

Statutes



Sheila Moon in *A Magic Dwells* says, “One way or another, a person, (an Association) needs to celebrate their Becoming. What deep need there is for new ways to mark life’s profound moments.” **September 8, 1993**, the date our Statutes were accepted was such a peak moment in a cycle for CCA.

In ten minutes I’m going to tell you a long, long story with a Prelude, Our Beginnings, the Rocky Road to Union in between, some Key Players, and the Happy Ending.

PRELUDE: In 1950 Sponsa Christi was promulgated. One of the strongest points was Government in the section on Federation for Contemplative Nuns. In 1955, Father Albert Burke called a General Assembly of all Carmelites in the Province. 53 sisters representing 27 Carmels came. They started talking about federation and STATUTES, which already had been discussed at the Boston and Indianapolis Regional Meetings in 1953 and 1954. By the end of the meeting, there was unanimous acceptance of Federation, but Fr. Albert said to study the material and wait until their finished STATUTES came from France to see what the Holy See had approved. (Fr. Marie Eugene had been working with the nuns there.) This was not “just waiting” but a road block for 12 years! Fr. Anastatus was in Office for 12 years and did not approve of Federation. We sat tight!

After the Council, 1962-65, Father Thomas Kilduff, Definitor, began visiting the nuns to encourage renewal. This time the desire came from the nuns, not because we needed government but a lot of things were wrong. The Mid-evil lifestyle we were living needed updating. We wanted consultation, discernment, working together as to how we could renew our lives. We wanted to get together so the Holy Spirit could speak to the whole group. This was a positive experience. Two thirds of the nuns were open to having a federation, but one third was not and though very well intended, wrote to Rome. They feared the destruction of Carmel.

OUR BEGINNINGS: CCA began at the 1970 Meeting at Marriotsville, MD. We got together, discussed *who* we were, *what* we wanted, and then set up STATUTES in 1976. (Use example of Christine’s image of a dress) You do not cut out a pattern, choose a color or style without knowing the woman for whom you are making the dress. So, too, our statutes took 6 years to write coming out of our lived experience, rather than trying to “fit into” something that was pre-designed for us. We were a diverse group, but united in essentials. As Ilia Delio said, “The greater the diversity, the greater the unity.” We petitioned Fr. Finian for a National Union (meanwhile other associations were coming into being). We wanted to witness to the unity of the Order. Yes, we respect differences, but do we all have to be different in the same way?

ROCKY ROAD TO UNION: This began 13 years of letter writing to Rome. Pat Scanlon wrote to Archbishop Mayer: "These STATUTES are not without life. They have grown out of our experience of working together for the last seven years." We wrote to Father Basil Heiser (with whom Christine, Pat and Marian met in St. Louis along with Archbishop Mayer), to Jean Jadot, Apostolic Delegate, to Fr. Finian, whom Joan Chittister tried to visit on our behalf when in Rome, to Archbishop Borders, and Gerald Sheahan, SJ, interceding on our behalf, even Cardinal Pironia, newly appointed who had a special interest in contemplatives.

KEY PLAYERS: Some key persons helping us from the legalistic angle were Columkillie Reagan and Margaret Mary Modde, canon lawyers, giving us clues as to what we should include in the wording of the STATUTES, as well as choosing a patron, title, and regular meeting times. All of the member CCA communities responded quickly in choosing these.

In 1978, the only clear reason coming back for hesitation to approve the Association came from Augustine Mayer, Secretary, saying "some monasteries do not observe the prescribed norms for enclosure." Benedict Bishop, Provincial answered this allegation by writing to him: "I'm well acquainted with 8 of the 14 communities and these communities are just as convinced as you are of the value of enclosure for the maintenance of the Teresian vocation."

As St. Catherine of Sienna said, "Nothing great was ever done without much enduring." Christine, Marian, Pat Scanlon, and Carol Sachse persevered in their efforts. Msgr. Gallante was also an encourager during this time. The sisters felt an urgency not just for approval, (in fact, some asked "why are we wasting our energy?") but more importantly so that we could work on an equal footing with the other Carmels toward unity of the Order. We were second class citizens. We wrote to the other associations and received no response.

Fr. Camilo was our final savior, though he, too was given the run-around. On September 8, 1993 when Marian, then Chairperson, and Christine were in Ireland the news came that the Statutes were finally approved! Right before the 1993 Meeting in St. Louis, Sister Teresa Benedicta said "how happy Sister Emmanuel (Queen of Carmel Association) and I (St. Teresa's Association) would be if you were approved.

As Christine said at a Peterborough Seminar, "This Rocky Road to Unity in Carmel parallels our efforts toward Christian Unity in the Church. It has become so much more valuable because we had to practice patience, Christian virtue, love, understanding and humility to get there. The Divine Plan is much greater than we are and could ever imagine."

Look what is happening today among our three US associations as well as international associations who are all represented here!! In fact, we have representatives from three continents and four countries. The result of having our STATUTES approved has blossomed and is blossoming.

I'd like to share an excerpt from the Introduction to our Statutes: "Recognizing a sound pluralism within the one Teresian charism, we offer to share our unity with all our sisters, and thus be in the Order, the Church and the world a corporate witness of love, reconciliation and unity in Christ." Our long struggle and wait was worth the pain. We will mark September 8, 1993 as a profound moment in our CCA history always.

Sr. Annamae Dannes