



CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI  
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## DEFINITORY LETTER (18)

+ September 14, 2013

Very dear Brothers and Sisters in Carmel,

PEACE.

On 6<sup>th</sup> September, after having taken part during three day in the IV International Teresian Congress, which was centred on the study of the “Interior Castle”, in CITEs (Avila), Fr General and the Definitors met in Rome for the 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of the sexennium. Fr George Tambala joined us on the 8<sup>th</sup>, after having given a conference in the congress.

Very much present in our prayers were our brothers of the Order of Carmel, who were meeting to celebrate their General Chapter. On September 12, Fr Fernando Millán Romeral was reelected as their General for another six years.

In the past months, the Definitory carried out the following visits: Fr General was in the Province of South Brazil, Fr Marcos Jüchem visited the Carribean Commissariat and Fr Peter, for his part, visited the General Delegation of Taiwan-Singapore and the Commissariat of Indonesia. Fr Augustine Mulloor carried out a fraternal visit of the Tamil Nadu Province.

Apart from discussing particular questions relating to these areas of jurisdiction, we were able to reflect once again on an aspect which to us seems vital and for this reason we want to share with you: building Teresian community.

This is not the first time we have touched on this question, which was also widely dealt with in the Extraordinary Definitory celebrated two years ago in Arriccia. However, convinced of its importance, we desire yet once again to share our thoughts with you, the fruit of our discussions during these days.

We all know that the community Teresa dreamed about, lived and proposed is founded on two essential elements: prayer and fraternal life. Concentrating of the first, we have noticed in many friars a double dissatisfaction: on the one hand, some do not find strong motivation to go to choir, or to do so together during the times dedicated to prayer, something which is often reflected in the community timetable or in the actual frequency with which it is practised, obviously poorly; this generates a second dissatisfaction in those who wish to devote more time to mental prayer in community, since they do not find in the community a satisfactory answer to this just aspiration.

The solution to this problem, first of all, is to recognize the causes of the impoverishment of prayer life in our communities. It appears to us that the most important cause is the lack of what we could call a *prayer culture*, i.e. an understanding of the same as an attitude which expresses and permits the living of a relationship with Christ in the Teresian manner, something which demands time in developing and deepening this meeting. To pray together, everyone dedicated at the same time to dialogue alone with the one we know loves us – then finding time to share our experience in prayer – makes us grow in friendship with the Risen One, while strengthening our bonds as a community. We all know how, for Saint Teresa, this was essential, something she repeated often in her writings: that the sisters be aware of having been all together, united by the same passion, by the same love for Jesus, because she was sure that this conviction would strengthen community bonds.

To generate this *culture* demands devoting time to the *pedagogy of prayer*, not only in initial training but also in life-long learning. This allows us to discover that the question of prayer can never be included in the field of obligations, rather it is a journey we make throughout life and which truly has an existential content, i.e., it is an essential part of what we are, not something which we must do or leave aside doing, depending on our obligations or our state of soul.

Without a doubt, it would also help our prayer life to recover the so-called *spiritual reading* both personally and in community – it is something we have been experiencing these last few years in reading Teresa's writings. It would also help to look for much longer times, including sabbatical years, to take part in courses, such as those offered by CITEs or which the Definitory organizes in the Holy Land. Certainly, our obligations are many, but if we could only realize to what extent it is essential for us, called to the Teresian Carmel, to cultivate and care for our life of friendship with Christ in prayer, then we would be certainly encouraged to give prime importance to caring for our prayer life, while our obligations would follow on from this.

Another important question we would like to share with you is the decision taken by Fr General with regard to the mission in Angola, after his visit to the Province of South Brazil. We were certainly very excited about the proposal for some Provinces to collaborate in establishing a mission in this African country before 2015. However, if we want to provide a solid basis for this missionary enterprise, thus guaranteeing its future to the extent that it depends on us, then we have still to wait a while. For this reason, in agreement with the Definitors, Fr General decided not to go ahead with the project, which is not being cancelled but, because of its importance, is delayed until the essentials for beginning are assured.

With regard to financial questions, we wish to show appreciation for the donations received, especially from our sisters the Discalced Carmelite nuns. As we have already said on other occasions, these help us to deal with the expenses the General House has to face, particularly in helping monasteries, convents and Provinces in need, as well as the outlay made in favour of the culture of the order, which is substantial. It is important that Provinces, which have not yet done so, send in their annual contributions to the Centre of the Order.

During these days, we studied the contributions from various fraternities throughout the world concerning the planned reform of the OCDS Constitutions. For these we are truly grateful. Fr Alzinir Debastiani, the General's Delegate, worked to make a faithful synthesis of these contributions, which he presented to Fr General and his Definitory so that we can prepare a definite text, which will be presented as soon as possible to the Congregation for Consecrated and Apostolic Life, in the hope of prompt approval.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October, God willing, will be opened the events which the Order and the Italian Church (particularly the Turin diocese) have planned to celebrate the first centenary of the birth of Fr

Anastasio Ballestrero. For this reason, the Definitory authorized the Postulator General to find out the necessary steps to be taken in order to begin the process of beatification of Fr Ballestrero.

Concerning the Teresian centenary, Fr Emilio Martínez informed us profusely about the planned activities.

On the one hand, the international commission set up at the beginning of the sexennium by the Definitory, continues its work, particularly in what refers to community and pastoral organization. For the first, the text has already been released throughout the Order and the Teresian family for the continued reading of Teresa's writings: a selection of letters and brief writings have been set out. These will be supported by the publication of brochures— as has always been done—which can be downloaded from the web site [www.paravosnaci.com](http://www.paravosnaci.com). At the same time, there has been prepared a new web page [www.lugaresteresianos.com](http://www.lugaresteresianos.com) in which, for now, it is possible to make a virtual visit to the church and birth chapel of Teresa of Jesus in Avila— “La Santa”. Later on we will continue adding other places where the life of Teresa unfolded, enabling us to peek at them from the window of the Internet.

In the area of pastoral organization, the commission is preparing an offer of pilgrimages and meetings in Avila, including visits to the tomb of St Teresa in Alba de Tormes, during the centenary year. These meetings will be organized in collaboration with the Spanish Episcopal Conference and the Diocese of Avila, as well as with other nearby Dioceses. Pastoral and catechetical material is being prepared which will help all our areas of jurisdiction to celebrate the centenary and, in brief, the first official commemorative poster will be sent to all the Provinces and monasteries of the Order.

Finally, the area of cultural preparation is centred on the work of the congresses carried out in CITEs (this year the IV was celebrated on the “Mansions”, as we mentioned before), with the novelty of the webcasting being subsidized this year by CITEs itself, with help from the International Commission. Besides this, work continues on the low-cost translation for Africa and Asia.

At the same time, the International Commission has assisted the celebration of the two congresses already held in Latin America (Dominican Republic and Mexico) and is helping prepare those that will soon be celebrated in Asia (India) and Africa. We will endeavour to give news of all this by means of the Centenary's web page.

Another communication tool is the Centenary's Facebook page, in which is daily offered images and writings of Saint Teresa, in association with a Twitter account (both also accessible through [www.paravosnaci.com](http://www.paravosnaci.com)). Our statistics inform us that this source is mainly utilized by Spanish speaking countries. It would be good if other countries made use of this means of communication by visiting it and sending in material to the Order's directors of communication at [ocdinform@gmail.com](mailto:ocdinform@gmail.com) so that they can make it known and share it with everyone.

On the other hand, for the coordination and organization of the pastoral, liturgical and cultural activities, which the celebration of the centenary in Spain will involve, the Order has formed a non-profit foundation based in CITEs, Avila. We are waiting for the creation of a Commission for the centennial by the Spanish Government, as well as the official Constitution of the Commission of the Spanish Episcopal Conference, to begin working together. One of our objectives, as you know, is to have the Holy Father visit Spain for the centenary during 2015. For this purpose, Fr General has maintained contact recently with Mons. Juan Antonio Martínez Camino, Auxiliary Bishop of Madrid and spokesman-secretary of the Spanish Episcopal Conference.

As an Order, we are aware of the responsibility of offering a quality response at every level in the place which will be the “epicentre” of the centenary, which is the Carmelite monastery in Avila, in which is the birth chapel of Saint Teresa. In this regard, we have received with pleasure a letter from

the Provincial of Castile, in which he informs us of some efforts already begun in this respect and, at the same time, asking the support of the General House.

The “La Santa” community must expect an enormous influx of pilgrims during the centenary year. For this reason, we must raise awareness, as an Order, to offer assistance to our friars working there and the first step will be to assure a presence there which can attend to the visitors in various languages, to offer them adequate pastoral, liturgical and catechetical assistance. As the Definitory, following the request of the Provincial of Castile, but also convinced of the need to respond to this just demand, we have also begun to contact some religious and superiors, offering them the possibility to spend that year in the community of Avila. Only in this way, also in collaboration with the CITEs community, can we give a proper and dignified response to help those who, at that time, will want to get to know our Holy Mother.

Naturally, the project is still in its early stages and it will be necessary to flesh it out as 2015 approaches. If there is set up a group of priests of various languages, anxious to be involved pastorally in serving the pilgrims in Spain, diverse offers might be organized beyond its presence in La Santa, like courses in various languages in CITEs or helping the pilgrimages which, undoubtedly, will also visit the tomb of the Saint in Alba de Tormes.

From here we launch the first appeal to motivate the Major Superiors in this respect.

We invite you to visit the Centennial website to keep informed, although we will try to get news to you through all the channels available to us.

During our meeting we received the sad news of the death of Fr Olivier Sakubu, OCD, Councillor of the General Delegation of the Congo, as a result of injuries suffered in a traffic accident. May God bring him to eternal glory and give comfort to those who are his.

With sincere affection, we commend ourselves to your prayers, while assuring you of ours. Your brothers in the Carmel of Mary, Joseph and Teresa,

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

Praise be to God and the Virgin Mary