

# **Challenges facing the Carmelite Third Order as we begin the Third Millennium**

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Please join me in prayer to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, asking her to speak to us through each other as we discuss the challenges facing the Carmelite Third Order in the months and years ahead.

O beautiful Flower of Carmel, most fruitful vine,  
splendor of heaven, holy and singular,  
who brought forth the Son of God,  
still ever remaining a pure Virgin,  
assist us in our necessities.  
O Star of the Sea, help and protect us!  
Show us that you are our Mother.  
Our Lady of Mount Carmel ... Pray for us.

## **EVOLUTION AND ADAPTATION**

Since our beginning in 1452, two words seem to have characterized the history of the Carmelite Third Order: evolution and adaptation. This is to say, not surprisingly, that we have been in a continuous state of change. Nonetheless, we can be justly proud and edified by how our predecessors discovered the meaning of Carmelite Spirituality, and were able to adapt this way of life to their particular time and place. Many of them even wrote about their experiences - some in quite humble and simple terms; others in rather eloquent and scholarly ways. Fr. Joachim Smet's 4-volume *History of the Carmelites*, and numerous publications authored and edited by Fr. Redemptus Valabek, chronicle the stories of several of these - our brother and sister Third Order Carmelites.

Interestingly, most of the challenges they experienced are, in essence, quite similar to those we face today!

## **OUR CURRENT SITUATION**

By definition, the Carmelite Third Order includes our many active sister congregations, the Donum Dei Missionary Workers, diocesan priests who have affiliated themselves with the Order, and of course the thousands of Lay Carmelites who are grouped together in local chapters - or communities, around the world. The "laity" in Carmel includes not only the "Lay Carmelites" and the Donum Dei Missionary Workers, but also the Leaven Secular Institute in England, several other secular institutes, the Devotees of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a growing number of youth groups and, the various Confraternities of the Brown Scapular.

As a matter of clarification, my use of the term "Lay Carmelite" within the context of this talk, is limited to those Third Order lay persons who have completed a defined formation program, made a profession of promises or vows, and follow the

Rule of life for Lay Carmelites and whatever local statutes that may have been published for their region or group.

This begs the need for a good Carmelite lexicon - a need that has surfaced at every regional and international Carmelite gathering I have ever attended.

The profile of the Third Order "Secular" of Carmel is also changing. In many places there is an increase in the number of men; and the age level of our members is also decreasing in several locales. The Third Order can be characterized as a widely diverse group represented by numerous cultures - which are not only a treasure and blessing for our Order, but a challenge as well. However, with hearts of charity, there can be great unity in our diversity - especially if we cultivate even more an attitude of we, not us versus them. In other words, our diversities, our heritages and the cultures that have sprung forth from them must be shared in harmony if our collective potential is ever to be anywhere near fully realized.

## **CHALLENGES**

Since we are limited in time, I have decided to offer what has emerged in my preparation for this talk as six challenge "areas." These challenge areas reflect the combined concerns from not only Lay Carmelites, but several O. Carm. and O.C.D. friars, nuns and active sisters, as well as O.C.D. Secular Carmelites from around the world who have offered me their suggestions. I am indebted to each of them for their assistance.

It will not be my objective to suggest simple solutions; rather, it will be to offer a few background thoughts in order to establish the legitimacy of each challenge area, and then to suggest some initial ideas to help begin our thinking process during the workshop sessions - where we will have the opportunity to tap into the collective expertise and wisdom of this assembly. As inspired by the Holy Spirit and with trust in the intercession of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, we will then, hopefully, identify initiatives that will be accepted by our worldwide leadership, and embraced and refined within the context of continuing dialog not only on the international level, but also at our regional and local group levels back home.

If I have misunderstood Our Lady regarding these challenges, my prayer now is that what She really wants to be the focus of our attention will become clear during our breakout sessions. Our task will then be to respond accordingly.

### **1. The first challenge area I would like to offer is that we never forget our Carmelite heritage and charism as we pursue "active" apostolates.**

It seems to me that as we begin this new millennium, we must become even more vigilant, as our tradition continues to evolve, and that we do not attempt to justify our direction and activity on misguided notions, ideas or philosophies not in concert with the Magisterium, or perhaps an unfounded personal agenda of what Carmelites are or are not supposed to be. Otherwise, we may find ourselves in situations similar to those that led to the great divisions within the Order in centuries past!

One of the wonderful treasures of Carmel is that there is wide latitude in the expression of our spirituality. But let us never lose sight of our identity and

special mission in the world as Carmelites! We are not Franciscans, Dominicans, Benedictines, or one of the many other fine religious Orders in the Church today - although I would tend to agree with those who suggest that we Carmelites may well embody the best of all those great traditions!

Ours is a call and vocation to prayer, community and service - each interacting in a beautiful balance that in many ways is unique to Carmel. As expressed so well by Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, ours is a special invitation to live a life of intimate contemplation in the presence of God within a spirituality proven in the lives of the many great Saints of our Order. There are those who may argue that service or an outward apostolate has greater weight in this equation nowadays - even to the point where time for daily meditation has become secondary or is often omitted.

Recalling that our heritage, our tradition, and our spirituality is based on the Rule of St. Albert should also never be far from mind. This prompts me to introduce a notion that has been articulated by a well-respected O.C.D. friar, who is deeply involved with the "Secular" Carmelites. He said: "the entire family of Carmel is moving towards referring to only one document as 'RULE', that of St. Albert. It is a notion that is definitely taking hold, and this will further unify the family and show how all of us take our inspiration from the one original document that established the Carmelite way of life." He went on to say: "Yet few if any Carmelites today actually follow the Rule of St. Albert literally. Friars and nuns alike the world over follow 'constitutions' more closely, but those constitutions are completely in sync with The Rule of St. Albert." "Nonetheless," he said, "for Lay and Secular Carmelites, this is a relatively new orientation that will take some time getting used to." Interestingly, this notion will be the topic of a special workshop during a conference on the Rule of St. Albert - A Mystical Way, that is being sponsored by the North American Carmelite Institute. It is to be held in San Antonio, Texas, in July of this year, and will not only be attended by our Fr. Joseph Chalmers, but also by Fr. Camilo Maccise, Prior General of the Discalced Carmelites.

Therefore, the suggestion from a growing number of individuals in our family - including many involved with the O.C.D. Secular Carmelites, is that further discussion take place about how to incorporate the Rule of St. Albert as the basic document of life for Third Order Carmelites. To that end, one of the instructions in the formation program of the North American provinces is now entitled: The Rule of St. Albert as Related to Lay Carmelites.

**2. The second challenge area that I would like to offer for your consideration is more aggressive development of our relationships with the other members of the Carmelite family in the months and years ahead.**

During these past few years, our Carmelite saints in heaven must truly be rejoicing at how the notion of "family" has been sweeping through nearly every facet of both of our Carmelite observances! Our Father Generals are meeting together and occasionally publishing common communiqués, the Curias of both traditions meet together on occasion as well, and there are Carmelite Institutes emerging that are benefiting from the participation of not only friars, nuns and active sisters, but Third Order Carmelites as well. In North America, a committee was formed 1994, (and met annually until this past year), which was comprised of the five Provincial Delegates to the Lay and Secular Carmelites from both our

O.Carm. provinces as well as the three O.C.D.S. jurisdictions. It also included one Lay and Secular Carmelite from each province and jurisdiction, and was called the TOC/OCDS Joint Committee. Enormous strides were made toward resolving misunderstandings between our two traditions, and has definitely brought us much closer together as brothers and sister Carmelites.

There have also been other noteworthy efforts toward including Third Order members in the mainstream business of the Order. For example, several of us were invited to speak and take part in the Council of Provinces in Nantes, France, in 1994; and now we have the International Commission for the Carmelite Laity, which includes several Third Order members. But much more can be done.

It is frequently observed that perhaps one of the greatest challenges the friars have with the Lay Carmelites is to appreciate the enormous talent base that exists within our membership and to discover effective ways to include these individuals in the work of the Order. Gaining better acceptance from more of the friars can be expected to continue as a challenge in several provinces. To some degree, this situation also extends to our active sisters and nuns, as well as to our O.C.D. and O.C.D.S. brothers and sisters.

We speak of the "family of Carmel", but for the most part, the Order remains quite patriarchal in its decision-making where the Third Order is concerned. There is no question that the friars must provide administrative and spiritual leadership at all levels. However, with the opportunities that we have to bring Carmel to thousands more souls who want our treasures, we need to find ways to work together much more as a team - from leadership roles to making major decisions where the Third Order is concerned, and perhaps for other ministries in which the Order is involved as well.

Several O.Carm. and O.C.D. friars have shared with me that "any significant unification between our traditions - if only in spirit, would probably find itself rooted in joint ventures at the grass roots level between the Lay and Secular Carmelites." We must emphasize our similarities and not our differences. For example, in North America, we have learned these past six years through the "Joint Committee" that differences between our T.O.C. and O.C.D.S. formation programs have narrowed to the point where they are actually quite similar. We have begun to share our formation materials, and there have even been a few regional events organized and presented in cooperation with each other - all with good success. This proves that the potential to do much more together is enormous - especially if we emphasize our similarities and not our differences. As one highly respected OCD Prioress recently shared with me: "unity makes strength ... and our Secular members need the Lay Carmelites as I believe the Lay Carmelites need their O.C.D.S. brothers and sisters." She exclaimed: "We are all in this together!"

It seems to me that we may be in a position today perhaps more than any other time in the past 400 years to seize an incredible opportunity to take giant steps toward unity in not only spirit between our Third Order groups, but actually working side by side at every level as family members. Together, we will be able to multiply our resources and become far better postured to offer our charism to thousands more in a world starving for closer intimacy with the Lord.

I cannot begin to imagine the great joy and honour this would bring to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and to our Lord, as well as to all of our Carmelite saints already home in heaven!

How can we do this? Let us hope that many tangible ideas will come forth from our workshop sessions today, and as we continue to discuss this challenge back home.

In a lecture presented in 1935 by Bl. Titus Brandsma, reference was made to a beautiful analogy offered by Ven. Bro. John of St. Samson which we may now more than any time in the past be positioned to see blossom in a magnificent way.

Bl. Titus said: "When we listen to John of St. Samson in the school of Carmel and discover the spirit of the second reformation, we are filled with pleasure. Then we venture to cross the abyss which seems to widen and does widen, according to some, between the two observances. Then we hear that on either side of the chasm the wood has its charms, that birds sing on both sides and their songs speak to us of God. We see trees bend towards each other across the chasm and their branches intermingle. From above there is no abyss, only a terrestrial pedestrian halts a moment before the division. The higher he mounts, the narrower the chasm appears to his sight. And when his wings are grown, then he springs from branch to branch till he is across the chasm and for him it is one and the same lovely wood, in which the birds sing one and the same hymn in honour of God."

**3. The third, and a very key challenge area, is for us to frequently review and implement revisions in our formation programs, as necessary - including the development of support material, that will insure the vitality and continual renewal of the Third Order and its members.**

Few of us would disagree that adequate and proper formation is one of the most crucial elements in the life of a Third Order Carmelite, if he or she is to achieve any significant measure of spiritual growth, and also if the community within which one is attached is to flourish. This notion is summarized in the introductory statement of a handbook entitled *The Process of Formation for Lay Carmelites*, which is being used in both North American provinces. It states: "Nearly every difficulty or problem in a Lay Carmelite community, or with an individual Lay Carmelite, insofar as his or her Carmelite vocation is concerned, can be traced to inadequate formation."

Our current Lay Carmelite Rule offers general guidance about formation in Articles 50, 56 and 57.

It seems to me that the question is how are our various provinces and groups interpreting what these articles are saying, and how is formation actually being presented not only to those preparing for profession, but also to those in Ongoing Formation. As one friar recently said to me: "the time is now for us to get down to the business of educating our "Carmelite" hearts through our minds in a profound way! Let us not forget that Carmel is also a 'School of Prayer'."

In the mid 80s, the two North American Provinces began what has become a complete change in our approach to formation and how it is presented. The formation timeline has evolved from three months to a minimum of six months

prior to Reception, and from 12 months to a minimum of 24 months prior to one's Profession of Promises. Additionally, and for several reasons, instead of referring to the "postulancy" or to the "novitiate," we now use the terms "Phase I" and "Phase II" for these periods of formation. A "Formation Guide" has also been prepared for each of these phases. The Phase I Guide has six instructions that address specific topics that lead the aspirant to a good understanding of the basics of what Carmel is all about prior to Reception; the Phase II Guide offers 24 instructions that provide a solid awareness of what the traditions and spirituality of Carmel are, what the prayer life of Carmel entails, an introduction to our Carmelite Saints, Blesseds and "notables", and an introductory orientation about commitment to the way of life of a Lay Carmelite - all before one makes his or her initial profession. A "Formation Guide" has also been prepared for Phase III, or "Ongoing Formation," that encourages each member to deepen their vocation through continued adult learning programs, and/or personal or group study and research. It also encourages our professed Lay Carmelites to record their findings and present them at future group meetings.

Additionally, as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002, initial Profession will be for Temporary Promises followed by an additional three years before one will be permitted to profess Final Promises. Why? Because experience has shown that more than a few of our members stop coming regularly to community meetings, or may not be taking part in any active way in their "ongoing formation," once they have made their Profession of Promises. It is as if "profession equals graduation!" Vows will not be permitted until a minimum of three years after Final Promises.

It is accurate to conclude that in our North American provinces, we will then have completed what has become a total redefinition of the formation program for Lay Carmelites.

Although I know few specifics about the formation programs in other regions, it would seem that we could all reap enormous benefit from knowing how formation is being approached in other provinces and commissariates and even within Third Order groups that may not be officially tied to a particular province or commissariate.

To take this a step further, I wonder how many of us are aware of the latest approaches to the formation process of our friars, nuns, active sister groups and others affiliated with the Order? I have no doubt that we could all benefit tremendously by having access to this knowledge and the assistance it may offer as we review and renew our Third Order formation programs throughout the world.

My perception is that except for what has been in the Rule for Lay Carmelites, we may also have little consistency in what is presented in our formation programs or how it is presented. Some may think this is fine and that autonomy is to be respected - or even encouraged. However, without agreement on at least minimal guidelines in our approach to formation, we run the risk of receiving and professing candidates who do not know or appreciate the real meaning of Carmel, how to get the most from living the Carmelite way of life, losing vocations - or perhaps even worse, producing tepid members.

Our rapid growth makes it clear that if we are not prepared with a solid formation program and good resource material, we will commit a grave disservice to the

Order and to those individuals who become members of our Third Order family. If we are to properly respond to those who Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and the Holy Spirit bring to us, we must be prepared to offer a well-founded and consistent formation program.

Allow me to suggest that formation becomes a major area of interest for the International Commission. Perhaps the Commission can identify a working group to ascertain how formation is currently being accomplished throughout the Third Order - especially among our Lay Carmelites, and then make recommendations that will lead to revised and more comprehensive formation standards.

On-site distance learning courses - especially for formation leaders, should also be explored, although I fully appreciate the huge administrative task and financial demands that will be required if such an effort is to be a success.

Collaborating with our O.C.D.S. counterparts about formation must also be a fundamental part of working through this challenge area.

**4. The fourth challenge area is one that will always be with us. It is to review, modify, or create structures at all levels that will more effectively serve the needs of the Third Order and the entire Carmelite family.**

Our current situation as far as structures is concerned is fairly well known. The Lay Carmelite Rule reminds us that we are an integral part of the Carmelite family and that we are guided by the superiors of the First Order and their delegates. Furthermore, that "the Prior General is the spiritual father, head and the bond of unity for the entire Carmelite family, and that it is his duty to look after the spiritual good of the Third Order, and to sustain and further its growth through his Delegate General." It goes on to stipulate that "each community is directed by a Council" as patterned after the friars and nuns. Article 46 notes that "Councils at international, national and regional levels are helpful for the mutual collaboration and unity [among] the various Groups."

How well these structures are serving the needs of the Third Order from the Curia down through all levels of the Order to our local communities should always be in review. These structures are necessary but not to the point where we should become subservient to structure vis-à-vis our structures serving us.

A General Secretariat dedicated to the laity in Carmel, including all elements of the Third Order, is much needed. Such an office has already been established within the Discalced Order. I fully appreciate the shortage of friars, as well as the funding that would be required; but let us pray this idea will not be rejected without serious deliberation based on the tremendous need and the potential this office can have for the entire Order. In other words, and among other functions, this office would have as a major purpose to bridge and mesh the efforts of the Third Order with those of the friars, nuns and active sisters as well as with the Discalced Carmelite Secular Order.

Another idea is to encourage the establishment of commissions in adjacent regions dedicated to the support of Third Order matters. As an example, an Inter-Provincial Commission for the Lay Carmelites has been functioning for over 10 years in North America; and in Australia, a Carmelite Family Commission was appointed in 1993, to explore ways in which lay people - who want to be more

closely associated with the Order, but not necessarily as Lay Carmelites, may be incorporated.

As was already alluded to in this talk, we should also explore ways of working more closely with the nuns and active sisters of both observances, as well as to examine ways toward merging with our O.C.D.S. brothers and sisters for selected local, regional and national events - such as days of recollection, retreats, regional seminars and workshops, and even national convocations from time to time.

**5. The fifth, and certainly a very significant challenge area as we face this new millennium is to understand and respond to our role as Carmelites in the "new evangelization" initiatives of the universal Church - which are actually not new at all.**

Pope Paul VI reminded us in his Apostolic Exhortation - "Evangelii Nuntiandi", that "Jesus Himself, the Good News of God, was the very first and the greatest evangelizer."

The Holy Father went on to say: "For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new. ... The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and [environment] which are theirs."

I would strongly recommend that all Third Order Carmelites read this entire Exhortation, as well as a number of similar documents on this subject written by our present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II.

Most Third Order Carmelites are already involved in apostolates and ministries that certainly demonstrate their response to evangelization. This clearly begins with living the life of a good Catholic Christian within one's immediate family - witnessing to their faith by example, open discussion, and prayer. The very purpose and life of our Donum Dei Carmelites is another perfect example of a Carmelite response to evangelization. A Lay Carmelite in San Diego, California, has spoken about the fact that Lay Carmelites in her area are involved in over 90 different ministries! The example that Lay Carmelites present to those in their workplace and in social circles - without ever mentioning verbally that they are Lay Carmelites, is what might be called "quiet evangelization" in a most virtuous and profound manner.

The challenge that we face is to become even more conscious of what evangelization really means not only for a Catholic Christian, but especially for us Third Order Carmelites. This is particularly relevant as we face the uncertain months and years ahead in the volatile world within which we live. We need to be prepared to assist the Church as the multitudes come into the fold - especially those seeking the kind of spirituality offered by Carmel.

It seems to me that there are a number of minimal things each of us must strive to do in preparing ourselves for this challenge. For example, we can all become better grounded in at least basic apologetics. We need to know our Catholic faith and be able to succinctly express its fundamental truths. We also need to know well our Carmelite tradition and its spirituality and to learn how to discuss this great treasure simply and clearly to those who are anxious to know about them.

We also need to continually encourage ourselves, as the opportunities present themselves, to be "quiet witnesses" to our faith and to our Carmelite way of life. Again, from Pope Paul VI's Exhortation: "For the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbour with limitless zeal. As we said recently to a group of lay people, 'Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses'."

Another means of evangelization that must not be neglected, and a ministry the majority of our Third Order members can do, is that of catechetical instruction. Once more from Pope Paul VI: "The intelligence, especially that of children and young people, needs to be learned through systematic religious instruction of the fundamental teachings, ... the truth which God has wished to convey to us, and which the Church has sought to express in an ever richer fashion, during the course of her long history."

To this end, I have begun discussion with several Lay Carmelites about a movement that might be called: "Carmel's Kids." This would be an opportunity for we Third Order Carmelites worldwide to reach out, for example, to three specific age groups of children: 8-10, 11-13, and 14-16 - different, of course, where the country and culture would dictate otherwise. These "kids" would gather together in small groups where a regimen of prayer and devotion based on the essence of Carmelite spirituality is instilled and promoted. Interactive discussion and other activities tailored to each of these age groups would also be a major part of the program. This is not intended to replace or to be competitive with other catechetical programs in our parishes, but to compliment them. I have prepared a brief handout that describes this proposal in a bit more detail. My hope is that it will receive at least initial feasibility consideration during our workshop sessions as well as later by our International Commission - assuming that its work will continue in some way.

Finally, none of us can ignore in good conscience the horrible sin of abortion that has enveloped our entire world! It would seem that in some way, becoming involved in pro-life matters must be an integral part of the life of every Third Order Carmelite!

**6. The sixth and final challenge area I would like to offer is that we continue to appreciate even more the value of using effective communication tools - including the use of modern telecommunication technologies.**

As it was for the first challenge area presented in this talk, this final challenge must permeate all the others if we hope to achieve any significant means of success as we work through each of them.

From the earliest history of humankind, verbal, non-verbal, sign language and other signalling methods have evolved gradually to the use of modern day telecommunication technologies - the majority of which have become available in most of the world. Now we even have the internet, e-mail and cell phones. We are not only in the age of information retrieval, but what might be referred to as the age of "connectivity" - no matter where one might find him or herself at any particular time. We can even identify where we are physically - down to a small spot less than two feet square anywhere on this planet - with the use of the Global Positioning Satellite System!

I would like to congratulate those who have brought us the excellent communications that are now available to our entire Carmelite family - from the Third Order periodical, *Carmel In The World*, to CITOC (the Order's Information & Communication Centre) and the fine newsletters being produced by many provinces, to all the noteworthy newsletters that are being produced by Third Order offices, and many local communities. There are also a growing number of Carmelite web sites on the internet, and more and more individual Carmelites now have their own e-mail address. One friar recently stated that the internet has become a virtual "university of Carmelitana" ... and I never cease to be amazed how cell phones have become commonplace even in many of the cloisters of our nuns!

Nonetheless, it is probably accurate to surmise that relatively few Third Order Carmelites are aware of the prevalence of these resources, or perhaps how to use them effectively - or they may simply not be interested because they are quite satisfied to remain in the relatively closed cocoon of their local community.

Referring once again to Pope Paul VI's Exhortation, "Our century is characterized by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation, catechesis or the further deepening of faith cannot do without these means, as we have already emphasized."

He goes on to say: "When they are put at the service of the Gospel, they are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims 'from the housetops' the message of which she is the depository. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes."

In other words, a more effective use of the communication tools currently available, as well as those yet to be conceived, will be the vehicles for us to bring our message to the world by helping to facilitate our work with all of the other challenges that have been discussed during this talk. To that end, I should like to propose that a "Communication Coordinator" function be defined and established within our provincial or Third Order congregation offices, and even within our local groups - perhaps modelled after the CITOC office in the Curia. Some of their responsibilities may include:

- developing improved methods to share information between our Third Order offices,

- becoming the focal point for publicity,
- assisting in the promotion of vocations to our friars, nuns and active sister congregations,
- being the interface with the friars, as well as the O.C.D. and O.C.D.S. members of our Carmelite family,
- encouraging and supporting the incorporation of the use of fax, e-mail, web sites, teleconferencing, improved newsletter preparation and distribution, and
- helping to develop a lexicon so that we all have the same understanding of terms such as: Lay Carmelite, Secular Carmelite, the Laity in Carmel, etc. To aid this function a comprehensive International Directory that can be accurately maintained and distributed in a timely manner is essential. This can only become a reality when we have a central point of contact for relaying updates.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I have been reminded that there is yet another "two-part" challenge, that many of you may also have been thinking about during this presentation - and for which there is no simple solution. It is that the fact that the first obligation of the majority of Third Order members is to their immediate family; and tied to this, is the fact that the availability of friars to assist us in many regions of the world is seriously limited. In other words, the question is: "how do we become more self-sufficient with the use of our own Third Order members as we grow and posture ourselves to embrace the multitudes who, knowingly and unknowingly, are and will be, seeking the treasures of Carmel in this new millennium?"

I certainly do not have all the answers, but I do know that we can accomplish all of this - and MORE, if we place our hands in those of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and allow Her to use us with total abandon and confident love! Let us get out of our "comfort zones" and accept the risks that will be necessary if we are to respond fully to Our Lady's call and invitation to expose Carmel to the world.

Thank you for listening, for deliberating on these challenge areas, and for defining initiatives both during and after our breakout sessions that, with the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit and Our Lady of Mount Carmel, we will be well equipped to embrace the challenges that face our Carmelite Third Order in the new millennium with confidence and vigour.