



*Sr. Marjorie Robinson, OCD*

## CCA INCLUSION – OUTREACH

### INTRODUCTION

As I pondered CCA's history through the lens of INCLUSION and OUTREACH, I found it difficult to separate one from the other. Once I allow another into the orbit of my existence, I am already reaching out.

### INCLUSION

The 45 sisters present at Marriottsville in 1970 decided not to choose federation but expressed a desire for a "loose association," which would allow for greater participation of all the sisters. From the beginning CCA was a GRASSROOTS ASSOCIATION: meetings are open to ALL sisters in the community. Sisters formed life-long friendships and found respect, acceptance, affirmation, the freedom to challenge and disagree. Trust deepened as we came to know each other as sisters and friends.

From the beginning, sisters were called forth to use their gifts and talents in service of CCA. Dave Ruhmkoff described CCA as AN ENABLING ORGANIZATION. CCA has nurtured leadership in a whole generation of women and continues to do so.

**PARTICIPATION** is a key word when reflecting on inclusion. Several examples of the communities' participation come to mind:

- In 1973 the CCA Newsletter was begun as a means to foster and facilitate communication within CCA.
- Change is welcomed from individuals and communities by way of PROPOSALS to the delegate assembly at CCA meetings.
- In 1975 the CHARTER OF LIFE Task Force was established. The communities eagerly took part in study and reflection on the Study Workbook.
- The Carmels' open responses to the questionnaire from the COMMUNITY CONCERNS COMMITTEE in 1990 was an example of tremendous trust.
- Member Carmels contributed input and feedback in the publication of CCA's VOCATION BROCHURE.

### OUTREACH

Much of CCA's early outreach was by way of INVITATION and SHARING INFORMATION. This paved the way for future COLLABORATION.

CCA's leadership sought OPPORTUNITIES FOR GREATER COMMUNICATION. Sisters met with bishops, provincials, vicars for religious and leadership of other associations. We communicated with thoughtful preparation, with the aim of fostering greater unity and understanding and being a voice for our own lives.

CCA joined with ICS in sponsoring seminars and educational workshops, such as the St. Therese seminar and a number of seminars at Peterborough.

We always welcomed our FRIARS to meetings as observers, as our brothers.

Members of CCA represented the association at ACS meetings and shared bonds of friendship and sisterhood with contemplatives of other traditions.

Our sisters were happy to share various PUBLICATIONS which were the fruit of study and prayerful reflection, such as: The Vocation to Carmel and Seasons of Carmel. And documents from the Roots Committee: The Rule of St. Albert, Commentary on the Rule, Ancient Carmelite Texts, to name a few.

**INTERNATIONAL GUESTS** attended the 1976 meeting for the first time: sisters from Holland, Canada, and the Philippines were our guests. Sisters from other countries and associations continue to accept invitations to our national meetings.

The Chairperson's CHRONICLES record the amount of outreach that goes on behind the scenes. As Mary Margaret pointed out, the CHRONICLES are "but a glimpse of the vibrant life of CCA in all her members. This life is collaborative and inclusive. It involves every sister either directly or indirectly in the union of prayerful support."

One could not have anticipated the amount of communication and correspondence which resulted after the famous "Casaroli letter" in 1984 announcing the DRAFT LEGISLATION. The responses only served to highlight the solidarity of the daughters of Teresa around the world.

It was crucial that CCA receive approval as an association in order to be recognized by others. The official approval of CCA's STATUTES in 1993 opened the door for greater collaboration among associations.

The first official exchange between CCA and the Queen of Carmel Association took place in 1992 when the councils of both associations met at Piedmont.

Marian and Christine made our first official contacts abroad in 1993 when they traveled to Great Britain and Ireland, meeting with the leadership of the British and Irish associations.

Special note must be made of FR. CAMILO's term of office as general superior from 1991-2003: Under his extraordinary leadership, COLLABORATION and efforts towards UNITY flourished. In meetings with the Carmelite Nuns in the U.S, he strongly encouraged the associations to work together. Fr. Camilo planted the seed and blessed its growth. WE are the responsible gardeners who are to bring forth the fruit of collaboration.

CCA supports The Carmelite Institute, a collaborative effort of the whole Carmelite family in the U.S. and Canada, and is represented on the Institute's board of directors and executive committee.

Fr. Camilo encouraged meetings of OCD friars and nuns in the U.S. to seek ways of greater collaboration. The first meeting took place in Dallas in 2001. Regular meetings of the provincials and association councils continue.

In September 2001 Fr. Camilo sent his first letter outlining the THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION PROJECT. The associations worked together on implementing the themes and schedule of the ten-year project by way of a coordinating team of sisters.

Annamae and Marjorie accepted the invitation to attend the German Federation Meeting and to visit Carmels in Germany in April 2002.

In September of that year Angela represented Annamae at the British Federation Meeting in Glasgow, Scotland.

Following the second meeting of friars and nuns at Holy Hill, a DIRECTORY for OCD NUNS AND FRIARS in the U.S. was published.

The idea of a FORMATORS' PROGRAM, a collaborative project of the three associations, became a reality in 2008.

We were open to new technology and took advantage of modern means of communication. CCA now has its own WEBSITE, and OCDNORTHAMERICA serves as a vehicle of communication among OCD friars and nuns via the internet.

In April of 2008 Carolyn and Colette represented CCA once again at the German Federation Meeting. Monika accompanied them as guide and translator.

In 2003 for the first time the nuns were invited to be observers at the FRIARS' GENERAL CHAPTER. They were present again this year. The three coordinators from the U.S. collaborated in choosing one representative and in preparing the content of her presentation at the chapter.

The nuns were invited to be observers at the PROVINCIAL CHAPTERS OF THE FRIARS in 2005 and 2008. CCA had the opportunity to make presentations, which the friars found informative and inspirational and which helped strengthen our bonds as sisters and brothers who share a common charism.

## **CONCLUSION**

Inclusion and participation within CCA added vitality and richness to the spirit of our individual communities. Outreach never jeopardized, threatened or compromised CCA's identity. In fact, it broadened our perspective of the Church, Carmel and the world.

I feel our efforts at inclusion and outreach have brought us to a deeper level. Vita Consecrata calls religious to practice the SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNION, "to be true experts of communion." It is COMMUNION which I feel describes our current experience.

In 1974 Fr. Finian counseled against forming unions or associations according to different spirits, which he felt would be divisive. Although ideology has played a part in the formation of associations in our country, it forced us to be diligent in our efforts toward unity.

It would have been premature in 1970 to expect the degree of communion that we experience today. An organization needs time to grow and mature, grace to negotiate differences, and openness to appreciate diversity. Profound trust was needed to accept as authentic different expressions of Carmelite life. Each association provided a friendly and safe environment for such growth to take place among its members.

As the seed grows “we know not how,” TRANSFORMATION happens in the process. We have learned to live in peace with ambiguity, to grow in love imperfectly, and to embrace a spirituality of communion. We celebrate that gift today.

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References of Special Note:

Christine’s talks at the Formation Seminars in the 1980s and her “Resume” at the time of CCA’s 25th Anniversary in 1995.

Connie’s HISTORY OF CCA on the occasion of CCA’s fifth anniversary in 1975.

NARRATIVE and FACTUAL ACCOUNTS of CCA meetings.

Coordinators’ CHRONICLES are gems of CCA’s history in a nutshell.

Tapes from Fr. Finian’s meeting with the nuns at St. Louis in 1975.