



General Definitory of the Discalced Carmelite Friars
Corso d'Italia, 38
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SEXENIUM 2015-2021 – LETTER No. 4

Rome, March 14, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Teresian Carmel,

We send our fraternal greeting at the end of our ordinary meeting of the General Definitory that took place in Rome from the 7th to the 13th of March. On this occasion, we had with us for the first time the presence of Father Daniel Ehigie who was elected the new general definitior for Africa after Father George Tambala was named Bishop of Zomba (Malawi). Father George received the Episcopal Ordination this past January 30th in an intense and joyful celebration in which Father Daniel participated along with a good number of members of the Carmelite family. At the beginning of the first session of the Definitory, Father Daniel read the profession of faith and officially assumed his office as general definitior.

Our meeting took place a few weeks after the conclusion of the Year of Consecrated Life. With this motive, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CIVCSVA) invited to Rome the president and a companion from each of the Federations and Associations of contemplative life, among them were the Discalced Carmelite Nuns. This event gifted us with a one day meeting with about a hundred Discalced Carmelite nuns from all over the world with Father General. The day was a rich experience of fraternity and served as a means of dialogue about important aspects related to on-going formation and communication. The contributions from the nuns will help Fr. General to move forward in his service to the Discalced Carmelite nuns in those areas.

As always, the themes dealt with during these days of our Definitory meeting were multiple and varied. To begin with, we dedicated a good part of the time dialoguing about the general visitations to the distinct circumscriptions that took place during the months of January and February.

Fr. General completed the pastoral visitation to the Delegation of Israel, following the fraternal visitation of the entire Definitory this past month of December. The Delegation, which is under the direct dependency of the general government, has a special meaning for the entire Order and needs particular attention. A community of twelve friars lives in the monastery of Stella Maris and also cares for the house of El Muhraqa. Another small community of three friars lives in the Latin parish of Haifa. In general, the situation at this time is positive. Thanks to the collaboration of the semi-province of Lebanon, we hope to be able to give a new impulse to the parish and the school of Haifa.

Following Israel, Fr. Saverio made the pastoral visitation of the Delegation of Egypt, which was created in 2010. At this moment, the Delegation comprises twelve friars, four of whom are in stages of formation and, presently, all reside in the house of Shubra, Cairo. The house of Ma'ady is in the process of renovation. Another house is available in Alexandria. The Definitory reviewed and approved the statutes of the Delegation for five more years and offered concrete suggestions in order to encourage the friars and their pastoral activity.

For his part, Fr. Agustí Borrell, the Vicar General, presented his report of his pastoral visitation of the Commissariat of Sicily. This circumscription presently numbers 26 solemnly professed friars and 6 communities. The pastoral activity is notable and takes place in four shrines, two parishes, and a house of spirituality. Attention to the Discalced Carmelite nuns, the Secular Order, and other Christian groups is also a part of their ministries. The decisions approved by the General Definitory stemming from the visitation report intends to especially strengthen the fraternal life of the communities and to direct the future of our presence in Sicily by means of collaboration with other circumscriptions in the area of formation, and by an adaptation of commitments and communities in accord with the real possibilities of the Commissariat.

Fr. Agustí also reported on the plenary council of the Iberian Province that took place in mid February in Avila, in which he participated. The Iberian Province was created in February of 2015 as a result of the unification of five provinces. One year after the initial chapter, the plenary council assessed the path of unification taken so far and reviewed some aspects. The process of the new province has been positive and hopeful despite its complexity and the inevitable difficulties. The general impression is that the consolidation of the new dynamic and the provincial structures is progressing adequately, as well as mutual acquaintance and the relationship between the friars.

Fr. Johannes Gorantla made a fraternal visitation during the past weeks to a good number of friars and nuns in the distinct circumscriptions of India. Concretely, he visited the missions of Chattisgarth (Tamilnadu), with two communities, and Sri Lanka (Tamilnadu), with one community, in the Vicariate of West Bengal (South Kerala, with 8 communities, in the Provincial Delegation of Ranchi (Malabar), with 5 communities, in the Vicariate of Orissa (Manjummel) with 5 communities, and in Delhi. He also participated in the meeting of provincials of India that took place on February 29 in Hyderabad. They discussed questions such as the rereading of the Constitutions, missionary funds, interprovincial collaboration in formation, and other programs of formation of the Definitory in India. The collaboration between the provinces of India is usual and fruitful. He also made a pastoral visitation to the monastery of Thanjavur.

For his part, Fr. Daniel Chowning made a visit to the provinces of Oklahoma, Paris, and England-Ireland. Presently, Oklahoma is a small province with 18 friars and 5 communities. The number of their ministerial commitments is a topic of

discernment. There are 40 friars in the Paris province, and serving in 5 communities. They are stable at the moment and give special attention to the liturgy, prayer in common, and spiritual direction. The Anglo-Irish province comprises 45 friars (not counting the vicariates of Nigeria and Australia). They are experiencing a lack of vocations, characteristic of the Western world, and have raised the question about the number of their ministerial activities.

Fr. Javier Mena made a fraternal visit to the Commissariat of Peru, to the Delegation of Ecuador, and the Vicariate of Bolivia-Uruguay-Paraguay. He encouraged the rereading of the Constitutions and common interprovincial projects, especially those relative to collaboration in the initial stages of formation. He began his fraternal visit to the Commissariat of Peru composed of 28 friars and 3 simply professed, serving in 6 communities. The presence of young friars who are assuming responsibilities is a sign of sure hope. The option for the ministry of spirituality can give greater solidity to the future of the Carmelite presence in the region (as well as continuity of the various social works in the community.) The following visit was to the Delegation of Ecuador where there are 18 friars in 4 communities (and 3 in the mission). They are progressing in the integration process, necessary because of the diversity of mentalities and of origins (Ecuadorians, Colombians, and Spaniards). Little by little, they are diversifying their pastoral activity, thinking about a greater dedication to the promotion of spirituality. The next visit was the Vicariate of Bolivia (4 communities with 10 friars and 2 Bishops), Uruguay (3 communities with 9 friars) and Paraguay (2 communities with 8 friars). This recent Vicariate still depends in some aspects on the Iberian Province. The activity has focused on formation; now will be the time to increase their dedication to the different pastoral domains, preferably to the ministry of spirituality, as well as strengthening the process of integration between the three countries that form the Vicariate.

Fr. Mariano Agruda visited the Carmelite family in Indonesia and Vietnam. These are countries with a large population and with a minority of Christians, but very committed. The Teresian Carmel is undergoing a stage of growth with a notable number of vocations. In Indonesia there are 9 communities of friars spread out in the various islands that form the country. In Vietnam, he visited Cao Thai, our first canonically erected community in the country. From there he visited seven communities of Discalced Carmelite nuns of Vietnam who are experiencing a great influx of vocations, which presents the challenge of formation. Fr. Mariano also made a stop in the Philippines where he visited some communities of Carmelite nuns and met with the council of the Secular Order, which is a flourishing reality in the Philippines.

One of the themes that all the definitors addressed in their meetings with the friars of the circumscriptions they visited was the process of rereading the Constitutions that is already in an intense phase in the communities. In the meetings, we were able to comment again on the importance of this initiative of the General Chapter that seeks to motivate an authentic personal and communal revision of the friars in order to obtain a renewal of our life as Discalced Carmelites. The Definitory

commented and evaluated the reactions that we have received and transferred them to the commission responsible for them. In general, although this entails a demanding work, and presupposes overcoming some initial resistances, in most places there is interest and dedication and is already producing the first fruits of personal reflection and of communal sharing of our Constitutions.

In their visits to different places, the Definitors have always included a fraternal encounter with the different communities of Discalced Carmelite nuns to strengthen the bonds of friendship and encourage collaboration between the friars and nuns. This is not only one of the objectives of the general government. It also counts among St. Teresa's desires. It is precisely in this spirit of collaboration that the material for ongoing formation has been prepared as requested by the Discalced Carmelite nuns in their message to the General Chapter last year while taking into consideration the dialogue between Fr General and the nuns in their meeting last February 3rd in Rome. The Definitory has received feedback from the Secretary for the Nuns, Fr Rafal Wilkowski, regarding suggestions, both those raised during this meeting and others that arrived later, in response to the proposals of Fr General. A commission will be created to formulate the themes and adequate methodology for the formation modules. These materials will be offered to the monasteries who desire to use them, always cognizant of the diversity of cultures and situations.

The Secular Carmel is part of the Order too. Expressed in both traditional and modern ways, it is experiencing great vitality and expansion in certain parts of the world. On the basis of the recommendations by Fr Alzinir Debastiani, General Delegate for the Secular Order, the General Definitory has deliberated on particular points like the role of the Provincial Council, formation, communication, and regional meetings. In the next few days, Fr General will send a letter addressing these concerns.

As regards communications, the redesigning and updating of the Curia Generalizia's website continues to surge forward. Our Facebook page (Ordo Carmelitarum Discalceatorum) and Twitter account (@ocdcuria) are potent sources of current information through which you can keep abreast of the day to day happenings and activities of the general government and of the Order. Please be reminded that you may send news about events in your respective circumscriptions to the Secretary for Communications (ocdinform@gmail.com).

We also listened to the report of Fr Jerome Paluku, Secretary for Missionary Cooperation, who has just returned from his visits to Malawi and the Congo where he participated in meetings with the Conference of Superiors from the English speaking and French speaking African circumscriptions respectively. He elucidated how the current situation presents new challenges to the missionary activity of the Order. He suggested ways to improve collaboration between the Generalate and the various circumscriptions as regards missionary endeavors. He likewise assisted some communities of Discalced Carmelite nuns in the preparation of project proposals. The Secretariat is assisting in the solicitation of funds for missionary

projects. These funds need to be handled and accounted for with professionalism and transparency including a proper auditing of money received. On the other hand, the Secretariat is receiving contributions from our circumscriptions to augment the missionary fund, of which a good part has already arrived. We are hoping the rest comes in the following weeks.

We also discussed about CITEs (International Center for Teresian and Sanjuanist Studies) where the Vicar General made a fraternal visit in early January. CITEs has become a point of reference for the diffusion of our spirituality and a venue for open interdisciplinary dialogue in the field of mysticism. In this field they have contributed in many publicized initiatives and well attended activities on the occasion of the Fifth Centenary of the birth of St Teresa. Through dialogue with the community, the Definitory is exploring ways to further reinforce CITEs in its role as a center for the formation of specialists in Teresian-Sanjuanist spirituality. In this regard, Fr General has renewed the appointment of Fr Francisco Javier Sancho as director of CITEs and of Fr Romulo Cuartas as associate director and treasurer.

As regards studies, we recognize equally the importance of the Teresianum as the principal center of studies in the Order. We deliberated on some aspects of its current situation and its initiatives. In the next few weeks, the Vicar General will make a fraternal visit to the permanent community.

As regards other matters, we took cognizance of some concrete cases of our religious from various circumscriptions, which need discernment and decision on the part of the Definitory. Fr Jean Joseph Bergara, as Procurator General, gave an update regarding the status of some of these cases which are pending with the Holy See.

We concluded our Definitory meeting at the threshold of Holy Week in this Jubilee Year of Mercy. We dispose ourselves to joyfully live the experience of God's Merciful Love revealed in the Risen One who gives us the gift of new life at Easter. In the Paschal Mystery, we see the fullness of this "great love" that so overshadowed our sister Elizabeth of the Trinity: something worth recalling now having received the good news of her coming canonization.

In the name of the General Definitory and the community at the Generalate, we wish the entire Teresian family throughout the world a happy Easter.

P. Saverio Cannistrà, General
 P. Agustí Borrell
 P. Łukasz Kansy
 P. Johannes Gorantla
 P. Daniel Chowning
 P. Francisco Javier Mena
 P. Mariano Agruda III
 P. Daniel Ehigie