

# 2. CONSTITUTIONAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

## (WITH EXPLANATION)

---

DRAFT  
APPROVED  
UNANIMOUSLY  
BY THE COMMISSION

(C: Way of Perfection; V: Life; M: The Interior Castle; F: Foundations)

# PRESENTATION OF THE DRAFT CONSTITUTIONAL TABLE OF CONTENTS FOR THE DISCALCED CARMELITE NUNS (1991)

Here we offer some guidelines with the aim of facilitating an understanding of the Table of Contents as a whole and in each of its parts.

## Style and Language

In the manner of Our Mother Teresa of Jesus

A Teresian Table of Contents, simple and clear, which addresses the essentials. With a universal perspective and balance between law and spirit. With renewed language, charismatic, in the first-person plural.

## From the Basic Documents

The Legacy of Nemi

The Table of Contents is based on the texts decided upon at the Nemi Assembly: The Holy Scriptures, The Rule, The Way of Perfection, The Declarations ('77), The Constitutions ('91). New ecclesial documents (VDQ, CO, VC, etc.). The Contributions from Federations and Associations. The Conferences and works of Nemi.

## From the Fundamental Contents

Essential Elements Updated Biblically, Theologically, and Charismatically

1. General principles: spirit and purpose of the Teresian charism (identity); doctrinal elements; legal norms.
2. Specific elements: evangelical counsels; community life; the life of prayer; formation; separation from the institute; readmission; government of the institute; administration of goods; obligation to observe the Constitutions.

## From the Internal Logic of the Table of Contents

A Charismatic, Formative, and Organizational Structure

The Table of Contents follows a *progressive internal logic*, from its spiritual foundation to its regulations of organization and government.

The *general structure* is divided into *three main parts* that interact with each other. Each dimension of community and personal life that forms the basis of our being Discalced Carmelite Nuns is formed and organized to ensure fidelity to the charism.

### Part I: Charismatic Foundation

The identity and spiritual roots of the Teresian charism are presented with its three essential pillars: the life of prayer, sisterly life and mission, as the way to follow Jesus and to shape personal and community life according to His example.

## Part II: Formation and Admission

This section addresses the integral and total formation of life and the itinerary of initial formation from aspirancy to solemn profession. The agents of formation are presented, and the importance of integral maturation is emphasized. The processes of admission, departure and readmission are mentioned, as well as perseverance and fidelity.

## Part III: Communion and Government

This part focuses on the organization and internal government of the community. It outlines the canonical bases, the functioning of the governing bodies and relations with the Federations and Associations, Bishops, and Superiors of the Order. It also deals with the administration of goods.

## Epilogue

The Table of Contents concludes with words from Teresa of Jesus, inviting us to observe the Rule and Constitutions as a path of prayer and fidelity to the charism received.

## In Summary

- Each part answers a fundamental question: **Who are we and what motivates us?** (*identity and charism*); **How do we grow and commit ourselves?** (*formation and admission*); **How do we organize and govern ourselves?** (*structure and government*).
- **We enter each part and chapter with quotations from the Holy Mother**, which serve as a guiding thread and basing each section in the spirituality of Teresian Carmel.
- The progression of **the Table of Contents** shows that it **starts with the question of being (the “ser tales” of The Way of Perfection) and vocation**, it continues with the **path of formation and of integration**, and it culminates in **community structure and governance**, as an organic process of consecrated life to live in fidelity to the Teresian charism, at the service of the Church and the world today.

# **PART I**

## **"WHAT DO YOU THINK WE MUST BE LIKE?"** (C 4,1)

### **CHARISMATIC FOUNDATION**

#### **EXPLANATION**

This first part of the Constitutions presents the *Teresian charism*, the *roots and inspiration* that sustain our *identity as Discalced Carmelite Nuns*, with the *Virgin Mary as Mother and Sister* of the entire *Teresian Carmelite Family* (Ch. 1) in *following Jesus* (Ch. 2). It addresses the *way of life* we have inherited from Teresa (Ch. 3) and the *mission* proper to our *contemplative being* (Ch. 4 and Ch. 5).

#### **PRESENTATION**

---

### **CHAPTER 1: "I was thinking about what I could do for God"** (V 32,9)

### **OUR CHARISM: TERESIAN IDENTITY**

#### **1. The Teresian Charism**

The encounter with Jesus Christ: "Our eyes on Christ, our Good." (1M 2,11)  
Three main elements: The Life of Prayer, Sisterly Life, Mission

#### **2. Marian Roots and the Life of Carmel**

Carmel is all Mary's  
Mary, Mother and Sister

As we know, Mary is at the root of our Order of the *Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel*. In continuity with the profound Mariological reflection of the Second Vatican Council (*Lumen*

*Gentium 8*), which considers Mary as part of the Church, we reaffirm that the Marian dimension is part of the entire life of our Order and completely permeates each of its members. Teresa expresses it thus: it is "The Order of the Virgin, Our Lady" (F 27,11); the foundations are made "with the favor of Our Lord and of the glorious Virgin Mother of God" (C introduction); each monastery and those of us who live there are part of the "little dovecotes of Our Lady" (F 4,5). In synthesis, we want to ponder and emphasize not only our Order's belonging to the Virgin Mary, but also the "transversality" of her presence as Mother and Sister who envelops, permeates, and nourishes our entire life. Mary is our model of discipleship, our guide in following Jesus, the example and light of our contemplative being and of the mission of the Order in the Church. Her presence is essential to our identity as Discalced Carmelite Nuns.

### **3. Carmelite Inspiration**

Elijah and the First Hermits of Mount Carmel

The Rule

### **4. The Family of Carmel**

Nuns

Friars

Secular Order

## **CHAPTER 2: "The Divine and the human are joined" (6M 7,9)**

### **FOLLOWING JESUS**

This section will be developed from the updated theology of consecrated life, taking into account baptismal life, Paschal existence, configuration with Christ, and the living of the vows in the mystery of the Church, in the context of current challenges.

#### **Introduction**

**The Evangelical counsels:** "To follow the evangelical counsels as perfectly as I could and strive that these few persons who live here do the same" (C 1,2)

- 1. Chastity**
- 2. Poverty**
- 3. Obedience**

# CHAPTER 3: "Our manner of life" (F 2,3) and "the style of our community life" (F 13,5)

## TERESIAN LIFE

This chapter outlines our way of life as Discalced Carmelite Nuns, the way in which we express the charism we have received to serve in the Church, our specific way of consecrated life.

Based on *The Way of Perfection*, we express our vocation through the three great virtues: love, detachment and humility, around which sisterly life and prayer are articulated.

In organizing this chapter, we have followed the Saint's thinking: "Before I speak of the interior, which is prayer, I will say a few things that are necessary for those who wish to follow the path of prayer" (C 4,3).

For Our Holy Mother, attention to the interior journey—which never ends—is an essential element of our way of life and our charismatic contribution in the Church; this journey is undertaken with humility, which is fundamental in the process of union with God.

The profound experience and wisdom of Teresa is what builds and links together the essential contents our lives.

### Introduction

#### **1. Sisterly Life.<sup>1</sup> "Love for one Another"**

(The Teresian Community. Common Life. Recreation. Forgiveness and Reconciliation. Community Chapter. Teresian Humanism: Infirm Sisters, Fragile Communities, etc.)

#### **2. Life of Prayer.<sup>2</sup> "Our Rule states that we must pray without ceasing" (C 4,2)**

Jesus Christ

Teresian Prayer

Sacramental Life<sup>3</sup>

Liturgical Life

Spiritual Life (Word of God, Spiritual Reading, Retreats, etc.)

---

<sup>1</sup> VDQ 24-27.

<sup>2</sup> VDQ 16-21.

<sup>3</sup> VDQ 22-23.

### **3. Evangelical Self-Denial. "*Detachment*"<sup>4</sup>**

"To give ourselves to the All entirely and without reserve" (C 8,1)  
"Losing concern about ourselves and our own satisfaction" (C 12,1)

### **4. The Interior Way. "*Humility*"**

To Walk in Truth  
Self-Knowledge  
Growth and Maturity in the Interior Life  
Configuration to Christ

## **CHAPTER 4: "The purpose for which the Lord brought you here together" (C 3,10)**

### **OUR MISSION<sup>5</sup>**

#### **Introduction**

"We could help this Lord of mine as much as possible" (C 1,2)

- 1. An Entirely Contemplative Life**
- 2. Apostolic and Missionary Meaning and Service**
- 3. Insertion into the Particular and Universal Church**

---

<sup>4</sup> VDQ 35.

<sup>5</sup> VDQ 36-37.

## CHAPTER 5: "Do that which best stirs you to love" (4M 1,7)

### THE MEANS TO FOSTER OUR LIFE

With what has been stated in the preceding chapters, the content of this chapter, as well as what refers to formation, the 12 matters calling for discernment and renewed norms of the Apostolic Constitution *Vultum Dei Quaerere* are included.<sup>6</sup>

The theme of enclosure will be revisited in Part III from a juridical perspective.

- 1. Solitude and silence<sup>7</sup>** (The Eremitical Dimension)
- 2. The Enclosure<sup>8</sup>**
- 3. Work<sup>9</sup>**
- 4. Digital culture and the Means of Communication<sup>10</sup>**

---

<sup>6</sup> VDQ 12.

<sup>7</sup> VDQ 31. 33.

<sup>8</sup> VDQ 31.

<sup>9</sup> VDQ 32.

<sup>10</sup> VDQ 34.

# PART II

## EXPLANATION

This second part outlines the path of growth for those of us who are called to this contemplative life in the Discalced Carmelite Order.

It begins with the theme of *Formation* (Ch. 1). It outlines the *stages of formation*, the *processes of discernment, admission, and accompaniment* (Ch. 2 and 3), relationships of *belonging and bonds* with the community (Ch. 4), and *fidelity to the charism in communion with the Church* (Ch. 5).

## "THE FOUNDATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE TO COME" (F 4,6)

## THE VOCATION TO THE DISCALCED CARMEL FORMATION AND ADMISSION

### GENERAL ASPECTS<sup>11</sup> OF FORMATION,<sup>12</sup> DISCERNMENT AND THE INCORPORATION OF SISTERS

Our vocation is a gift received from God. Formation supports our response to this free gift, that leads us to configuration with the Lord Jesus. Formation is integral and concerns all stages of life. It is, by nature, a ongoing process.

Our understanding of ongoing formation gives rise to our understanding of initial formation. This has led us to place the chapter on ongoing formation before those on initial formation. This reversal of our usual way of thinking is present in various Church documents since 2000 and is also found in *Cor Orans*.

<sup>11</sup> VDQ 13; CO 221-230.289.

<sup>12</sup> VDQ 13-15.

## Introduction

Rationale<sup>13</sup> and Objectives<sup>14</sup> of Formation in the Discalced Carmelite Order

### 1. Dimensions of Integral Formation<sup>15</sup>

The Process Formation

Its Dimensions: Human and Sisterly, Cultural, Spiritual and Apostolic, Charismatic<sup>16</sup>

### 2. Agents of Formation<sup>17</sup>

The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

The Church and the Virgin Mary

The Sister

The Community

The Prioress. The Formator. The Formation Team

The Federation and Association

## CHAPTER 1: "Strong determination to learn" (C 26,10)

### ONGOING FORMATION

#### 1. Ongoing Formation in Daily Life<sup>18</sup>

The "Humus" of Community Life, Formation Program, etc.

#### 2. Personal and Community Formation

#### 3. Ongoing Formation with the Federations and Associations<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> See letter from Fr. General Miguel Márquez, *Letter to the entire Order on the Solemnity of Our Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus*, Rome, October 15, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> CO 224.

<sup>15</sup> CO 225.

<sup>16</sup> VC 71; VDQ 13.

<sup>17</sup> VDQ 14; CO 237.289.

<sup>18</sup> VDQ 13-15; art. 3 §1-2; 7 §1; CO 238-239.

<sup>19</sup> CO 117-120.

## CHAPTER 2: "That persons would enter who by their example would be a foundation" (V 36,6)

### DISCERNMENT AND VOCATIONAL ACCOMPANIMENT<sup>20</sup>

Chapters 2 and 3 will take into account, among other things, the DIVCSVA document: *The Art of Seeking the Face of God*, written especially for initial formation.

Chapter 2 covers the stages prior to religious life (aspirancy and postulancy) and Chapter 3 covers those specific to religious life (novitiate, temporary profession and solemn profession).

#### **Introduction<sup>21</sup>**

Accompaniment and Discernment

#### **1. Aspirancy<sup>22</sup>**

Discernment  
Requirements - Admission - Duration  
Forms  
Purpose and Goal  
Formation and Accompaniment  
Departure - Dismissal

#### **2. Postulancy<sup>23</sup>**

Discernment  
Requirements - Admission - Duration  
Purpose and Goal  
Formation and Accompaniment  
Departure - Dismissal

---

<sup>20</sup> VDQ art. 3 § 5.

<sup>21</sup> CO 250-261.

<sup>22</sup> CO 262-268.

<sup>23</sup> CO 269-276.

# CHAPTER 3: "Draw near, then, to this good Master" (C 26, 11)

## INITIAL FORMATION IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF CARMEL

### **Introduction<sup>24</sup>**

### **From Novitiate to Solemn Profession<sup>25</sup>**

#### **1. Novitiate<sup>26</sup>**

Requirements - Admission - Duration  
Purpose and Goal  
Formation and Accompaniment  
Departure - Dismissal

#### **2. Religious Profession**

##### **a) Temporary Profession<sup>27</sup>**

Requirements - Admission - Duration  
Purpose and Goal  
Formation and Accompaniment  
Renewal of Temporary Vows  
Progressive Incorporation into the Community  
Departure - Dismissal

##### **b) Solemn Profession<sup>28</sup>**

Preparation - Admission  
Formation and Accompaniment During the First Years

---

<sup>24</sup> CO 250-261.

<sup>25</sup> VDQ 13-15.

<sup>26</sup> CO 277-284.

<sup>27</sup> CO 285-289.

<sup>28</sup> CO 219-220.

## CHAPTER 4: "All must come from His hand" (F 5,17)

### BELONGING. SEPARATION<sup>29</sup>

- 1. Incorporation**
- 2. Extern Sisters**
- 3. Transfers<sup>30</sup>**
- 4. Transfer from one Institute to Another**
- 5. Absences**
- 6. Exclaustrations<sup>31</sup>**
- 7. Departure from the Order**  
Dispensation. Dismissal
- 8. Readmission to the Order**

## CHAPTER 5: "Strive to be the kind of rock" (F 4,7)

### FIDELITY TO THE CHARISM<sup>32</sup>

Fidelity to the charism is articulated on three levels:

*At the level of the Order:* the charism is transmitted through the continuous renewal of the text of the Constitutions, throughout the centuries, in dialogue with magisterial and charismatic texts. This is Constitutional renewal, where "feeling with the Church" is part of fidelity to the charism.

*At the community level:* community life is the place of mutual support and fraternal correction to persevere in fidelity to the charism.

*At the personal level:* fidelity to the charism is expressed in all stages of life. At each stage, the Sister has different points of support to renew her "Yes" to the Lord with *determined determination*.  
"The obligation to observe the Constitutions" will appear in this chapter.

- 1. To Feel with the Church. Charismatic fidelity**
- 2. Mutual Support and Fraternal Correction<sup>33</sup>**
- 3. Remaining<sup>34</sup>**  
Renewal of Profession

<sup>29</sup> CJC can. 684-704.

<sup>30</sup> CO 122.

<sup>31</sup> CO 130-131.

<sup>32</sup> Initial inspiration: *The Primitive Constitutions*.

<sup>33</sup> CJC can. 1343ff.

<sup>34</sup> *The Gift of Fidelity and the Joy of Perseverance*, DIVCSVA, 2020.

# **PART III**

## **EXPLANATION**

This third part refers to the organization, government and administration of communities. It includes chapters on *canonical status* (Ch. 1), services *internal government* (Ch. 2), *relationships of communion and government* (Ch. 3), and *administration of goods* (Ch. 4).

## **"STRIVE TO ADVANCE ALWAYS FROM GOOD TO BETTER" (F 29,32)**

## **COMMUNION AND GOVERNMENT**

This section addresses the internal government of the community, which is an essential element for cultivating authentic fraternal communion. To this end, it is necessary that the service of government be carried out in a harmonious manner, promoting the integral growth of each sister and of the community as a whole.

## **ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNMENT OF OUR TERESIAN COMMUNITIES**

### **CHAPTER 1: "With me it was like being in glory to see the Blessed Sacrament reserved" (V 36,6)**

Our Mother Saint Teresa links the foundations of her monasteries with the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharist is the center and summit that articulates our life. From this centrality, every gesture of our day is oriented. The community is organized around the recognition of Jesus as the true author of our sisterhood.

## CANONICAL STATUS

**Introduction:** *Sui iuris*, juridical dependence, entirely contemplative life<sup>35</sup>

The canonical basis for the contents of this section corresponds to *Vultum Dei Quaerere* and *Cor Orans*.

1. **Foundation.<sup>36</sup> Canonical Erection<sup>37</sup>**
2. **Enclosure<sup>38</sup>**
3. **Vital and Juridical Autonomy<sup>39</sup>**
4. **Particular Statutes<sup>40</sup>**
5. **Affiliation<sup>41</sup>**
6. **Transfers<sup>42</sup> and Construction of Monasteries**
7. **Suppression<sup>43</sup>**

## CHAPTER 2: "Let us make haste to serve His Majesty" (F 29,32)

### SERVICES FOR THE INTERNAL GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMUNITY

1. **The Prioress**
2. **The Council**
3. **The Community Chapter**  
(Obligations and Rights of the Chapter Sisters, Active and Passive Voice, Renunciation of Active and Passive Voice, Discernment Processes)
4. **The Elective Chapter**

---

<sup>35</sup> CO 188.

<sup>36</sup> CO 20-38.

<sup>37</sup> CO 39-41; 83c; 94.

<sup>38</sup> VDQ 31; Art. 10; CO 172-218.

<sup>39</sup> VDQ 28-29; Art. 8 § 1-2; CO 15-19; 43-45; 121.

<sup>40</sup> CJC can. 587 § 4.

<sup>41</sup> VDQ Art. 8 § 3; CO 54-64; 128; 132.

<sup>42</sup> CO 65-66.

<sup>43</sup> CO 67-73; 83e; 128.

## CHAPTER 3: "Consulting the friends of God" (V 23,4)

### RELATIONS OF COMMUNION AND GOVERNMENT

To discern God's will, the Church offers us mediations of communion, collaboration, and government. This connection is not limited to formal compliance, but is based on ecclesial communion, with openness to dialogue and willingness to accept her guidance as an expression of the common good.

#### **1. Relationships of Communion and Collaboration**

Relations with the Federation and Association<sup>44</sup>

#### **2. Relationships of Government**

Relations with the Superiors of the Order

Relations with the Bishops<sup>45</sup>

## CHAPTER 4: "Your eyes on your Spouse; He will sustain you" (C 2,1)

### ADMINISTRATION OF GOODS<sup>46</sup>

#### **1. Ordinary Administration**

#### **2. Extraordinary Administration**<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> VDQ 30.

<sup>45</sup> CO 81-85.

<sup>46</sup> *Economy at the Service of Charism and Mission*, DIVCSVA, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> CO 46-53.

## EPILOGUE

For the epilogue, we have chosen the words of Teresa. It is she herself who inspires us to live our vocation with commitment, hope and joy.

*If, with the help of Our Lord and the glorious Virgin Mother of God, we strive to observe our Rule and Constitutions very carefully, I hope in the Lord that our prayers will be heard (cf. C 4,1).*

---

# THE TERESIAN DYNAMISM OF THE TABLE OF CONTENTS

Our Constitutions are the expression and translation of the Teresian Charism in juridical language. The constitutional text makes it possible to transmit the charism from generation to generation, organizing the concrete and normative forms in which it can be expressed, lived and followed on all continents.

It is important for us to share the Teresian resonance and dynamism of the draft Table of Contents of our Constitutions, and we will do so from two perspectives: *form* and *content*.

## 1) Form: A Dialogic Dimension

At first glance, the Table of Contents we have presented offers a **dialogic structure**: each major part, each chapter, is in a certain sense, a response to a demand of Our Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus. In fact, the *Teresian quotations* that precede each chapter are placed there as if they were saying to each Sister: "Listen to the call of Saint Teresa, let her take you by the hand to be, day by day, a Discalced Carmelite Nun who puts into practice, with her Sisters, what the Church gives you through these Constitution: to follow Jesus Christ."

This dialogical structure that we have chosen in the Commission has a **strong resonance with the Way of Perfection**, which also bears witness to the conversation between Teresa and her Sisters.

## 2) Content: A Teresian Breath

In the spirit of Teresa, the proposed Table of Contents has been opened with an **interior appeal** to welcome the charism received as a call to live in truth, in prayer, in sisterly communion, and on mission: "*What do you think we must be like?*" (C 4, 1); And the Table of Contents develops into a **path of learning** to discern, to allow oneself to be formed and to grow, step by step, in a "*determined determination*," faithful to the following of Christ that integrates the whole person. Finally, it takes root in a **lasting communion**: forms of government and service offered by the Church are transformed into places where sisterly love and fidelity to Jesus become reality and remain.

Thus, the Teresian dynamism that runs through the Table of Contents is recognized in several signs: **it begins in interiority**, as a grace that must be welcomed; **it grows through sisterly life**, as a love that must be learned; **it is fulfilled in communion**, as a fidelity that must be lived for the Church and for the world.

### Part I: The Primacy of the Interior Encounter with Jesus Christ

This is the foundation of St. Teresa's spiritual journey and corresponds to the first part of the Table of Contents: **charismatic foundation**. The first chapter, "*I thought about what I could do for God...*" places Teresian identity as an answer to the love of God. It is the foundational experience that Teresa of Jesus recounts in *The Book of Her Life*: the awakening of the desire to "*do something for God*" (V 32, 9). The Teresian charism is not born of an abstract idea, but of the loving impact of Jesus Christ in

the heart of *La Santa*. It is an experience of interior conversion, a dynamic of transformation. This develops within the depths of a divine friendship in which prayer is the foundation of the community bond and the ecclesial mission.

The first chapter also highlights the Virgin Mary, "Mother and Sister," and the prophet Elijah, an inspiring figure of Carmel: thus, contemplation is rooted in the history of salvation. Carmel is a Marian and ecclesial space, a "*little dovecote of the Virgin*" (F 4, 5) where, like her, we carry the world within our prayer.

The following chapter, "*Divine and Human Together*" (VI M 7, 9), conveys one of the most profound aspects of the Teresian experience. In this divine-human unity, Saint Teresa contemplates the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history as a model of the spiritual life. For her, the divine does not cancel what is human, but rather transfigures it. This perspective of Teresian humanism underlies the presentation of following of Christ and of the evangelical counsels through the articulation of the theological life and human maturity.

The "*Teresian Life*" in chapter 3 reflects the dynamic identity developed in *The Way of Perfection*, gathering the three fundamental virtues of the interior journey—love, detachment and humility—which strongly link sisterly life with the life of prayer. Indeed, for Our Holy Mother, friendship is a pedagogical and charismatic instrument. God educates through sisterly relationships. Thus, Teresian dynamism roots the individual process *in* community life: we do not move toward God alone, but with the others and for the others. The latter is particularly expressed in Chapter 4, which presents "*Our Mission*."

In Chapter 5, the expression "...do that which best stirs you to love" (IV M 1, 7) reveals the movement of grace acting in the hearts of Teresa and her Sisters: it is God who awakens love, and the soul cooperates with freedom of heart. The life of solitude and silence, the enclosure, are privileged means for promoting the contemplative life. They are, in themselves, a space of interior transformation that favors the unification of our being and inserts it into the mystery of Christ, in the heart of the world. In legal language, the enclosure is a constitutive element of the nuns' own right. In the Teresian perspective, ensures the scope and continuity of the interior movement in which the soul walks inward, where the living God dwells.

"*What do you think we must be like?*" This quote, which expresses the spiritual search for vocation in *The Way of Perfection*, becomes here the **juridical principle of identity**. The life of prayer, sisterly life and mission, the essential triad of the Teresian charism, are expressed as **constitutive elements of the Order's own law**.

The canonical translation is carried out through the complementarity of grace with the norm: prayer is no longer just an experience, but a vocational commitment; sisterly communion a way of life; mission, a goal recognized by the Church. Thus, the first part of the Table of Contents establishes the spiritual source of the Teresian charism legally, guaranteeing its **institutional recognition**.

## Part II: Formation, A Spiritual Pedagogy

The second part, *Formation and Admission*, is structured entirely according to the formula of the book of *The Foundations*: "...the foundation for those who are to come." (F 4, 6). Formation is described as an ongoing process, reflecting Teresa's firm determination to always move forward: "Now we are

*beginning, and ... strive to advance always from good to better.*" (F 29, 32). Here we have the expression of an explicitly Teresian pedagogy: to begin and to begin always.

This part of the Table of Contents introduces us to a dynamic community of formation, which is understood as integral, human and spiritual development within a sisterly setting. For Saint Teresa, the community is precisely the place for spiritual growth through friendship, dialogue and accompaniment.

The last chapter of this second part, "*Fidelity to the Charism*," echoes like a legal translation of the *determined determination*: "*They must have a great and very resolute determination to persevere until reaching the end*" (C 21, 2). This expression is like the center of the Teresian dynamism: an active perseverance that increases the grace received. The Table of Contents translates this as "*remaining*," a sign of creative fidelity. The obligation to "*observe the Constitutions*" then becomes, not a restriction, but an act of faithful love, a living response to charismatic grace.

Thus, the second part, ***Formation and Admission***, is the juridical translation of the process of spiritual growth. That which in Teresa of Jesus is an inner learning of fidelity, is expressed in the Table of Contents in the conjugation of the different canonical stages of initial formation (aspirancy, postulancy, novitiate, profession) and ongoing formation. Inner freedom becomes ecclesial commitment, and mystical fidelity to the call received becomes juridical stability.

### Part III: Government, A Communion in Progress

In addressing structures of government, relationships of authority, and the management of goods, the third part of the Constitutions, "***Communion and Government***" expresses a spiritual movement of ecclesial communion. For Saint Teresa, communion is not merely an organizational outcome, but a mystical experience. It is the fruit of union with Christ that flows within and among the sisters. The Table of Contents emphasizes this by stating that internal government must be developed "in a harmonious manner, favoring the integral growth of each Sister and of the community as a whole." This principle of "harmony" is the juridical transcription of Teresa's words in *The Way of Perfection*: "...all must be friends, all must be loved, all must be held dear, all must be helped" (C 4, 7).

The chapter on the prioress, the council, and community chapters follows this logic: responsibility takes the form of service, and obedience is understood as shared discernment. For Teresa, authority is not opposed to freedom. It is a ministry of love that seeks the good of the other. Thus, Teresian dynamism expresses: hierarchy in communion of responsibilities, and government in the exercise of charity.

The opening chapter of the third part, on the "Canonical Status," quotes the words of Our Holy Mother: "...with me it was like being in glory to see the Blessed Sacrament reserved" (V 36, 6). This phrase indicates that the foundation of a monastery was only complete once the Eucharist had been celebrated, as the Eucharist is the center of sisterly life and government, and organizes the space and time of Carmel. "Communion and Government" are not two distinct realities: Eucharistic unity becomes the principle of the common life and the norm for all authority.

The following chapters, on collaborative relationships with the Federations and Associations, and governmental relationships with the Superiors of the Order and the Bishops, reflect a widening of communion: an ecclesial openness. For Our Holy Mother, the Church is the living Body of Christ,

where each vocation is integrated as service. In this spirit, the Table of Contents considers these instances of government as an act of communion with superiors that also expresses a juridical relationship.

The last chapter on the "Administration of Goods," "Your eyes on your Spouse! He will sustain you" (C 2, 1), links the economic dimension with evangelical poverty: all goods belong to God, the source and the fulfilment of the community. Poverty becomes the concrete expression of a communion that trusts God, that converts into a norm of management and a visible sign of dependence on God. Here, the Teresian echoes of chapter 2 of *The Way of Perfection* are evident.

The **Epilogue** of the Table of Contents takes up the promise of *the Way of Perfection* (cf. 4, 1): "*If, with the favor of Our Lord and the glorious Virgin Mother of God, we strive to observe our Rule and Constitutions very carefully, I hope in the Lord that our prayers will be heard.*" Saint Teresa does not separate fidelity to the Rule and the Constitutions from the life of prayer. For her, the law is not a limitation, but a space of growing in love. To be faithful is to walk: fidelity to the charism is a fidelity in progress, a communion that is constantly renewed and deepened, at the very rhythm of grace.

## From Teresian Spirit to Juridical Form

The Table of Contents reveals a profoundly ecclesial vision. Law is not foreign to charism but rather offers it a visible form in time. Each part of the Table of Contents translates an essential aspect of charismatic grace: **contemplative source** (Part I), becomes juridical identity, **spiritual pedagogy** (Part II), canonical processes, and **mystical communion** (Part III), structures of government. This movement inscribes in law the dynamic of a grace received by Teresa, a grace that never ceases to engender life. The inner breath of Teresa of Jesus is transformed into a **lasting ecclesial form**. The juridical text sustains the spiritual dynamic, framing and protecting it.

The Table of Contents is like a living mirror of this Teresian path, where the institutional form becomes **a space of grace and hope** for each community, each Sister. This reflects the Teresian dynamism of the Table of Contents of our Constitutions: **to begin from within, to move forward together, and to go always from good to better.**