the community. We share our gifts, our time and energy with our community and with the people among whom we live and whom we are called to live. To be poor means to be available and open for the needs of others."

### **Questions:**

What may be the idols, the lesser gods, keeping my heart cluttered and fragmented? Do I find myself clinging to my possessions? Do I have many non-negotiables in my life, making me unfree? Am I a person who does not focus on me and on my personal needs only? Am I contented with simple things? Am I generous in sharing my gifts, time and energy with my community? Am I faithful in submitting all my income to the community? Am I sensitive to the situation of the poor in the world? How have I shared my life so that other lives are improved? Poverty does not

mean destitution. What level of comfort do I need? What will be a challenge for me in living this vow?

**Read RIVC n. 14 (Chastity - loving passionately and purified)**

The vow of chastity challenges a Carmelite to relate to others with genuine friendship and appropriate affection. The Carmelite has to live with a wide love, relating to many with sincere concern, and loving certain persons with a mature intimacy. “The RIVC teaches that our chastity as Carmelite disciples of Jesus Christ means to allow the development and purification of our capacity for love in all its vital and affective dimensions including our sexuality so that we become more and more able to love God, other people and the whole of creation passionately in a respectful and non-possessive way.”

**Questions:**

What has been my experience of friendship? Have I had good friends? Do I live with fear of involvement? Is it love that motivates me to live a chaste life? Am I able to live a deep and intimate union with God? Am I able to enter into close and affective relationships with other men and women, community members and other people? Am I not exclusive, possessive and manipulative in my relationships with others? What boundaries do I need in relationships? Do I understand my heart is made for God, and will always have a restless yearning? Does my relationship with God bring balance and order to my other relationships?

**Read RIVC n. 15 (Holiness and sinfulness)**

“The RIVC teaches that God’s call, his free gift, does not fall on neutral ground. It is addressed to individuals, each with a particular story of grace and sin. We all know the power of grace, which gives us the strength and life to cooperate joyfully in God’s plan.”

**Questions:**

Do I really believe that I am truly forgiven and accepted by God? Am I able to accept and forgive myself in spite of all my limitations, weaknesses, and sinfulness? Am I convinced that God calls me to become a religious and a Carmelite despite my sinfulness? Am I able to accept others despite their sinfulness?

**Read RIVC n. 16 (Self-knowledge)**

St. Teresa said we lack “self-knowledge”. We ask the world around us to tell us who we are. We ask others to validate us. Teresa taught that it is only in relationship with God do we come to know our true identity. “The RIVC teaches that our attraction to spiritual values is dulled by social conditioning and by our own limitations. We must therefore be aware of the subconscious dimension within each of us, so that we may acquire a deeper knowledge of ourselves, understand what motivates our actions and respond freely to God’s call. Self-awareness - awareness of our potential and our limitations- helps us to channel our energies constructively towards the attainment of ideals of our vocation.”

**Questions:**

How much do I know of myself? How much do I know of my strong points and weak points? Where do I look to find my worth? Accomplishments? Titles? What are the strengths of my personality? Which psycho-human and spiritual processes have I undertaken in the initial and on-going formation stages? Am I open to psycho-human spiritual processes provided in the initial and the on-going formation programs? Do I have a healthy self-image of myself and that of others?

**Read RIVC n. 17 (Full maturity)**

“The RIVC upholds that there is a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between human maturity and religious maturity: the more we free ourselves from psychological difficulties, the more able we become to reach correct and appropriate personal decisions and to take responsibility for them.”

**Questions:**

Do I look to Carmel to give me identity, or do I bring to Carmel an appropriate sense of who I am? Am I aware of any psychological baggage in myself? How do I free myself from this psychological baggage? Do I take full responsibility for all my decisions and actions in life? Can I say I am a fully mature person?

**Read RIVC n. 18 (Conversion and personal growth)**

“Formation is a lifelong-process which involves individuals at every level and stimulates their conversion; in other

words, it is a radical re-orientation and a progressive transformation of their selves and of their relationship with others and with God.”

**Questions:**

What are my areas of hurt, of vulnerability? Do I have enough wholeness so that I can engage in a formation process of growth, and not spend my time in Carmel focused solely on my wounds? Am I converted at the psychological level, intellectual level, moral level, emotional level and social levels? How do I manifest this in my way of thinking, way of speaking, doing and relating with myself, others and God?

**Read RIVC n. 19 (An ongoing journey)**

“The RIVC teaches that Carmelite formation is an ongoing process. It is an ongoing journey. It is a dynamic process which is it to continue throughout their lives, and not merely as a way of attaining a permanent membership in the Order.”

**Questions:**

Do I have an image for my life, e.g. a journey, an adventure, a wandering in the desert? Do I constantly renew my life and constantly struggle to adhere radically to Christ according to the Carmelite way of life? Do I allow myself to be grasped and transformed by God’s love so as to grow in all aspects of my life: psycho-human and social dimension, spiritual and Carmelite dimension?

### **Read RIVC n. 20 (A personalized journey)**

“The RIVC teaches that Carmelite formation is a personalized journey. Formation programs must help individuals to assimilate the values they have freely chosen – to assimilate them gradually and ever more deeply, according to the model of the hierarchical spiral.”

#### **Questions:**

Am I able to critically evaluate my personal values and gradually integrate them with the Carmelite values and way of life? Am I capable of taking responsibility for my own life and for others? Can I transcend my personal needs and interests and assume functions of service to the religious community and to the ecclesiastical community?

### **Read RIVC n. 21 (Journeying towards freedom)**

“The RIVC teaches that Carmelite formation is a journey towards freedom. It helps individuals attain a freedom which goes beyond their own lives, their own interests, their own selfish ego and personal needs, so that they may open themselves to the action of the Spirit and to growth in the love of God.”

#### **Questions:**

Looking at myself at the moment, can I say that I have grown in freedom? Do I seek transcendence and not self-gratification? Do I live in communion with my brothers and sisters because of certain values and not because of roles? Do I strive to mirror faithfully the face of God and not to achieve high productivity?

**Read RIVC n. 22 (Journeying together)**

The RIVC recognizes the value of journeying together in formation. The process of formation has socio-cultural dimensions. We all come from particular social and ecclesial contexts; we join communities which include individuals of different backgrounds, ages, cultures, roles, and so forth; and we are sent into society as witnesses and evangelizers.

**Questions:**

Am I aware that the process of formation has socio-cultural dimensions? Am I aware of my own particular social and ecclesial backgrounds which might serve as my baggage along the journey of formation? Do I recognize that together with my confreres, I need to allow myself to be questioned, challenged and evangelized by society? How shall I support my co-pilgrims in the formation?

**Read RIVC n. 23 (On the path of Carmel)**

The RIVC gives emphasis that formation must be explicitly Carmelite. The Carmelite vocation and the Carmelite charism must be seen as potentially present in each candidate, as possibility and as gift, as a vocation to be built up and developed - not as external adjuncts, marginal to the individual's essential identity.

**Questions:**

How much is my sense of belonging to the Carmelites? Have I acquired a deep sense of Carmelite identity? What is the degree that I have of theoretical and experiential knowledge of the Carmelite way of life and charisms? Am I proud to be a Carmelite?



**Read RIVC n. 24 (Principles and criteria of Carmelite formation)**

The RIVC outlined the principles and criteria of Carmelite formation.

**Questions:**

Are all these principles and criteria of Carmelite formation acceptable to me? Which of them are familiar to me and which are unfamiliar? Which of them have I applied and which have I not?

## **B. CALLED TO CARMELITE LIFE: *FRATERNITY IN THE MIDST OF THE PEOPLE***

### **Read RIVC n. 25 (The gift of Carmelite life)**

“The RIVC acknowledges the gift of Carmelite life. Individuals called to the Carmelite life recognize that the charism and the spirituality of the Order find a resonance at the very center of their hearts, which have been touched by the living God. The process of formation gradually unfolds their Carmelite identity, in constant relation to the shared charism of the Order, contributing to their own growth to maturity and to the development of the Order itself.”

### **Questions:**

What is it in Carmel that I appreciate the most? Do I recognize that Carmelite life is a gift? Do I find a resonance of the Carmelite charism in my heart? As I go along in initial and ongoing formation, am I growing in my Carmelite identity? Have I internalized the Carmelite charism and the Carmelite way of life?

### **Read RIVC n. 26 (Participation in a long history)**

The first Carmelites gathered on Mount Carmel to attend to the Lord. They lived in individual cells, gathered for daily Eucharist, and worked in silence in the valley. Carmel is a land of solitude and silence. The Carmelite tradition speaks to society about the need to have an interior life.

“The RIVC teaches that when we enter Carmel, we participate in a long history. To enter into the Carmelite experience is to become part of an ongoing story. This work of continuous revision provides individuals with many opportunities to make their own contributions, with their specific gifts, thereby enriching, developing and renewing the life of the Order.”

**Questions:**

What is my contribution to continue the rich history of the Order, its development, and its renewal? What particular gifts and talents do I have?

**Read RIVC n. 27 (A common vocation)**

“The RIVC teaches that all Carmelites participate in the one and only vocation to Carmel, in various and complimentary ways, according to the call and gifts of each individual. Whether or not they are ordained, all make the same profession to religious life.”

**Questions:**

Is there a difference in the way I relate with confreres who are ordained and un-ordained? Do I regard the un-ordained brothers as having less privileges than those who are ordained?

**Read RIVC n. 28 (Journeying towards our goal)**

“The RIVC teaches that contemplation is the heart of Carmelite charism. Contemplation is the inner journey of Carmelites, arising out of the free initiative of God, who

touches and transforms us, leading us towards unity in love with him, raising us up so that we may enjoy his gratuitous love and live in his loving presence.”

**Questions:**

Am I a contemplative person? How much time in a day do I devote to prayer and contemplation? Do I allow God to take control of my life? Can I say that all my words and actions are a product of fervent contemplation?

**Read RIVC n. 29 (An inner journey)**

“The RIVC teaches that through the gradual and continuous transformation in Christ, which is accomplished within us by the Spirit, God draws us to Himself on an inner journey which takes us from the dispersive fringes of life to the innermost cells of our beings where he dwells and where he unites us with himself.”

**Questions:**

How far am I now in my inner journey? Am I aware of the inner processes happening within me for the development of my contemplative life? Am I able to develop an attitude of being aware of God’s presence? Do I see the world through the eyes of God? Do I love the world in God’s heart? Do I seek, recognize, love and serve God in those around me?

**Read RIVC n. 30 (An evangelical journey)**

“The RIVC teaches that the Carmelite way assumes that life in accordance with the evangelical counsels is most appropriate path towards full transformation in Christ.

The practice of the evangelical counsels is not a renunciation but a means by which we grow in love so attain fullness of life in God.”

**Questions:**

Do the Evangelical counsels help me in living sensibly in the community? How do I live out the vow of poverty, chastity and obedience in the community?

**Read RIVC n. 31 (An ascetic journey)**

“The RVIC teaches that the process of transformation in Christ demands from us a continuous striving to offer to God a holy heart which has been purified from every actual stain of sin. We attain this goal when we become perfect and in Carith – that is to say, when we are hidden in that love (in charitate) in which the Wise One says all guilt is hidden.”

**Questions:**

Am I growing in charity and love to my brothers and sisters? What might I do to be more receptive to God’s message? How do I open up to God? Do I have a deep connection with Him through my prayer life? Am I striving continuously in order to offer to God a holy heart which is purified from any stain of sin?

**Read RIVC n. 32 (A journey through the desert)**

“The RIVC teaches that in the footsteps of the first Carmelite hermits, we too journey through the desert which develops our contemplative dimension.”

**Questions:**

Given my own situation and circumstances, how do I create my own desert? How do I induce a desert experience so as to develop my contemplative life? What has been my experience of the “desert”, a time when my normal resources are lacking? Have I been able to wait for God’s approach, like a “watch in the night”?

**Read RIVC n. 33 (Along the paths of contemplation)**

“The RIVC admonishes that it is important not only to be familiar with the theory of contemplative process and to have a constantly renewed understanding of vows and values of Carmelite Spirituality, but also to acquire and incarnate a contemplative lifestyle and contemplative attitude.”

**Questions:**

From my experience, how do I understand contemplation? Is my community a contemplative? How often do we gather for prayer as a community?

**Read RIVC n. 34 (The meeting of two paths)**

“The RIVC teaches the importance of prayer as a meeting of two paths. God seeks us out, drawing us closer, invited by the Spirit to focus our attention on God, to welcome the Word, and open ourselves to the God’s transforming action.”

**Questions:**

Do I have a personal experience while praying whereby I feel God is drawing me closer to Him? Can I honestly say that I have listened to his voice and not merely to my own thoughts and feelings?

**Read RIVC n. 35  
(Preparing the way for the encounter)**

“Following the wisdom of the Rule, the RIVC gives importance to solitude and silence. We are invited to remain in solitude in our cells. This brings us to fullness of perfection and worthy of intimacy with God.”

**Questions:**

How comfortable am I with silence and solitude? Do I live in a community whose physical location is conducive to silence and solitude? How often do I go into silence and solitude so as to open myself to the transforming action of God?

**Read RIVC n. 36 (Silence as the meeting place with the Other and others)**

“The RIVC teaches that silence is the meeting place with the Other and others. In silence we may experience fear, but if we embrace it, we become imbued with the awareness of our own nothingness and learn to wait on God in naked surrender.”

**Questions:**

Have I found special places where I can be alone and prayerful? How comfortable am I with silence? Am I really able to enter into my innermost being where I meet God in silence? Am I really able to expose before God my total self, my vulnerable and sinful self? Don't I hide anything from God when I speak with Him in silence?

**Read RIVC n. 37 (Alone before God)**

“The RIVC teaches the importance of prayer. As Carmelites, we are invited to cultivate it and to find time and space for the Lord.”

**Questions:**

How is my prayer life? How often do I pray? What has been my pattern of prayer? Do I have one particular way of praying? Am I able to cultivate a deep friendship with Christ through prayer? Who do I consider as models in developing my prayer life?

**Read RIVC n. 38 (Along the paths of prayer)**

“The RIVC teaches that we must cultivate various forms of prayer, especially those that are dear to the Carmelite tradition. It also teaches that the Eucharist must be seen as the source and high point of our relationship with Christ.”

**Questions:**

Am I familiar with the Carmelite forms of prayer such as systematic meditation, lectio divina, the practice of the presence of God, the prayer of aspiration and the silent prayer? Do I consider the Eucharist as the source and high point of my relationship with Christ? How will prayer in Carmel be challenging for me? God addresses us first. Is there a “listening” dimension to my prayer? Has consistent reading of scripture been part of my life?



**Read RIVC n. 39**

**(Together before God: the liturgical life community)**

The RIVC gives importance to the liturgical life of the community. People are formed and grow in faith through the liturgy. Liturgical practice and formation ought to be life-giving and life-celebrating.”

**Questions:**

How and what do I contribute in order to make our community liturgy life-giving and life-celebrating? As a community, how much time and effort do we give for the preparation of liturgy? What has been my practice of attending Eucharist? How would I characterize my experience of the Eucharist? Is the Eucharist primarily a personal devotion, or can I appreciate the communal dimension of the Mass?

**Read RIVC n. 40 (The path outlined by the Rule)**

The Rule of Carmel maintains the tension between a personal journey in response to God, and a shared journey with others. We individuals go to God as a people. “Taking inspiration from the Carmelite Rule, the RIVC gives importance to fraternity. A set of attitudes and paths are identified to consolidate community as it is lived-out in practice following the inspiration of the first community of Jerusalem.”

**Questions:**

Am I able to attend to my personal path in Carmel while staying responsible to the community’s path? How do I live in my community? How much have I put into practice

of this set of attitudes and path designed to enhance my community? Is my present community an embodiment of the first Christian community in Jerusalem?

### **Read RIVC n. 41 (The journey towards community)**

“The RIVC teaches that religious community is a gift of the Spirit. Like every spiritual gift, however, it must be built up day by day through the effort of each and every member. The awareness of having received a common vocation - a vocation which finds its concrete expression in a plan that is developed, implemented and verified communally - must be allowed to grow to maturity.”

#### **Questions:**

Do I recognize that my community is a gift of the Spirit? Can I let go of biases and allow my brothers and sisters to grow to full maturity? Am I more mindful of their gifts and talents than of their weaknesses and limitations? Do I take fraternal corrections and criticisms as gestures of love and charity from my brothers and sisters in the community? What has been my experience of joining others in a common project? Do I have a tendency to follow my own way, with reluctant attention to the community? Community requires honest communication and sincere interest in the activities of others. How difficult is that for me?

### **Read RIVC n. 42 (Prophets of new relationships)**

“The RIVC teaches that Carmelites are prophets of new relationships. The Carmelite community becomes in and of itself a proclamation to the world. Our fraternal life becomes a prophetic sign of the possibility of living in com-

munion. Listening prayerfully to the word of God, they find in it the inspiration to become a living and prophetic presence in the Christian community and in the world. From the sharing of material and spiritual goods springs the need to share with every brother and sister all that the Lord has freely given.”

### **Questions:**

How is the relationship in my community? Is it a community where there is real brotherhood and sisterhood, a community where there is mutual respect and concern for one another? How do people from outside my community look at us? Is my community a prophet of new relationships? Am I a factor for making it an inspiration to people from outside to live a life of prayer, fraternity and service?

### **Read RIVC n. 43 (Paths to community)**

“The RIVC sets some directions towards community life. We must be attentive and caring towards those with whom we live, engaging in open and honest dialogue with them, expressing interest in their lives and personalities, helping them on their spiritual journey, and cooperating with them willingly and eagerly. The RIVC also points out that it is not enough to identify with one’s community. Each member must learn to feel that he is truly part of his Province and of the Order. Contact with the other communities in the Province, and international experiences, contribute to gradually develop a sense of identity with the Order, with its history, its tradition and its life, and to cultivate a spirituality of communion.”

**Questions:**

Which of those attitudes and behaviors have I shown to my community? Do I actively and creatively participate in community activities like common prayers, meetings, meals and recreational activities? Do I consider my work and involvement a part of community apostolate? Do I rejoice when my brothers and sisters in the community are successful in their line of work and ministries? Do I humbly accept and am joyful when asked to do a certain task for the Province or General Curia?

**Read RIVC n. 44 (Work on our Journey)**

“Taking inspiration from the Rule, the RIVC teaches the value of work in our life as Carmelites. On the one hand work is understood simply as a means of supporting the community. Every work has therefore to be understood as community work even if it is done in the greatest solitude. On the other hand, according to our Rule, work has a spiritual meaning within our journey towards union with God and builds up the Kingdom. Outside the times for prayer and community activities work helps us to be engaged in doing something with attention and concentration in order to be “occupied” so that we are not getting distracted from the very true meaning of our life.”

**Questions:**

Do I love the work that I am engaged in? What meaning do I give to my work? Do I consider it an opportunity towards union with God and toward building up His Kingdom? Do I faithfully and sincerely remit to my community whatever remuneration I receive from my work?

**Read RIVC n. 45  
(Participants in Christ's mission in the Church)**

“The RIVC teaches that Carmelites participate in Christ's mission in the Church. We make our own “the mission of Jesus, who was sent to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God and to bring about the total liberation of humanity from all sin and oppression.”

**Questions:**

What is my interest in proclaiming the gospel? What difference will promoting the reign of God make in the world? Are all my work and involvements expressions of the Carmelite charism? Are the ministries of my community in consonance or in response to the vision, mission and goal of the local Church? Do I participate in the movement for justice, peace and integrity of creation? Are the ministries of my community aimed at total liberation of humanity from all sin and oppression?

**Read RIVC n. 46 (Serving those who seek God)**

The tradition of Carmel may speak to the deep hungers of humankind. Carmel shares the good news of the gospel, and practices works of charity and justice. “The RIVC teaches that Carmelites should serve those who seek God. The thirst for spirituality goes beyond the limits of Christianity and is often to be found hidden even in those who profess no religion. As Carmelites, we must be able to recognize this thirst for spirituality, wherever it may be, and to enter into dialogue with anyone who seeks God, contributing to the discoveries individuals make in their own

experience of the “holy places and mystical spaces” where God comes to meet us.”

**Questions:**

What strengths do I bring in service of God’s people? What is my attitude towards people of other faiths? Do I recognize the possibility of experiencing God from people of different faith traditions or to those who profess no religion at all? Am I willing to share with people of other faiths my experience of contemplation and the richness of our Carmelite tradition? Do I engage in interfaith dialogue? Am I prepared theologically and pastorally to engage in interfaith and inter-religious dialogue?

**Read RIVC n. 47****(Brothers in the midst of the people)**

“The RIVC teaches that Carmelites are brothers in the midst of the people. It believes that Communal life is in itself both a proclamation and a challenge. A community that is full of life is both attractive and prophetic; it is a sign of the liberating presence of the Lord among his people.”

**Questions:**

Do I have an attractive and prophetic community? Is it a welcoming? Does it radiate to people an experience of friendship, fraternity, love, hope and salvation? What and how do I contribute so that my community becomes an attractive and prophetic one?

### **Read RIVC n. 48 (Brothers in mission)**

“The RIVC upholds that Carmelites are brothers in mission. We must learn “to ‘leave the sacred precincts’ and ‘go outside the camp’ in order to proclaim ‘in the new marketplaces of the world’ that God loves humankind with an everlasting tenderness. Moreover, every culture into which we integrate ourselves will enrich both our own understanding of the Gospel message and of our charism, and the means which express them; for as we evangelize, we are in turn evangelized. As we take Christ to others, we encounter Christ present in them.”

### **Questions:**

Is Carmel, for me, a base for engaging the world? Or could it become a refuge from the world? Do I bring any professional training or aspiration from Carmel to the world? What talents, skills, and abilities would I like to develop as my contribution to the world? Reflecting upon our very own contexts and geographic locations, who among the people are most neglected, downtrodden and marginalized? Who among them need solidarity and support? Am I able to bring the good news of salvation to them? Do I experience Christ among the most abandoned people as I minister to them?

### **Read RIVC n. 49 (Mission ad Gentes)**

“The RIVC acknowledges the necessity of mission ad gentes. In obedience to Christ’s command to “go and teach all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to ob-

serve my commands,” the Order recognizes and promotes the continuation of a long missionary tradition.”

**Questions:**

What is my understanding of *Mission ad gentes*? Getting insights from St. Therese of the Child Jesus, do I adhere to the belief that missionary work is nothing other than the manifestation, or the epiphany, and the realization, of God’s plan in the world and in history? How do I express it, given my own context and situation? Am I willing to jump into the unknown and tread untraveled paths just to proclaim the good news of Christ and the way of life of Carmel?

**Read RIVC n. 50 (Inculturation)**

“The RIVC indorses inculturation. It teaches that the Carmelite charism reaches beyond cultural differences, because the search for God is the heart of the Carmelite vocation and is also the deepest desire of the human heart. We can no longer live as isolated realities, because events across the globe touch us, challenge us, engage us. The mendicant friar is not constrained by high walls, but enters the market place where many cultures interact. We are heirs to a great missionary tradition, opening our Order to new cultures and ideas, places where the “seed of Carmel has been planted.”

**Questions:**

How open and willing am I to live in a multicultural community? Am I prepared to live in one? How solid is my Christian and Carmelite formation? What training and preparations do I need and what contribution do I bring to



enter the market place where many cultures interact and share the seed of Carmel?

### **Read RIVC n. 51 (An inter-cultural project)**

“The RIVC upholds that inculturation and inter-culturation envisage a plurality that underlines the need for exchange, conversion, a sharing of lives, and a freedom to be who we are in the global village.”

#### **Questions:**

Am I comfortable outside my own world and culture? What has been my experience in engaging other cultures? To what extent am I aware and motivated of the need for inculturation and inter-culturation? According to my knowledge, what are the initiatives and efforts both in the initial and in the on-going stages of formation in order to heighten the awareness for inculturation and inter-culturation? To what extent is this a reality in my province, in the geographical region, and in the whole order?

### **Read RIVC n. 52 (Prophets of justice and peace)**

The prophetic dimension of Carmel encourages Carmel to go to the margins, to leave comfortable patterns, and join with those who are left out. “The RIVC upholds that Carmelites are prophets of justice and peace. The contemplative dimension of Carmelite life allows us to recognize God’s action in creation and in history. Commitment to justice, peace and the safeguarding of creation is not an option; these are urgent challenges, to which contemplative and prophetic Carmelite communities - following the examples of Elijah and Mary - must respond, speaking out

in explicit defense of the truth and of the divine plan for humanity and for creation as a whole. Our communal lifestyle is in itself such a statement: it is founded on just and peaceful relations, according to the plan outlined in the Rule, which our tradition traces back to the experience of Elijah, who founded on Mount Carmel a community of justice and peace.”

### **Questions:**

How do I understand the periphery? Will this service of the poor and marginalized be difficult for me? What does it mean to me to be a prophet? Has someone been prophetic to me, challenging me in my faith? How far am I a prophet of justice and peace? Do I have prophetic actions which are a product of my contemplation? Do I recognize God’s actions in creation and history? Am I growing in my solidarity with people who live in situations of deprivation and injustice? Am I growing in my love for the poor? Am I one with the poor in their struggle for justice and peace? Do I have a community whose lifestyle conveys the message that we are just, loving and for peace?

### **Read RIVC n. 53**

#### **(Keeping alive the memory of Mary)**

“The RIVC upholds that Carmelites should keep alive the memory of Mary. The rediscovery of the Marian tradition in Carmelite spirituality inspires us today to offer the humble service of those who attribute to Mary, primary model of discipleship, a specific role in spiritual and ecclesial life. This involves promoting an authentic renewal of Mariology on solid biblical, liturgical, ecumenical and anthropological foundations. In addition, we need to look

more critically at our Marian tradition, in order to find a new language and new ways of expressing our relationship with Mary on our spiritual journey.”

**Questions:**

Is Mary a model of humility for me? Does she inspire me in serving humbly the needy? Have I become a disciple of Jesus like Mary?

**Read RIVC n. 54 (Paths which inspire service)**

“The RIVC recognizes the importance of service. Our apostolic service is too serious a matter to be left to improvisation, random impulse and wasteful dispersion. Formation to service - an essential element of our charism - must be addressed with the same care and attention as formation to contemplation, to prayer and to fraternity. Hence, we must create a climate of silence and of conversion capable of opening hearts, eyes and minds, so that, enlightened by the Word of God, we may learn to read the signs of the times, listen to others and be attentive to what is happening in the world and in the environment in which we live.”

**Questions:**

What is my experience of service like? How efficient am I in serving others? Can I work with a team and know how to dialogue and collaborate with others? How far am I oriented towards service to others? Am I equipped with skills (discerning and identifying genuine needs, planning and organizing, identification of methods, professional, cultural, theological, scientific and technological know-how)

in order to be holistic and integral in my approach to service?

**Read RIVC n. 55  
(In the footsteps of the prophet Elijah)**

“The RIVC counsels that Carmelites follow the footsteps of the prophet Elijah. Carmelites remember, and in some ways relive, the prophet’s experience: hiding in the desert in times of dryness; facing the challenge of the false prophets of a dead idol who was incapable of giving life; following Elijah on the long journey back through the desert to Mount Horeb to meet the Lord in new and unexpected ways, and to understand that he is present even where he appears to be absent; sharing in Elijah’s thirst for justice; knowing themselves to be, like Elisha, heirs to the mantle that fell from heaven; and from the chariot engulfed in flames.”

**Questions:**

Am I inspired by the prophet Elijah? Am I like Elijah who was burning with zeal for God, ever ready to listen to His voice, stand in God’s presence and ever ready to serve Him? Am I courageous enough to unmask all modern idols, denounce injustices, speak and stand for the truth, peace and love?

**Read RIVC n. 56 (Near Elijah’s spring)**

“The RIVC teaches that Carmelites treasure the memory of the spring of Elijah. From this place, “close by the spring,” the Carmelite hermits set out on the long journey charted by Saint Albert’s Rule - a path that stretches through time

to us. For them, and for those who followed them, Elijah thus became the first to incarnate the ideal of life which had motivated them to leave their homes. They felt themselves to be in some sense his children, heirs to a spiritual heritage which in various ways had been handed down to them.”

**Questions:**

How do I nurture my memory of Elijah? Am I a faithful son of Elijah? How do I continue his legacy as a prophet and as a mystic in my own time and context?

**Read RIVC n. 57 (Mary guides us on our journey)**

“The RIVC acknowledges that as Carmelites Mary guides us on our journey. In dedicating their oratory to Mary, the Mother of the Lord, the first Carmelites chose her as their patroness and entrusted themselves to her, consecrating their lives entirely to her service and to her praise - expressed primarily in their life, more than in their rituals.”

**Questions:**

Can I identify with Mary in her gratitude for God's blessings in her life? Do I have a deep affinity with Mary? Do I recognize her as guide in my life? Do I recognize her as mother of our Lord? Do I believe that the scapular is a sign and reminder of Mary's protection and also as a sign of my trust of her? How shall I express my love and respect to her?

**Read RIVC n. 58 (Journeying with Mary)**

“The RIVC upholds that Carmelites are journeying with Mary. On the journey towards God, Carmelites recognize the Virgin Most Pure as their sister, the new woman who allows herself to be transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit. Mary, pilgrim in the faith, becomes for them a sign of all that they want to be in the Church. Carmelites have a close and intimate relationship with Mary, our Mother and Sister, who is present in our personal lives and in our fraternal life in community.

**Questions:**

How much do I know of the biblical Mary? Do I recognize that Mary is journeying with me? Am I like her who allows herself to be transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit? Do I have a close and intimate relationship with her? Can I say that she is present in my personal life and in the life of our community?

## **C. AGENTS AND INTERMEDIATE OF FORMATION: *OBEDIENT TO THE ACTION OF THE SPIRIT***

### **Read RIVC n. 59 (The story of a vocation)**

“The RIVC upholds that religious life begins with a call which is a gift from God and which demands a response from the one who is called. But the call and the response are not given once and for all at the initial moment: the gift is offered and received anew each day; the call is always new and always demands a new response.”

### **Questions:**

Do I recognize that my vocation to religious life is a gift from God? When was the first time I recognized that God was calling me to Carmelite life? Who and what were the significant persons and events which led me to discover this Carmelite calling? How shall I nurture my Carmelite vocation every day?

### **Read RIVC n. 60 (Vocation: God’s gift and our response)**

“The RIVC upholds that Carmelite vocation is God’s gift and our response. Those who are called experience the gratuitous “eternal and infinite love which is at the very root of our being” and feel the need to respond by the total and unconditional gift of their lives. Letting themselves be grasped by Christ, they leave all things behind to follow him and seek, day by day, to “become one with him, taking

on his mind and his way of life.” Those who are called entrust themselves to the action of the Holy Spirit. As the response to God’s call grows, self-giving and commitments, often purified by the crises of life, become more total.”

**Questions:**

Was I totally free when I said yes to the Carmelite way of life? Is my response total and unconditional? What have I left behind in order to follow Christ completely? Have I entrusted myself to the action of the Holy Spirit so that I may recognize the signs and the fruit of the Spirit’s presence in my life and in the world around me? Am I growing in my response, self-giving and commitment to God’s call? Have I experienced crisis which has purified my vocation to Carmel?

**Read RIVC n. 61 (The Church as the context of religious vocation)**

“The RIVC acknowledges the Church as the context of our religious vocation. The intimate bond between the Church and consecrated life has certain implications for our formation. The vocation to the consecrated life is born within the Church and is ratified by the Church. This vocation is nourished by the sacraments and by the Word, which have been entrusted to the Church, and it is lived ‘in full communion with the Church’s doctrine, her life, her pastors, her faithful, and her mission in the world.’ ”

**Questions:**

Do I recognize that my religious vocation is formed by the Church? Do I perceive how the Church has been helping me develop my vocation to Carmel? In what way can I ex-



press my gratitude to the Church for the gift of my vocation to the religious life?

**Read RIVC n. 62 (Mary, mother and teacher)**

“The RIVC recognizes Mary as our mother and teacher. The Virgin Mary, model, image and eminent member of the Church, draws us to God by her spiritual beauty. With her maternal love, she accompanies and guides us on the paths that lead to God; she, who, by the will of the Father and the intervention of the Spirit, conceived Christ, continues to be associated with the Holy Spirit in the mysterious action of generating and forming Christ in believers.”

**Questions:**

Do I recognize Mary as my mother and teacher in responding to my Carmelite vocation? Am I drawn by her spiritual beauty as I nurture my vocation to Carmel?

**Read RIVC n. 63  
(The complementarity of vocations)**

“The RIVC acknowledges the complementarity of vocations within the Church. Vocations to the consecrated life are often born in families, or in associations of lay people, who, by their prayers and their spiritual support, continually accompany candidates. Throughout the journey of vocational discernment and initial formation, meetings, exchanges and cooperation with religious of other Institutes, with candidates to the ordained ministry and with ordained ministers, help to define and shed light on the candidate’s vocation and personal charism. These rela-

tionships will continue to be a source of support throughout the journey of religious life.

**Questions:**

Does my family have a significant role to my vocation? Who are the significant people who have helped me develop my vocation, and accompanied me in my journey in the religious life? What are their particular contributions in my vocation? How do I show my gratitude to them?

**Read RIVC n. 64 (The local religious community as the context of initial formation)**

“The RIVC acknowledges the local religious community as the context of initial formation. The candidates first experience the charism of the Order through the community in which they live. For this reason, there should be a certain oneness of mind and heart among the members of those communities in which candidates are present. A community must offer candidates a spiritual atmosphere, a coherent lifestyle, and an apostolic enthusiasm which will attract them to a radical following of Christ. Community prayer and shared participation in the Eucharist, regular meetings, and shared meals and leisure time are all opportunities to deepen mutual knowledge and to transmit the living memory of our charism.”

**Questions:**

Is my community formative to candidates? Do I see my community as a source of inspiration to our brothers and sisters in initial formation? Are we able to offer candidates a spiritual atmosphere, a coherent lifestyle and an apostolic enthusiasm which attract a radical following of

Christ? Are all our members participating regularly in the celebrations of the Holy Eucharist, regular meetings, shared meals and quality time with the community? Is my community welcoming, loving and friendly to the candidates?

**Read RIVC n. 65 (The local religious community as the place of ongoing formation)**

“The RIVC recognizes the local religious community as the place of ongoing formation. The ongoing formation of members takes place primarily within their own communities. These provide an environment in which individuals can grow and mature as people, as Christians and as religious interacting with God and with their brothers. Hence, it is important to find ways and opportunities to promote the “human, intellectual, spiritual and pastoral growth.”

**Questions:**

How is my community as a place of on-going formation? How am I contributing to make this community a place where every member can grow and mature as a person, as a Carmelite and as a Christian? Do all the members of my community have the chance to grow intellectually, theologically, spiritually and pastorally? Are reading materials for this kind of development available in my community? Do we as a community have regular meetings, common studies, retreats and recollections? Is there no one in my community who is overburdened with duties and responsibilities?

**Read RIVC n. 66 (Formators)**

“The RIVC recognizes the important role of formators in Carmelite formation. God the Father, through the Holy Spirit, forms the mind of Christ in the hearts of consecrated people. God’s action is mediated by formators, who are placed as “older brothers” at the side of those whom God has called. Their role is crucial to the success of formation. The formator’s task is a very delicate one; it requires thorough preparation and a continued effort of renewal. Formators must have a certain degree of psychological and spiritual maturity; they must be relatively free of inner conflict; and they must be sufficiently self-confident to share, to enter into dialogue, and to work with others.”

**Questions:**

Can I be a formator? How do I look at the formators? Do I recognize that God’s action is mediated by formators, who are placed as “older brothers” at the side of those whom God has called? What support could I make to the formators for them to have a certain degree of psychological and spiritual maturity, relatively free of inner conflict, sufficiently self-confident to share, enter into dialogue, and work with others?

**Read RIVC n. 67 (The prerequisites and responsibilities of the formator)**

The RIVC outlines the prerequisites and responsibilities of the formator. (Please read n. 67 for substantial details)

**Questions:**

Do I have those capacities and capabilities to meet the requisites and responsibilities of a formator?

**Read RIVC n. 68 (Coordination of formation)**

“The RIVC recognize the importance of coordination of formation. If possible, there should be a different formator for each stage of initial formation. Coordination and cooperation among the formators assigned to the various stages is, however, essential, in order to ensure continuity throughout the process of formation.”

**Questions:**

Do I see proper coordination in our formation program? Do we have different formator for each stage of initial formation? Is our formation program in accordance with the principles laid out in the present RIVC?

**Read RIVC n. 69 (The Order)**

“The RIVC acknowledges that formation is the responsibility of the Order and that the candidates are introduced to his/her becoming a member of an international Order. By means of religious profession, candidates are incorporated first into the Order as a whole and, subordinatedly, into a Province or General Commissariat. Hence, the Order as a whole must be involved in both the initial and the ongoing formation of its members. The one charism and the fraternal bonds which unite us find their concrete expression in cooperation at the international, regional and national levels, and, when appropriate, with other members of the Carmelite Family. Moreover, the

need for qualified formators who have been prepared specifically for this task, and the need to continue clarifying and inculturating our charism, require us to promote such a policy of cooperation.

### **Questions:**

Is formation a priority of the Order? Is the Order as a whole involved in both the initial and the ongoing formation of its members? Does the Order organize courses for formators and for ongoing formations of its members? Is there a clear cooperation and collaboration among formators from the commissariat level, provincial level, regional level and international level? Is there a clear and unified formation program?

### **Read RIVC n. 70**

#### **(The Prior General and his delegate)**

“The RIVC acknowledges the role of the Prior General and his delegate to the general direction and guidance of formation within the entire Order. The general direction and guidance of all that pertains to formation within the entire Order is the prerogative of the Prior General. The Prior General shall fulfill this task primarily by paying special attention to formation during his visits to Provinces. It shall be his task and that of his Council to approve the *Ratio Institutionis Vitæ Carmelitanæ* and to convene, at least once during each six-year term, a meeting of all the formators of the Order, to revise and update the RIVC.”

### **Questions:**

Does the Prior General pay special attention to formation during his visits to provinces? Is the presence of the Gen-

eral Councilor or delegates felt among formators and candidates in the provinces? Is there a conscious effort for the promotion and popularization of the RIVC to the general membership? Are there discussions among provinces on the subject of initial formation? Are there exchanges of formators and of candidates?

**Read RIVC n. 71  
(The Prior Provincial and his delegates)**

“The RIVC recognizes the important role of the Prior Provincial and his delegate in the general direction and guidance of all that pertains to formation in a Province. The Prior Provincial and his Council shall be directly involved in initial formation - not only in decisions concerning the admission of individual candidates to the various stages of the formation program, but also through visitations, meetings, briefings and evaluations, which they shall undertake on a regular basis, together with the Formation Commission. The Prior Provincial shall choose formators with the greatest care, and he shall share in the burden of the formators’ delicate task by encouraging them, supporting them, and being mindful of their general state of health.”

**Questions:**

Is formation a priority of the Prior Provincial and his delegates? Does he and his delegates take the lead in setting the general direction and guidance that pertains to formation in my province? Are the Prior Provincial and his council in my province directly involved in initial formation – not only in decisions concerning the admission of individual candidates to the various stages of the forma-

tion program but also through visitations, meetings, briefing and evaluations? Do they support, encourage and mindful of the formators' delicate tasks?



## **D. ON-GOING FORMATION: *A CONTINUING JOURNEY***

### **Read RIVC n. 123 (The nature and purpose of ongoing formation)**

“The RIVC lays down the nature and purpose of ongoing formation. Formation is a lifelong task. Seen in this light, ongoing formation is not a specific stage, but the context within which the entire process of formation, in all its aspects, must be developed. It follows that ongoing formation is our way of living out our Carmelite identity as a continuing process of transformation towards full maturity in Christ: “The consecrated person can never claim to have completely brought to life the ‘new creature’ who, in every circumstance of life, reflects the very mind of Christ.” Our journey is not a solitary one. We belong to the Carmelite fraternity; we must therefore care for the renewal of the Order, and be attentive to and interested in all that happens within the Order.”

### **Questions:**

Do I recognize that my need for formation is a lifelong task; that is, it does not end at solemn profession? Do I recognize that ongoing formation is my way of living out my Carmelite identity as a continuing process of transformation towards full maturity in Christ? Do I acknowledge that I belong to the Carmelite fraternity and therefore, I should care for the renewal of the Order, and be attentive to and be interested in all that happens within it?

**Read RIVC n. 124  
(Early years after initial formation)**

“The RIVC recognizes that need for support of young friars after the completion of initial formation.”

**Questions:**

Is there enough support given to friars during the early years after their initial formation? Are they given sufficient time to integrate into communities and ministries of the Province by providing them personal and group reflections? Do I have a listening heart and ear to new confreres?

**Read RIVC n. 125 (Carmelites)**

The individual Carmelite is ultimately responsible for his continued formation. New issues emerge in the course of life. These require constant attention. The RIVC upholds that formation is a personal responsibility.

**Questions:**

Do I take responsibility for my own formation? What resources do I have to continue to be attentive to my spiritual life and human development? To whom can I turn to discuss my problems? Who are my companions on the journey? Do I learn to grow in a holistic and integrated manner? Am I open to new experiences and new possibilities?

**Read RIVC n. 126**

**(The prior provincial and the province)**

“The RIVC recognizes that the well-being and spiritual health of the brothers is a responsibility of the prior provincial. Each Province shall have a program for ongoing formation, which shall establish objectives in line with the Province’s priorities, and shall analyze possible focuses for growth and renewal.”

**Questions:**

Does my Provincial arrange for appropriate initiatives and projects to provide continued growth for each member? Is there a clear and systematic program for ongoing formation in my Province? Are the well-being and spiritual health of the brothers given enough attention?

**Read RIVC n. 127**

**(The local prior and the community)**

“The RIVC recognizes the important role of the local prior and the community in formation. The local prior shall promote gatherings, meetings, retreats and opportunities for renewal and spiritual growth; he shall keep members informed, and shall provide opportunities for participation in formation events organized at other levels.”

**Questions:**

Is my local prior support the growth of each member to grow into full maturity? Do we have regular meetings, recollections and retreats as a community? Are there opportunities for renewal and spiritual growth? What do I

contribute so that my community becomes an inspiring community?

### **Read RIVC n. 131 (Transition from the house of initial formation to another community)**

“The RIVC recognizes the crucial period of transition from the house of initial formation to another community. The end of initial formation coincides with the move from a formation community to another community, which often includes older members whose attitudes and behavior may be different from the idealism of the formation period to the reality of life within a community and within a Province”.

#### **Questions:**

Am I finding ways to mentor younger Carmelites? Am I attuned to the effect in me of transitions in community and ministry? Are new members in my community accompanied by an older brother who can answer questions in times of difficulties, dilemmas and problems? How understanding and considerate am I of new members in my community? Do I spend time to listen to their stories? Do I share with them my experiences and wisdom?

### **Read RIVC n. 132 (When habit sets in)**

“The RIVC acknowledges the need for renewal. A few years after making solemn profession and entering into a life of service, we need to take stock of our lives and to renew our motivation and our enthusiasm, so that we may avoid becoming set in our ways, giving in to individualism,

habit or temptation, becoming discouraged by the meager results of our efforts, or succumbing to indifference.”

**Questions:**

How long has it been since I made my solemn profession of vows? How do I feel about my life now? Do I feel tired, bored or overburdened? Do I feel it is time for me to have a sabbatical year and to take courses for renewal? What specific courses do I need in order to renew my motivation and enthusiasm?

**Read RIVC n. 133 (Times of Crisis)**

“The RIVC acknowledges the need for guidance and professional help in times of crisis. Being serious about our spiritual lives means that in our journey of ever-growing intimacy with God, we must expect to experience spiritual crises, some of which may have an existential dimension. The path of inner transformation is far from linear; it involves frequent breaks and leaps. Nor is spiritual growth simply a matter of renewing our prayer life or some other activity: it involves our whole being.”

**Questions:**

Can I allow others to show appropriate care for me when it is needed? What have I noticed and observed of people experiencing crises in life? What is my attitude towards them? Have I experienced crisis moments in my life? What is the best way to deal with crises?

**Read RIVC n. 134 (Assuming new responsibilities)**

“The RIVC emphasizes the need for appropriate preparation when a Carmelite assumes a new ministry or a new service. Those who are called to assume new functions or responsibilities need to internalize the necessary spiritual qualities and practical or professional abilities required to perform their new tasks.”

**Questions:**

Is it a practice in my province to prepare the friars for new assignments? What preparation did I take when I assumed the tasks given to me? How did I manage to cope with the demands of my work and ministry?

**Read RIVC n. 135 (Advanced age)**

“The RIVC acknowledges the reality of having in our communities confreres who are advanced in age. We must learn how to grow old and how to prepare ourselves to let go of things, roles, and attachments. Older members must be included in the life of the community; they must be cared for with attention and affection.”

**Questions:**

What is my experience of letting go as my age advances? How do we take care of the elderly members? Do we include them in the life of the community, and take care of them with attention and affection? Do I relate with them with respect, and compassion? Do I consider confreres who are advanced in age as individuals who can communicate wisdom and transmit the memories and traditions of the Order?

**E. SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR CHILDREN  
AND VULNERABLE ADULTS:  
*A CONCERN OF INITIAL AND ON-GOING  
FORMATION***

**Read RIVC n. 130 and n. 157 together (Safe environment for children and vulnerable adults)**

“The initial and on-going formation programs throughout the Order of Carmelites should include ongoing education for members about creating and assuring safe environments for children and vulnerable adults. Such education would be in compliance with ecclesial and social norms in providing safe environments and minimizing risks for minors.”

**Questions:**

Am I familiar with ecclesial and provincial guidelines for pastoral ministry concerning children and the vulnerable adults? Am I careful about keeping boundaries? Do I know what is appropriate and what is inappropriate behavior? In any ministerial setting am I alert to creating a safe environment? Are our initial and on-going formation programs designed to create and assure a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults? Do members in initial and on-going formation receive ongoing education about developing a mature, integrated and celibate sexuality? Are members in initial and on-going formation educated to identify and address challenges in maintaining celibate, healthy and intimate relationships?

