



CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI
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LETTER FROM THE DEFINITORY (16)

10th March, 2013

Dear brothers and sisters in Carmel,

PEACE.

Fr Saverio Cannistrà, the Superior General, presided at this 16th meeting of the OCD General Definitory, which began on 3rd March. From now on, we will extend the length of our meetings, even though we will normally meet only in the morning, so that in the afternoon we will be able to work on the issues that arise as our meeting proceeds.

During these days of meeting, the Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI, has been very much present in our prayers, as have the Cardinals who are gathering in conclave on March 12.

As has become customary, we dedicated the first sessions to sharing the conclusions from our last visits. We were thus able to understand better what was happening in Madagascar (Fr General), Burgos (Fr Emilio), Andhra Pradesh – the youngest Province in the Order – (Fr Augustine), Manjummel (Fr Peter), Central America (Fr Marcos) and Oklahoma (Fr John).

One of the more important aspects about which we spoke in commenting on our visits, and which we wish to share with you, is the training of our friars. It is evident that they need to receive a good formation for the priestly life, but formation specific to religious and Carmelite life should not be neglected. We should not forget that “for the one called by God, the Carmelite vocation, centered on contemplative experience, constitutes the proper way to realize his Christian existence by means of religious profession” (*OCD Ratio Institutionis*: 14).

It is important that, during the formative stages, a good assimilation of the charism is encouraged, (particularly in the newest circumscriptions, but not alone there), enriching it with the characteristics proper to each culture, each generation, in such a way that truly “with each new vocation, the Order begins a chapter in its history, in the never-ending book of foundations” (RI: 26).

In this area, the formators play an important part. They are called to help “the person called by God to face up to the charism and to experience it, to make it his own, to experience himself fully incorporated in the religious family which accepts him. In order to reach this, they will unite fidelity to creativity. They will try to consider our manner of living always in relation to the supreme rule of

radically following Christ, and not as repeating or restoring what our predecessors lived. They will mutually help one another in adapting to new demands and the various cultural contexts so as to incarnate and live the Teresian charism in the light of the signs of the times and what the Spirit is telling the Churches” (ib.).

However, nobody can feel themselves exempt from formative responsibility. Experience teaches us that assimilation of the charism, more than a theoretical study of it, comes about in as far as it is transmitted in a community and provincial environment, which allows the candidates to accept the essential elements which make up our life as Teresian Carmelites.

However, in some circumscriptions the priestly aspects of our vocation are highlighted in excess and, in this way, candidates are trained with their apostolate as priests, normally in parishes, in view. This is not so much because they are taught this theoretically but because, in the environment in which they are trained, they assimilate what they see.

Consequently it is important that we bear very much in mind the indications of the *Ratio Institutionis*, as well as what is stated in our Norms: “Students who attend diocesan seminaries or other ecclesiastical schools are to be instructed at home in those subjects which, in the judgment of the Provincial Councils or the Conferences of Superiors, are deemed necessary and essential for their religious and Carmelite formation. (N 113; cf. ib. 123). But it is even more necessary that, particularly in formative communities, it is born in mind that we have to live in a way that our candidates learn that the ministry of the Discalced Carmelite emanates from intimate union with Christ, and is realized with and from the community (cf. C 15§d-e; 93).

Our apostolic service to the Church will not be faithful if we forget that it is intimately united to our life as praying communities: “Likewise, a method of accomplishing work on various levels, not separately, but by the teaming up of many religious working at the same tasks, rendering the labour more fruitful and giving a witness of evangelical unity, is highly recommended” (N 48 §c).

We would like to share with you other very good news with regards to the missionary expansion of the Order.

Accompanied by Fr George Tambala, the Provincial of Manjummel visited Zambia to examine possible places to establish Discalced Carmelites in that country. Around early June, four priests from the Province will come from Malawi to be part of two parishes in Zambia, to strengthen their knowledge of the local language and to get to know, as well, the dynamism of pastoral ministry in the area.

On the other hand, as perhaps some of you already know, since January 2012, Saint Joseph’s Commissariat of Central Italy has been carrying out social and pastoral work in Albania. Fr General, accompanied by the Fr Commissar, visited the country last February. In this meeting of the Definitory, we also decided to approve the beginning of a missionary project in these lands, by setting up a community dependant of the Centre of the Order. The first missionaries will settle in Albania for sure after the 2013 summer. The Bishop of the Diocese of Sapa, in which there is already a community of Discalced Carmelite nuns, requests the presence of friars to direct a spirituality house, which will be built beside our nuns’ monastery. The Lord has blessed this new foundation with two vocations: a young man who will join the postulant house in Pisa and another who is making his novitiate in the Genoa Province, which he joined.

Sri Lanka is another of the Carmelite missionary horizons. By means of Fr Augustine Mulloor, we are in contact with some Provinces in India to establish a presence in that country, which we hope to do in a short time.

Finally, without leaving this missionary section, the Definitory decided to help financially the Warsaw Province, which had to face up to some extraordinary works in Byelorussia.

As usual, Fr Attilio Ghisleri, the Bursar General, informed us of the situation of the Order's finances. In this session we paid much attention to questions related to the Holy Land.

This year has been difficult for all. If we think about the people who suffer from the crisis in a more dramatic way, particularly the unemployed, we cannot complain too much. Rather, we should thank God since his provident help never fails us and we should pray for the so many men and women who suffer in situations of extreme poverty.

However, the Centre of the Order has suffered the consequences of this financial crisis, particularly with the increase of taxes that has fallen in a particularly strong manner on our buildings in Rome, which constitute the basis of our economy as General House.

The Center of the Order tries to be a channel through which are distributed the goods with which God blesses us. Through the aid received from the more favoured Circumscriptions, we are able to help those who are poorer. It is for this reason, appealing to your generosity and trust, we would like to ask you not to give up on your help. We are grateful for all that arrives here, but we would ask you to pay attention that the fixed offerings do not diminish. From this point of view, we make an appeal to all the Circumscriptions of the Order to verify that the contributions to the Centre of the Order set down in the Constitutions have already been sent. This is for the purpose of fulfilling what the Norms envisage, which is, that with everyone's help (cf N 253) assistance can be given in situations of greater need (cf. N 254).

Here we will also recall what the same Norms point out in number 255: "Provinces whose economic condition permits it should willingly contribute more than the taxes imposed by the Definitory for the common welfare of the Order, in a spirit of fraternal solidarity".

In fact, thanks to the very generous help of the nuns' Federation of Aragon and Valencia and of the Venice Province, we have been able to come to the aid of an important need of the Province of Croatia. What arrives here does not remain here, but is sent as quickly as possible for the needs of those who suffer hardship or require special assistance (cf. NA 254).

Mr Juan Borrego, in charge of the Order's communications, informed us recently of differences introduced into the web page for the Teresian centenary www.paravosnaci.com, which is well known to all. He also presented us with the draft for the Order's new web page, which will soon be in operation.

As we already know, the commitment and collaboration of all are needed so that the Order's instruments of communication function well. In order to promote and strengthen this commitment and collaboration, we have decided to call an OCD CONGRESS FOR COMMUNICATIONS, the details of which will be sent to all Major Superiors. This congress will be celebrated at CITEs in Avila from 17th to 21st September this year and at least ONE DELEGATE FROM EACH PROVINCE OR COMMISSARIAT, AS WELL AS A DELEGATE FROM FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICA AND ONE FROM ENGLISH-SPEAKING AFRICA, should attend. Other interested religious may enrol themselves should there be places available. We ask all the Major Superiors that as soon as they receive the enrolment form to get in contact with CITEs to formalize it.

With regards to the archives, Fr Óscar, who is in charge of the General House archives, and his assistant Mr Marcos Argüelles informed the Definitory and the main officials of the Curia on the state of the archives, giving also some rules on how to file documents correctly and uniformly.

In this regard, it is advisable that major superiors are aware of the need to take care of the archives in the various circumscriptions, keeping in mind what was set down in the 2009 Fatima General Chapter, “The General Chapter asks the Provincials to prepare young religious so that they study the history of the Order and take care of the Provincial archives.”

Listening to these two young lay collaborators, Juan and Marcos, has been for us not only of great help to sensitize us to the fundamental requirements of communication with today’s instruments and of the need to establish orderly and methodical procedures in our activities; they also showed us the importance of developing the work entrusted to us with passion, convinced of its value for the life of the Order and of the Church. We have to fight the temptation to apathy, the tendency to fulfil our work lazily, without pouring all our energies and capabilities into it, thus showing, we could say, we do it without deep conviction.

In regard to our Discalced Carmelite nuns, we wish to thank them first of all for their closeness and prayers, as well as their ever generous material help for the needs of the Centre of the Order.

The Superior General presented CICALSAL with some questions concerning the document issued by it last September concerning the Assistants to the Associations and Federations. As soon as the response is received, it will be sent to the Presidents as quickly as possible.

We would also like to tell you that a group of sisters from Mexico and Costa Rica has been prepared to strengthen the presence of the Teresian Carmelite nuns in Havana (Cuba).

Fr Emilio also informed the Definitory of the visit he recently made to the Carmel of Tangier, in Morocco, where our sisters continue to give generous testimony by their life, in an ambience for the most part Islamic.

From 27th August to 1st September 2013, there will be celebrated at CITEs in Avila a Seminar on Spiritual Theology, organized by the Centre of the Order. Specialists on the material have already been invited to it. We are waiting for replies from some of them and ask their Major Superiors to facilitate their participation.

The main objective is to reflect on three areas: 1. The identity of spiritual theology, its methods, its relationship with other disciplines and ways of teaching it; 2. The relationship between theological-spiritual research and the Teresian-Carmelite vocation: in the life of a community (local, provincial) and in the apostolate; 3. The renewal of our study centres and their coordination.

At the end of the Seminar, a document will be drawn up on each of these areas, which we will share with the whole Order.

Fr Emilio J. Martínez, who is in charge of the Teresian 5th centenary, informed us about how the preparations are going. One thing we have achieved is that the Spanish Government will establish a National Commission for the organization and monitoring of the celebratory events. For its part, the Order has established a Foundation, which will coordinate the works of this Commission, but will also have an extent that is international.

In renewing the Web page www.paravosnaci.com, we have sought to improve it in the hope that it can continue to prove of good service to the Order in preparing the 5th centenary. We have also strengthened our presence on the social media. It is important that we do not forget that we cannot be simply passive and limit ourselves to receiving the materials produced, without also being active and collaborating, by sending material and information on events that are happening.

We received a letter from the Prior of Avila, Fr David Jiménez, in which he extends an invitation to the whole Order to make a pilgrimage to the house where Teresa was born. It is necessary

that we organize our pilgrimages in good time, since we think that the demand will be high. In a few days the General House will send this letter to you, and for those wishing to reply, here are the Email addresses: albergue@teresadejesus.com and peregrinaciones@teresadejesus.com.

Our next meeting will be from 6th to 16th June, this year. Beforehand, from 10th to 17th May, we will have a meeting with the O.Carm General Council in Aylesford. Although we know that you do so frequently, we ask you to keep on praying for us, so that we may keep on fulfilling this work with a spirit of loyalty and service to the Order.

Your brothers,

Fr Saverio Cannistrà, Superior 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