



Order of
Carmelites
Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary



**Carmelite Parish
Ministry Manual**

Preamble

From our beginnings on Mount Carmel, the Carmelites have been involved in tending the needs of God's people. Tradition has it that our first enclave on Mount Carmel was situated on the pilgrim route to Jerusalem and that the early hermits regularly supplied the spiritual needs of pilgrims who came to visit. In addition, they probably left the compound at times in order to attend to the spiritual needs of their neighbors.

After the initial Carmelite migrations westward, the Carmelites continued to minister to the spiritual needs of all who came to them. Thus the priory of Aylesford, founded around 1242 in England, itself was on the pilgrim route to Canterbury, so that the early Carmelites continued in their new setting much of their apostolic work on Mount Carmel.

With the change to being mendicants, confirmed by the revised rule of 1247, the Carmelites entered into the vibrant life of the cities, establishing themselves in the newly emerging towns so that by 1281 we numbered ten provinces. As newly arrived friars we were often located on the outskirts of the city, usually outside the city walls, to minister to the needs of the new immigrants arriving in great numbers. As mendicants, we ministered to the new burgher or middle class, engaged them spiritually and interacted materially with them as well, since as city-dwellers we had to buy many of the goods, which a monastery would have produced on its own. The new middle class proved fertile ground for vocations, especially since the lower and middle classes were excluded from entering a monastery. The engagement with the people through our churches, preaching and teaching ministries enabled us to grow through the centuries. Soon after our arrival in the U.S. we became engaged in parochial ministry, which has been substantial in the successful growth of our Province.

Carmelite Spirituality

Carmelites in a parish carry on the mission of the Province and the Order, not a personal apostolate. We relate to each other as equal brothers and realize that our superiors exercise authority for only a limited time. We draw from a large and venerable spiritual tradition that has proven successful in many countries and over many centuries. Our relationship to each other and to the larger Order is an integral part of what we bring to a parish setting. Thus, our spiritual approach to life is unique to ourselves and distinct from our diocesan and other religious colleagues. Unlike the diocesan priest who sees his vocation in response to the needs of the people, and whose personal private prayer balances his public ministry, the Carmelites minister as a group.

As Carmelites, we seek to constantly live in the presence of God, who is present to us in prayer, in the scriptures, in the Eucharist, in community members and in our efforts of service to bring forth the Kingdom. We draw on a rich mystical tradition that enhances our own spiritual life. Central to this mystical tradition is a relationship to the prophet Elijah and to the Virgin Mary, fashioned over several centuries of history and articulated by numerous Carmelite writers.

Elijah's prophetic example inspires us to work for justice while his zeal for God empowers us to be zealous in serving God and others. Mary inspires us towards greater openness to people, and her strength of commitment inspires in us a centered single-mindedness.

Opening our hearts to God and investing ourselves in Carmelite community enhances our engagement with the people we serve. Our identity as Carmelites and our parochial ministry need not be dichotomous but rather should be seen as mutually life giving.

The foundation of any parish ministry that we exercise as Carmelites must be the consequence of a prayerful, fraternal, and prophetic community life. Community building among ourselves is the priority, so that through prayer, *lectio divina*, silence, and sensitivity to each other, we create sacred space where we can encounter God and each other.

Carmelite Community Life

Carmelite parish life integrates the Ratio of the Order and the pastoral plan of the local diocese. Three components are integral to this life:

- Contemplative approach to life:
 - Community prayer life is built into the schedule;
 - The center of this prayer life is the Eucharist;
 - The practice of silence and listening should be fostered.
- Fraternity:
 - Communal awareness and openness to one another are foundational to our communal life;
 - Fostering mutual personal growth is encouraged.
- Simplicity of lifestyle:
 - In the spirit of our vow of poverty, Carmelites should model a value system based on the principle of less rather than more;
 - Our personal lifestyle provides a counter-balance to the constant demand for “more” so pervasive in society.

Relationship with the Carmelite Order

As Carmelites, we share the charism and spirit of the Order and of the Province and try to foster vocations to the Order. We also remind the people of the parish of the wider dimensions of Church.

The Carmelite community is a visible sign to the local parish of a group of religious brothers living in community and working together for the Church.

In recent years because of the declining number of vocations and Carmelites working in parishes, the Carmelite Province of the Most Pure Heart of Mary has been guided by the idea of clustering Carmelites who minister in a nearby geographical area so as to promote the value of fraternity among members.

When the Provincial Council is assigning Carmelites to a parish, consideration should be made of the needs of the local Carmelite community in the area as well as the needs of the parish. If the position of pastor and/or parochial vicar have been “open listed” with no response for two years, this might be an indication that members of the Province do not wish to serve in that particular parish. This might be a serious indicator that we should withdraw from this parish.

New parishes should not be accepted without serious consideration regarding how the decision would impact parochial commitments already in place.

Carmelite Identity in Ministry

Carmelite identity in ministry is expressed in varied ways at different levels of activity. These levels include but are not limited to:

- Local Carmelite Community:
 - Common prayer;
 - Common meals;
 - Community meetings;
 - Wearing of the habit.
- Clustered Carmelite Community:
 - Potus/meals with neighboring communities;
 - Feast day celebrations: prayer and meals;
 - Day of recollection or renewal;
 - Use of outside Carmelites for parish missions/retreats.
- Larger Carmelite Community:
 - Feast days/social events/gatherings with other Carmelites;
 - Days of recollection and retreat with other Carmelites;
 - Joint vocation days.
- Parish:
 - Art & environment: use of Carmelite symbols/banners/artwork;
 - Carmelite feasts - use of Carmelite Sacramentary and Lectionary
 - Guest speakers on Carmelite topics: history/Carmelite Saints & writings;
 - Formation of a Third Order/support for an existing Third Order.
- Diocese:
 - Presence of Carmelites at diocesan events;
 - Advertisement of Carmelite events in diocesan communications;
 - Availability of Carmelites as guest speakers for diocesan events;
 - Availability of Carmelites for adult education
 - Availability of Carmelites for spiritual direction.

Parish Ministry and the Carmelites

Ministry is neither extraneous nor optional, but is an integral part of our Carmelite charism. It must characterize our presence in the Church and in the world.

A parish is defined in Canon Law as: *A certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a parish priest as its proper pastor, under the authority of the diocesan bishop.* [Can. 515]

We Carmelites recognize that people go to churches where they feel they are nourished; and a parish served by Carmelites should be understood as a spiritual community rather than a territory.

The center of the parish is God (not the pastor, nor the Carmelite community). Personal relationship with God can more easily be cultivated within a lived experience of community, hospitality, and dialogue.

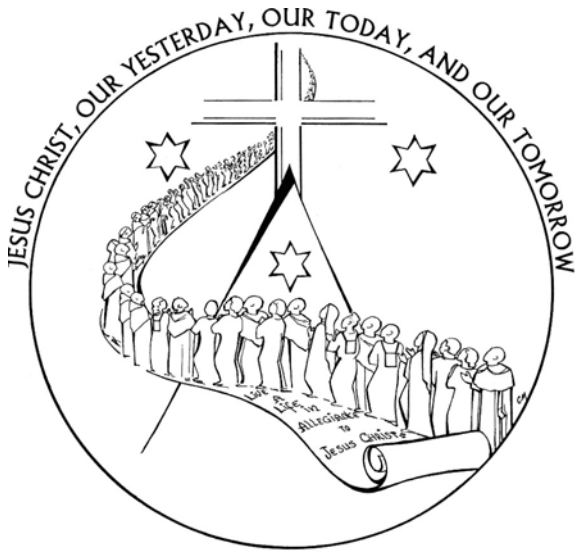
We strive to build faith communities animated and guided by the Carmelite charism:

- Where members live out their vocation to be holy;
- Where there are fewer barriers between people and God;
- Where availability to God and to one another is cultivated.

Relationship with the Parish Community

- Canon Law reminds us of the obligations and rights of all Christ's faithful. [cf Can. 208-213] We acknowledge the role of the laity in helping the ministry of the Church. We should be open to empowering the laity and expanding lay ministry roles.
- The Church or parish is not the Church of the pastor or clergy; but rather the Church should be seen as “the whole people of God on pilgrimage towards the heavenly Jerusalem.” Therefore, we strive to broaden the laity's sense of mission and shared responsibility.
- Ordained deacons play a vital role in ministry in our parishes.
- Women have an equal role with men in the running of the parish and in its various ministries.
- Our parishes will try to develop and expand lay ministerial (liturgical, sacramental, and administrative) roles in the Church to the fullest extent.
- Consistent with our commitment to a preferential option for the poor, we encourage stewardship.
- Our parish communities will work for justice and peace and against conflict, hatred, and violence.
- Our Carmelite parishes should investigate ways to share resources, and/or twin with other communities of faith in order to help the poor within the local community, the Church, and larger society, both in our own country and abroad.
- The liturgy, which is the celebration of our life with God, will be a central focus of our parishes. Liturgies should be thoughtfully and well prepared with particular attention to homilies. The effective celebration of weddings, baptisms, funerals, and reconciliation, ensures that these sacraments are channels of God's joy, healing, and hope.
- Parish educational programs will honor the God-given potential of all our members:
 - Catholic schools and religious education programs will assist the young in making positive choices connected to Gospel values;
 - Adult and ongoing faith formation programs will invite and challenge more mature parishioners to growth.

- Supporting missionary activity and ecumenical efforts broadens our understanding of Church and expands our understanding of God's family.
- As Carmelites working in parish ministry we have to be open to different models of parochial ministry:
 - Traditional model - Pastor and Parochial Vicar(s) - This model should be seen as one of a collaborative style where all the Carmelites work together in ministering to a particular parish. This is done with the assistance of qualified parish staff and help from parishioners.
 - Emerging models:
 - A pastor and Parochial Vicar(s) have the care of two or more churches in an area;
 - Carmelites live together but minister and care for a number of churches in the local area. This could have one centralized staff for the administration of the different churches, or different churches could have their own local staff.
- As Carmelites working in parishes we are doing so with the permission of the local Bishop. We should try to foster a good relationship with the Bishop and local clergy, since we are working to nurture the growth of the local Church.
 - We should be aware of and participate in local regional ministerial planning. This might involve the restructuring of parishes and collaboration between parishes.
- We will try to follow the Gospel message of being prudent stewards of the patrimony of the parishes that are entrusted to us. We should follow all diocesan, federal, state and local laws in our stewardship and administration of the Church's assets.
 - Where possible we should encourage our parishes to be centers of stewardship based on people giving their Time, Talents and Treasures.



Administrative / Juridical Issues

As Carmelite religious, we administer the parishes entrusted to us by the local diocesan Bishop.

“The entrustment of a parish may either be in perpetuity or for a specific time. In either case this is to be done by means of a written agreement made between the diocesan Bishop and the competent Superior of the institute or society. This agreement must expressly and accurately define, among other things, the work to be done, the persons to be assigned to it and the financial arrangements.” [Can. 520 §2]

To ensure good relationships with the local Bishop and the smooth running of the parishes entrusted to us, the following administrative and juridical items are outlined:

- Term limits:
 - Normally a pastor is appointed for a six-year term which can be renewed for a second and third term of three years only after consultation with the Provincial Council;
 - Normally Parochial Vicars are appointed for a three-year term which can be renewed for a further term of three years;
 - Although these nominations are made by the Provincial and his Council in consultation with the Carmelite concerned, it is the local Bishop who makes the appointment;
 - Where possible these term limits should be adhered to, so as to encourage the wellbeing of both the individual Carmelite and the parish community.
- Pastor – Parochial Vicar Covenant:
 - Within our parishes, the relationship between Carmelites and staff should ideally be a collaborative one;
 - Where there are two or more Carmelites working in a parish there should be some form of covenant or agreement of areas of responsibility and sharing of the workload.
 - In the case of a first appointment to a parish, there should be some kind of mentoring program to help understand the following:
 - Requirements of the local Diocese and Chancery. This is sometimes done through a Diocesan organized seminar workshop for new priests or pastors to the Diocese;
 - Parish pastoral and financial operations;
 - Relationships with parishioners and parish staff.

- Parish Pastoral Council:
 - Each parish is encouraged to have a Pastoral Council to help advise the pastor on areas of pastoral care in the parish and help foster pastoral action. There should be regular meetings to help build up the communal life of the parish.
- Parish Finance Council:
 - Each parish is bound by Canon Law [Can. 537] to have a Finance Council to help the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish;
 - The Finance Council shall assist in the preparation of the parish annual budget and oversee the care of the temporal goods of the parish;
 - The Finance Council shall ensure that all diocesan, federal, state, and local financial guidelines are being met.
- Salaries and Benefits:
 - To ensure that the needs of the Carmelite Community and the individual Carmelite are met, there should be a written community policy regarding:
 - Individual monthly allowance;
 - Vacation allowance;
 - Which stipends and stole fees go to parish, house or individual.
 - To ensure that the spiritual, recreational, and physical needs of the individual Carmelites in the community are cared for there should be a community policy regarding:
 - Weekly days off;
 - Vacations;
 - Annual retreats;
 - Opportunities for ongoing formation.

- Monetary support of the Province:
 - As Carmelites working in diocesan parishes we should ensure that all the salaries, allowances and benefits that are allowable to the diocesan clergy are credited to the Carmelite community by the parish or diocese;
 - This should include but not limited to:
 - Salary;
 - Car allowances;
 - Car and health insurance premiums;
 - Retreat and ongoing formation allowances;
 - Pension/Retirement contributions;
 - We should ensure that the following are taken up in the Parish as special or second collections and the appropriate amounts allowed by the diocese are sent to the Provincial Office. These generally include:
 - Seminary collection;
 - Carmelite Missions - this collection should be in addition to the annual mission appeal sponsored by the diocese if the diocese participates in this Propagation of the Faith collection. The collection is to be forwarded to the Carmelite Mission office as soon as possible, unless the diocesan policy is that it is sent to the diocese for them to forward to the Mission Office.
 - Towards the end of each half-year the surplus funds in the Carmelite community account are to be sent to the Provincial Treasurer as help and support to the Province and Order.

- Provincial visitation:
 - Each community and parish should welcome a visit by the Prior Provincial, Vice Prior Provincial and Provincial Councilors.
 - Realizing that we are all stewards and have to give an account of our stewardship, we should be open to a visitation of the parish and of the community;
 - We should also, as individuals, look towards doing a self-evaluation of how we are doing in our ministry.

- Vocations recruitment:
 - Realizing the need for vocations not only to the Carmelite Order but also to the priesthood and religious life in general, our parishes should always try to foster vocations.
 - We should encourage local parish vocation groups, visits from Carmelite and other vocations promoters.
- Personal and Spiritual welfare:
 - Carmelites are people of prayer and action. However, sometimes ministry commitments take precedence over our community and personal prayer lives. We should therefore try to ensure that time is taken when planning the annual calendar to make provision for:
 - Personal retreat;
 - Ongoing or professional updating (e.g. the Carmelite Forum);
 - Carmelite gatherings such as regional meetings and Chapters.
 - We have to take care of ourselves physically. This can be done by trying to follow a healthy lifestyle which includes making sure we have regular checkups:
 - Medical; Dental; Vision;
 - Participating in some kind of exercise regimen or program;
 - Making sure we get time off each week for rest and relaxation.

Withdrawal from a parish

At times the Province will have to withdraw from parishes. This is a painful decision and one that is not made lightly. It should be made after consultation with the Carmelites working in the parish. Strategies to be considered when the Carmelites withdraw from a parish:

- Once the decision has been made by the Provincial Council, this should be communicated to the local Carmelite Community and the local Ordinary. A date for withdrawal should then be agreed upon;
- As rumors can cause hardship and distress to many people, strict confidentiality should be maintained;
- As religious we have taken a vow of obedience and we should accept the decisions that are made by the prior provincial and his Council, whom we have elected to guide our province;
- A timeline should be determined for the communication of this decision to the parish staff, parish Pastoral Council, and the parish at large;
- The prior provincial should send a signed letter, on Province stationery, which can then be distributed to each parishioner telling them of the decision. He or the vice provincial should come to the parish and tell the parishioners of the decision at all the weekend Sunday Masses. If possible it would be good for him to meet with the parish staff and Pastoral Council;
- The Carmelites in the parish should work towards a smooth transition with the new clergy who will take over the parish. The local Diocese may have a procedure in place for the transition of pastors, but there are various legal forms that have to be completed so that the appropriate change of signatories are made on parish accounts, credit cards, etc.
- Stipends for Mass intentions that have been booked by parishioners are to be transferred to a Mass account for the parish;
- All monies in the community account(s) are to be sent to the provincial treasurer.