



CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI  
Corso d'Italia, 38  
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## DEFINITORY LETTER (15)

26<sup>th</sup> December 2012

Very Dear brothers and sisters in Carmel:

PEACE

In the days prior to Christmas, our Father General, Saverio Cannistrà, presided over a meeting in Rome of the General Definitory. We wish to begin this letter by expressing our desire that these days will be for the whole family of Carmel, days of peace and love in which, following the example of our Holy Parents, we will pause in particular to adore and contemplate with delight the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Word. May Mary and Joseph teach us how to welcome into our lives Jesus, the God made man for our salvation.

In the months since our last letter, the General as well as the Definitors have continued our visits to the different areas of jurisdiction of the Order. We have received from our brothers and sisters a sincere and fraternal welcome and a readiness to dialogue which truly pleases us and which makes our task ever so much easier. In our visits we can testify to the love with which you commit your lives to the service of the Order and the Church, by taking part in the duty of evangelization in its various forms, with apostolic and contemplative enthusiasm.

Some circumscriptions show great vitality, through the youth of their members and an abundance of vocations. Our brothers and sisters of the Secular Order are also strong and enthusiastic in many areas of the world. Other areas, even though ageing and with personnel problems caused by the scarcity of vocations, show also signs of life and we find in them friars, nuns and secular members, just like the other members of the Teresian family, who make the effort to share our charism and to proclaim Jesus Christ with what they are and have, despite the difficulties.

We thank God for all of you.

As a fruit of our dialogue during this meeting, we wish to recommend to everyone not to neglect the interior work for your own persons, the care of yourselves. Whether we are full of energy and see ourselves capable of doing everything and want to take care of every need that arises, or whether, when our energies become limited, we start multiplying the things we do in order to be as committed as we were when we were younger, we run the risk of neglecting our ongoing formation, which must never be confused with just assimilation and

keeping up to date intellectually and pastorally (cf. Norms 130), but must include, above all, attention to the spiritual life. Number 126 of the Constitutions expresses this very well: “All our religious should strive to combine an intense spiritual life with an unflagging application to sacred and profane studies. They will thus be unceasingly renewed in spirit, and their service to the church will keep abreast with the needs of the times. Each province shall take appropriate steps to foster this. The Provincial Council shall accordingly make suitable arrangements for times of ongoing formation during which our religious can apply themselves more intensely to prayer and study.”

Certainly, the spiritual life does not grow just by attention to external forms, but must include care of our interior life in an integral manner, by following a way in which nothing is taken for granted. God’s grace bears fruit in us when we prepare ourselves as persons to receive it, by taking care of all the dimensions of our being, including that “we take seriously our obligation to work. Work in its various forms—study, apostolic activity and manual labour we see as a demand of poverty and of fraternal service (C31), together with “the sincere and fraternal renewal of the spirit of prayer” through such means as “the review of life, liturgical services of God’s word, penitential vigils, times of recollection, readings and reciprocal sharings of pastoral experiences” (Norms 31, cf. Ib. 32) and retreats (cf. Ib. 33).

During our visits we had the opportunity to meet with our Carmelite friars who are not priests. Unfortunately, in recent years their number has been reduced; worse still, it seems to us that their role and their presence among us has not been understood. As our Constitutions say: “Our Order comprises both clerical and lay members, all of whom work together for a common purpose, sharing in different ways the same charism and the same religious consecration by solemn vows” (C 127).

Ten years ago, Rev. Fr Camilo Maccise, who died this year, wrote to the whole Order a letter, *Towards a new Identity, The vocation and mission of Lay Brother in the Order*, in which he dealt in depth with the situation of the lay brothers in the Order. It should be interesting if the Provincials’ conferences reflected on this subject, using this letter as a basis.

In his letter, Fr Camilo reminds us, as affirms the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council and Blessed John Paul II confirms, the lay religious life is *a state for the profession of the evangelical counsels which is complete in itself*. John Paul II himself stated: “religious life in the Church cannot be thought about without the presence of this particular lay vocation, still open to many Christians who can consecrate themselves in it to following Christ and to the service of humanity ... It is necessary that lay religious become aware that they too, together with their priest brothers, are responsible for all that contributes to the vitality of their own Institute ... I wish to remind all religious – lay and priests – of the complementarity of their respective roles within the same religious life. For the religious priest, caught up in multiple pastoral activities, is reminded by the lay brother that religious life has a community dimension that cannot be forgotten. The Brothers, dedicated to humble domestic service or secular duties of service, are reminded by the priest that what they are doing has an apostolic dimension” (*Towards a new Identity*, 11-12).

All things considered, we are not friars just to dedicate ourselves to the apostolate or to hold some office. It seems that we are saying to ourselves that if we do not hold an office we have no identity and this is certainly not so. When visible apostolic work is imposed on other aspects of fraternal life, which in itself has enormous apostolic value, even if hidden, and we neglect personal relationships and prayer, particularly mental prayer, the temptation imposes itself to believe that solely the person who is making or doing *is* truly a religious. But this is false: solely the person, who *is* in relationship with God and others, truly *is* a religious.

Our visits have led us to reflect on two other subjects in particular: firstly, we would like to invite the Circumscriptions, which are becoming quite reduced in number and have no sure hope of growing in the near future, to consider something: Would it not be better to request a new grading, changing from a Province to a Semi-Province or Commissariat, or really think about uniting with other existing Provinces in order to create sounder situations? We also noticed on our visits – and also through other means – that many Provinces forget what is laid down in number 97 of the Constitutions and so accept or abandon parishes without the prescribed authorization of the Definitory. We would ask you to pay attention to this detail.

Our Discalced Carmelite sister have received a decree from the CIVCSVA, dated September 2012, “desiring to bring back the person and function of Religious Assistant, for the good of their own Federations and Associations of Monasteries of Nuns”. In this regard, Fr Saverio informed the Definitory that he has already met once with the Prefect of the Congregation, His Reverend Excellency Mons. João Braz de Aviz, to whom he presented questions about the nature and extent of the decree. We hope that this recently begun dialogue will allow clarification of doubts that the decree in question has raised. Should our questions bear fruit we will inform the Presidents and their Councils.

With regards to our OCDS members, we discussed in our meeting the need to introduce some change into their Constitutions. Fundamentally there are two points we wish to develop: on the one hand, the topic of community; on the other, to emphasise the importance of Saint Joseph as a fundamental element of the vocation of the Secular Carmel. In the coming months we are going to gather from the various fraternities their opinions in this regard, so that we can carry out the needed modifications to their Constitutions.

Concerning the financial situation of the Centre of the Order, we observe with preoccupation that the crisis is beginning to affect us relatively strongly. Of course, if we look around us at so many brothers and sisters who suffer its effects, particularly all those who have no work, we cannot complain. But it is true that the tax increases – which fall heavily on rented property which constitutes the main source of income of the General House – the decrease in alms received and the widespread rise in the cost of living is greatly affecting us. Nevertheless, it is a struggle for us to keep on investing in formation, to help Provinces and monasteries in need, to give financial support to the preparation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Teresian centenary as well as payment of the CITeS debt.

Any help is always welcome. We trust in divine Providence as well as the contributions of our brothers and sisters, by ordinary and extraordinary means. In this regard it is important that the Provinces remember the need to pay their dues to the General House on time. We also call on the Provinces which have more funds to reflect on their contribution to “everybody’s cash register”, in other words the finance of the General house. We are not looking for money for ourselves, but we are looking for help so that, afterwards, we can give help.

Touching on this topic, we wish to advise you that because of a recent law of the European Union, all cheques sent to the General House should be made out to CASA GENERALIZIA DEI P. CARMELITANI SCALZI. Those made out to a particular person, including Fr General, cannot be cashed. We ask you to pay attention to this detail when you are making your donations by cheque.

In regard to the centres dependent on the General House, we discussed the situation of the Teresianum Faculty, reviewing what has been done until now by the internal commission that was created, among other things, for the revision of the statutes and the curriculum. In the coming weeks, in dialogue with the President and the Faculty Council, we will continue to assess the steps taken.

We also wish, at this point, to thank and show our appreciation for all that is being done by the Teresa-St John of the Cross International Centre of Avila (CITeS), an enormous work in spreading our spirituality which, in these years before the Centenary, is centred around the annual congress on each one of Saint Teresa's works (already there have been three). These are available to all thanks to their transmission via Internet and through DVD's which contain all the conferences. Also, the work of the CITeS community and the lay people assisting them is helping in a great way to pay the debt acquired by building the centre.

As you know, communication is of vital importance for us. Because of this, from the Centre of the Order we have tried to promote initiatives that are necessary to have a real sharing of news between all of us. The friar in charge of communications in the Order, Fr David Jiménez, has had to take on the position of Superior of the "La Santa" community in Avila and, because of this, his Provincial has asked us that we free him from the position he has held until now. We decided to take on a lay person, a professional journalist and member of our Teresian family, who already has been helping us in the work of information tied to celebrating the 5<sup>th</sup> centenary of the birth of Saint Teresa. He is Dr Juan Manuel Borrego Alonso who, from now on, is in charge of this sensitive mission.

From the depths of our heart we thank Fr David for the work he has carried out until now for the whole Order and we ask the Lord to be with him and to enlighten Dr Juan Manuel Borrego in carrying out his work.

The fact of new missionary presences of the Teresian Carmel, whose realization is moving ever closer, opens for us a pleasing horizon of hope: The Province of Korea has accepted responsibility for China; the Manjummel Province has generously accepted Zambia; and the Provincials of South-Brazil and Portugal have visited Angola for the purpose of starting a mission there, which will involve other Spanish and Latin American Provinces.

In these days together, we had time to discuss how preparations are going for the centenary of Saint Teresa – everything seems on course. Very advanced are the discussions with foundations in Spain which are disposed to finance the restoration of the birth chapel of Saint Teresa in the "La Santa" church in Avila. Other projects to be carried out in Spain will enjoy important financial benefits which, as in the case just mentioned, will facilitate the arrival of sources of funding. From January a new version of the Web page of the Order for the centenary will begin, which we hope will be very useful for everyone.

The Pastoral Commission is already preparing the International Teresian Meeting which will take place in Rio de Janeiro, in the days prior to the 2013 World Youth Day. Also, the basics are being prepared for the international meeting of the Teresian Carmel youth which will be in Avila during 2015.

At the same time, 2,000 biographies of Saint Teresa have been sent to Africa in French and English and have financially helped the expenses of the Missionary Congress celebrated last summer in São Roque (Brasil), as well as the one celebrated in Nairobi on Africa. These and other projects, which we will inform you about, are being carried out in a great way thanks to your donations for which we are sincerely thankful, with the hope that you can continue to help us financially.

Fr Augustine Mulloor told us about the Course for Community Facilitators celebrated in Atma Darshan (India) from 21<sup>st</sup> September to 8<sup>th</sup> December 2012, which was a great success. Able to take part were religious from India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Tanzania who received a very complete list of subjects of which we can highlight: the vision of community and authority in Jesus, the Teresian vision of community or community facilitation from the doctrine of St John of the Cross, as well as the use of means for facilitation or psychological resources for its development. The next course,

always for English speaking religious, will be celebrated from 15<sup>th</sup> September to 18<sup>th</sup> October 2013 and the topic will be spiritual direction. We strongly advise the Major Superiors to get in contact with Fr Johnson, secretary for formation in the General House, ([ocdform@gmail.com](mailto:ocdform@gmail.com)) so that they can obtain the necessary information to enroll religious in this course, for it is of great interest and the training received from it is clearly useful.

On 17<sup>th</sup> December, we met with our brothers from the O. Carm General Council. It was an informal and relaxed meeting in which, thanks to the presence of Br Fausto Spinelli, ocd, the new regional bursar of the Israel Delegation, was discussed the plans involving both Orders for the preservation of Wadi Es Siah, the cradle of Carmel. Both sides saw the need to develop a strategy allowing us to gather funds for protecting this spiritual and historical patrimony, as well as continuing contact with the individual government departments to receive the necessary permissions.

At the same time, information was given on the "ALACAR" meeting, celebrated in São Paulo from 22nd to 27th of October 2012, in which was discussed community life in Carmel, a gift and a sign of joy and hope.

As well, there were discussion on plans for celebrating the coming centenaries involving the both Orders: in 2014 the 4th centenary of the beatification of Saint Teresa and the death of Fr Jerónimo Gracián, as well as the 7th centenary of the death of St Albert of Jerusalem; in 2015 the centenary of the birth of Saint Teresa and in 2016 the 450th anniversary of the birth of Saint Mary Magdalene de Pazzi. These are all thought provoking dates, which call us to reflect on the present and to plan a future loyal to the word and the life of so many eminent witnesses.

We also discussed in this meeting the content and logistical questions about our next meeting which will take place in Aylesford (United Kingdom) in May next year.

Once again, wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a holy and prosperous 2013, we send you fraternal and heartfelt greetings. Your brothers:

Fr Saverio Cannistrà, Sup. 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