

DISCALCED CARMELITE GENERAL HOUSE
Corso d'Italia, 38
00198 Rome – Italy

LETTER FROM THE DEFINITORY (6)

+ Rome, September 14, 2010

Very dear brothers and sisters in Carmel:

PEACE

On beginning this sixth meeting of the General Definitory, we remembered our brother Anthony Pinheiro, who died unexpectedly when we were finishing the last meeting. Just before beginning the meeting, we offered the community Mass of the Holy Spirit for his eternal rest. His memory was very much present to us during these days. During this Mass in the General House, Fr General said to us: Anthony always had a word to say to us in the homily when he presided at the Mass. Now, with his life and his death, he gives us the last word, a witness to radical commitment to obedience, love and willingness to fulfil God's wishes and those of his superiors. He left everything to come to Rome and here he left aside his life. May he rest in peace.

Our meeting, which began of 10th September, was used by Fr General and the Definitors to share what they had done during the Summer. In these months there was time for Fr General to improve his Spanish in Spain and for Fr Albert to go to Ireland to improve his English. There also remained some time to have a little rest.

We also used this time to carry out some duties. For example, Fr Augustine, who was present at the Funeral of Fr Anthony in India, finished visiting all the Provinces and other areas of jurisdiction, as well as all the monasteries in India. Fr Robert made a visit to Lebanon and Fr Marcos visited the Carribean, Mexico, the Latin American presences in Europe and Egypt. Fr Peter visited the friars and nuns in Taiwan-Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia. This also included a visit to the Discalced Carmelite nuns in East Timor. Fr Paul was in Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya and Fr John, after representing Fr General and the Definitory at the funeral of Fr Finian, was in Malta, Ireland, England and Scotland. In his turn, Fr Emilio told us about the work of the commission for the Teresian centenary and the congress celebrated in CITEs at the end of August on the Book of her Life.

After this first exchange, we had to face the first great issue of the Definitory: that of reorganizing the Latin American jurisdictions, which we had been studying over a long period. During the visits made by Fr Marcos, he was able to acquaint himself with the opinions of the religious of these regions and also of the Spanish Provincials who had some juridical responsibility in the areas concerned. Finally, we took the following decisions: to create, beginning with the three Vicariates already existing, the Commissariats of the Carribean, Chile and Peru; to unite into one Vicariate, dependent on the Burgos Province, our presences in Bolivia, Paraguay and Uruguay, in the hope that they could become a Commissariat in the future; to transfer our presences in Ecuador, as a Vicariate, to the Province of Colombia; to encourage the Central American Province and the General Delegation of Venezuela to work out an agreement of collaboration.

Amongst this process of growth and spread of the Order, so evident in what is happening in the Americas, this Definitory took the agreeable decision to erect a new Province, that of Delhi in India, which until now had been a Commissariat.

We also spoke about our foundations in Europe and their problems, mainly of the ageing of the religious and the lack of vocations. We tried to make suggestions to the various circumscriptions to help them find solutions. Concerning this point, Fr Emilio will meet shortly with some of the Italian Provincials and he will be joined by Frs Albert and Robert to be present with the European Provincials at the meeting of their Conference, which will take place at the end of October.

At the meeting of the young European Carmelites, which took place from the end of August to the beginning of September, the idea arose of preparing a “school” or a “house of evangelization” for Europe, like the traditional “Mission Seminaries”, where Discalced Carmelites, coming from other areas to help the Order in this continent, could prepare themselves adequately for this work. This house could also be of use for the European religious to follow updating courses on their mission in Europe. In this Definitory we also took the first steps which we hope will mature and make this idea more viable. We are open to any collaboration in planning this project.

As in the last meeting, we continued to discuss our Deserts. For example, in Europe the Deserts suffer more or less the general problems and receive much criticism. We believe that this way of life, protected by our Constitutions and which is greatly appreciated by us, must be taken care of and protected. By talking with the Major Superiors, we will try to work out viable and valid proposals to support life in our Deserts.

With regards to the economy, the situation at the moment is more stable, in great part thanks to the help and loans we have recently received. On the other hand, we have begun to work on the possibility of organizing meetings of the Provincial Bursars with the Bursar General, in particular geographical areas which are deemed opportune.

With regards to our own life as a community, we discussed the life of those living in the General House, who make up the community. Together with our brothers who help us and offer an invaluable service, we want to live our life of prayer and community as Teresian Carmelites which goes beyond just our work. To do so we concentrated on the positive elements of our life in order to strengthen them and we also took note of what is negative, in order to overcome it. As has happened in recent sexenniums, the Vicar General will make a pastoral visit of the General House community this year, from 18th to 25th November.

The Piacenza monastery of Discalced Carmelite Nuns had the kindness of sending us a letter discussing our reflections in the last letter. This was something very pleasing to us, stimulating our work.

In revealing ourselves in a new way to today’s world, making our presence evident, we could feel dizzy on seeing the extent of what is happening at the moment, so complex and diverse, that so abundantly weighs in upon us. Really, it is difficult to work out those things which allow us to make our charism visible. Without doubt, each community must find the just means, through knowledge of their own circumstances and that of the world surrounding them.

However, it is also certain that there are essential elements that are common to us all and which permit us to give form to our charism in our circumstances. As Fr General said to our European students at their meeting in Malta: “We are not talking about changing our Teresian charism, just as we are not talking about changing the Gospel. We are talking about living it in a way that is most suitable for the time. For the charism has not changed, but the world has changed, the men and women called to live this charism or receive its witness have

changed. To deny the need of permanent renewal is really equivalent to denying the unquestionable history of the Church, which has always adapted to the world that was contemporary to it.

In this duty of *living our charism in a way more adequate to our times*, the processes of community discernment are decisive and important. But, before all, a fundamental element stands out: that of personal commitment. Each one of us must make a quasi-moral choice to make the Carmelite religious life visible in our times.

The community option does not allow us to escape our personal option. The community is made up of the total of all the individual options, which have decided to chose a poor life, not important, built upon fraternity in a world that is often divided, built upon prayer and silence in a world full of noise, built upon unselfish service in a world obsessed with possessions and power, built upon nourishing wisdom in a world that is often banal and empty.

Above all, our vocation is not a process of self-realization, rather it is a journey of commitment to others, of overcoming ourselves in order to give ourselves to others through prayer, community life and apostolic work (hidden in contemplation or visible in work), in the effort to establish God's Kingdom in a way that often seems paradoxical or not understandable, yet strongly part of the person of Jesus, who lived absolutely beyond his own personal needs. It means trying to be the people our Holy Mother Teresa *wanted us to be*.

To go out of ourselves means, above all, to hand over our personal choices and our desires for personal development so that they contribute to the good of the Order which we love, for the good of our community which is our family, for the good of our monasteries and convents, which are our houses. We reach this only through a personal choice, founded on the conviction that what we are doing is for the love of God and others, that what we are seeking is to make ourselves servants, following Christ's example.

With every best wish, your brothers:

Fr Saverio Cannistrà, General

Fr Emilio J. Martínez

Fr Albert Wach

Fr Augustine Mulloor

Fr Robert Paul

Fr Marcos Juchem

Fr Peter Chung

Fr George Tambala

Fr John Grennan