

GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES
AVILA - 17TH May 2003

JOURNEYING WITH ST. TERESA OF JESUS AND ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

SETTING OUT FROM ESSENTIALS

PRESENTATION

Dear Brothers,

I am sending you the Chapter Document entitled *Journeying with St Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross. Setting Out From Essentials*, which is the fruit of reflection by the Order and our 2003 General Chapter. Our reflections began in the year 2000 with a *Consultation Document*.

As a result of this a great number of observations were given from most of the Friar's Circumscriptions and, on a voluntary basis, from a number of Associations or Federations and Monasteries of our Nuns, from the Carmelite Secular Fraternities, as well as from groups and individuals linked with the Teresian Carmel (cf. Introductory letter for the *Instrumentum Laboris* by Father General, Camilo Maccise, written 19th March 2001). In February 2001 the provisional document, *Instrumentum Laboris*, was studied at the Extraordinary Definitory in Nairobi (Kenya), as a result of this the definitive *Instrumentum Laboris* was produced. It was then studied in the various Circumscriptions and at the 2002 Provincial Chapters. Finally, in September 2002, the Extraordinary Definitory in Lipa (Philippines), worked on the text which was then presented to the General Chapter; this took place in Avila (Spain) from 28th April to 18th May 2003.

The General Chapter was still an opportunity to revise the said Document, above all the practical part. To be concrete, simple and practical, the Chapter Members agreed to put together, simply, the operative conclusions in a third part. Thus the second part, which had until then been understood as a practical entity, acquired a more doctrinal character. This part could serve as a reference point for the challenges found in today's world, as it offers some ways to rise to them.

The **Operative Conclusions** of the third part of the Chapter Document can only be properly understood in the light of the previous, doctrinal part. In no way are they simply an assimilation of the doctrinal part, as might have been expected, whose horizon is far wider and deeper.

In the original language of the Document (Spanish) the title contains the word *volver* (to turn, go back etc.), which can be translated in different ways in other languages. However the word is translated its meaning is not to go back in time, but rather to search for all that is genuine in the present and from there to be drawn forward into the future.

On this day, the Feast of Pentecost, I ask with as much fervour and joy as possible for an outpouring of the Spirit of the Father and of the Son on Carmel, for the good of the Church and the world.

Rome, 8th June 2003

Fr. Luis Arostegui, O.C.D.
Superior General

JOURNEYING WITH ST. TERESA OF JESUS AND ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

SETTING OUT FROM ESSENTIALS

GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES
AVILA - 17TH May 2003

TO THE FRIARS, SISTERS AND LAITY OF THE TERESIAN CARMEL

PROLOGUE

1. We have a knowledge of our charism, possibly unrivalled in our history. Today, more than ever, our saints and the spirituality identifying our family, are in demand both within the Church and outside it by a great variety of readers, who legitimately request that we share this wealth with them. Our *Constitutions*, particularly the first chapter, describe in synthesis the essential elements of our charism. It is a formulation that is a fruit of a renewed awareness after Vatican II. At least, we must ask ourselves how can we reply, from our charism, to the demands of the signs of the times in the Church and the world, how can we reply to the great and legitimate human and religious aspirations of the new generations, so that they can fulfil in an efficacious manner, and bring into effect, the mission of the Teresian Carmel in the Third Millennium.

2. The experience the Order has had in the postconciliar period “should *inspire in us new energy*, and impel us to invest in concrete initiatives... In the cause of the Kingdom there is no time for looking back, even less for settling into laziness... It is important however that what we propose, with the help of God, should be profoundly rooted in contemplation and prayer¹. These words of John Paul II trace out for us an itinerary for renewal that begins with contemplation of the suffering and risen Christ, so that we walk with him, nourished by his word which we should listen to and proclaim. In this manner we can be “witnesses of love” and face up to present challenges: the problems of peace, the contempt for the fundamental rights of so many people, the ecological crisis, respect for the life of every human being, the latest advances of science. “Charity will necessarily become service to culture, politics, the economy and the family, so that the fundamental principles upon which depend the destiny of human beings and the future of civilization will be everywhere respected..... The ethical and social aspect of the question is an essential element of Christian witness: we must reject the temptation to offer a privatised and individualistic spirituality which ill accords with the demands of charity, to say nothing of the implications of the Incarnation and, in the last analysis, of Christianity’s eschatological tension. While that tension makes us aware of the relative character of history, it in no way implies that we withdraw from “building” history².

¹*Novo Millennio Ineunte* (NMI) 15.

²Id. 51-52.

3. The topic of our General Chapter is: *On the journey with Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross. Setting out from essentials*. This involves thinking about the future of Carmel at the beginning of the Third Millennium and also on the future of consecrated life, which was begun in the Lisieux General Chapter. This, as says *Vita Consecrata*, “is an integral part of the Church’s life”³ and, as such, cannot be lacking in it⁴. The same document, in looking to the future, presents with realism the possibility that Institutes “even run the risk of disappearing altogether” while in others “there is the problem of reassessing their apostolate”⁵.

4. Certainly it is difficult to divine the future. At least, if we are capable of analysing the signs of times and places, we can discover in them the seed that can help us see in part what might happen. *What, from this point of view, is the situation of Carmel, friars, nuns and laity?* To reply requires an analysis of the situation of the world, the Church and the family of Carmel. This evaluation will establish us in fidelity to the essential lines of the charism of Teresa and St John of the Cross as expressed in our *Constitutions*, so that in this manner we can face up to the challenges of our age. It is the Spirit who impels us towards the future so that we can continue doing great things⁶.

5. This *Discussion Document (Instrumentum laboris)* is destined primarily for the friars. If it is sent to our sisters of contemplative life and to the secular members it is because we wish to enrich ourselves with their outlook and their viewpoints in order to renew our own life. In a particular way we are seeking to examine our own lifestyle which needs, as the Church requests, a creative fidelity. The nuns, as well as the secular members of the Teresian Carmelite family, have a corresponding duty to reflect on their own life and on the renewal that the Spirit requires of them through the Magisterium of the Church, particularly in the Synods on Consecrated Life and on the laity, along with their respective post-synodal documents.

³VC 3.

⁴See Id. 63.

⁵Ib.

⁶See VC 110.

INTRODUCTION

A GLANCE AT THE REALITY

6. Guided by the Magisterium of the Church we have the responsibility with her “of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel”..... We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live⁷. We accomplish this through our Teresian Carmelite identity and with eyes of faith. We point out only some fundamental traits of today’s world, which are present, in one way or the other, with the normal differences that are found in the various social, cultural and ecclesial contexts.

1. A situation of exile and of hope

7. We live in an era which some have described as an exile. It resembles the time in Israel’s history when it found itself despoiled of all its securities: the temple, the place of God’s presence; Jerusalem, the Kingdom’s capital and centre of unity for the people; the monarchy, reference point of its identity as a nation. In the Church and in consecrated life, specially in the West, we have lost many points of security which we had in the recent past. These have given way to search, uncertainty, diversification, bewilderment. Like the People of Israel, religious life has suddenly found itself without its central symbols which were a source of certainty.

Exile is not only an external happening. It is a spiritual experience: St John’s ever-occurring “going out”, the “Dark Night” affecting the whole of our spiritual journey, the inevitable journey into oneself “through new, unknown and unfamiliar roads” to “reach unknown lands”⁸. These things are designed to bring us to this reality. Those who find themselves in a situation of exile are people who, even though they have had to cross frontiers, continue to carry in their heart spiritual bonds and nostalgia for what was left on the other side. There is suffering for what is lost, which continues to be a part of their identity. Consecrated life, as well as our own Order, has had to redraw boundaries as a result of a situation of exile. A profound spirituality is needed to face up to these new confines and frontiers.

New experiences made with prayerful discernment, far from causing us to lose identity, assist us to preserve it in a renewed form. Exile is an opportunity to take up the journey with hope, in order to face up to *the constant challenge of returning to what is essential*, to grow and mature in faith and in knowledge of God, while discovering what comes from historical conditioning as well as the saving designs of the Lord who works by means of them.

2. A world in permanent transformation and change

8. As *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us in its introduction, change in the world is *rapid*: only a short time is needed now for changes that took centuries before; *universal*: affecting everybody and everything; *profound*: affecting the whole human being and the personal, family and social environment. Instead of referring to change, it would be better to speak of a change of an era marked by modernity and post-modernity, by subjectivism, and ideologies in crisis.

Other tendencies are also evident which are *positive*, such as awareness of the value of the person and his or her fundamental rights; the search for a new harmony between the human being and nature, its protection and defence; sensitivity to the problem of life, justice and peace;

⁷GS 4.

⁸2DN 16:8

awareness of the value of individual cultures; the search for a new international economic order; the growing feeling people have of responsibility for the future; a new place for women in society; a greater awareness that religious and mystical experiences serve as a means in the process of liberation and personal growth, and at the same time an authentic desire for spiritual life. Of particular note, and we wish to give them emphasis by discussing them a little, are the phenomena that have appeared such as *secularization*, *liberation*, *globalization* and the *new ethics*.

9. *Secularization* brings with it a transformation affecting the relationship of the human person with nature, with others and with God. It is the phenomenon of desacralization which affirms the legitimate autonomy of the person, culture and technology. This is the source of some imbalance between autonomy of the human person and loss of the sense of transcendence leading to secularism, between religious values and the new myths and idols. On the other hand there is a contrary reaction, noted frequently in various parts of the world, of religious fundamentalism which carries with it the denial of liberty and autonomy of the person, of culture and of technology and also persecution of religious minorities.

10. Another phenomenon we cannot ignore is that of *liberation*. Persons, groups, peoples and cultures do not want to be an object in the hands of those who wield power. They also want to have a role to play in a situation of equality, responsibility, participation and communion. Awareness of the dignity of the human person stimulates a search to bring this about through the exercise of their fundamental rights effectively recognized, protected and promoted. In this area we must include the feminist movement which is asking that women be given a fitting place in society and the Church. This happens when there arise new forms of oppression, exclusion and exploitation of those who are weakest, often constraining people to abandon their land, to find themselves among the increasing number of refugees.

11. An element also characterising the present time is *globalization*: technological, economic, political, cultural. Today's world is going through a process of unification caused by growing interdependence in all areas. *Positive aspects* of globalization are: the possibility of a great worldwide interconnection, access to information and the shrinking of distances that can improve the quality of human life. The *negative aspects* are: the disproportionate pursuit of financial gain which reduces the person to a consumer, which forces the poor to migrate in search of a worthy life, the growing gap between rich and poor, the destruction of cultures and ways of living which internationalization tries to make uniform. Faced with this the Church, particularly in her social documents, has underlined the dignity of the human person and the family dimension of the human race, which is "based on the awareness that humanity, however much marred by sin, hatred and violence, is called by God to be *a single family*"⁹. Because of this the concept of the individuality of the person ought to be filled out with the concepts of solidarity and responsibility in common, particularly in regard to the poor. Because of this, goods carry an inherent social responsibility, that is they have an intrinsic social function, "based upon and justified precisely by the principle of the universal destination of goods"¹⁰. Present globalization is a new manifestation of the meeting of peoples, which carries with it hopes and fears, possibilities and risks. It can be an instrument for dialogue or an instrument of domination.

12. Underlying these changes is the crisis of the past *ethics* and the search for a *new ethics* far

⁹JOHN PAUL II Message for the world day of peace (2000): 2.

¹⁰*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*: 42.

removed from religious institutions. It is an ethics which relegates God and religion to the private sector. We are bystanders in the development of bioethics. There is urgent need of an ethics based on the dignity of the human person created by God, the sole absolute. This ethics, based on the fundamental principles of Christian faith ought to be a morality having an attitude of search and discussion arising from dialogue, in order to accompany people in making decisions; a morality that listens to the cry of the poor and can be prophetic, capable of denouncing whatever opposes God's plan, while proclaiming the alternative values of Christian faith as a source of love and authentic liberty.

3. A new situation in the Church and in consecrated life

13. Except for the first three centuries of growth in the Middle East, the face of the Church up until the beginning of the XX Century has been a European one. Now things have changed, nearly three-quarters of Christians live in the third world. This requires a transition from a mono centric, religious, cultural and theological attitude to a multi-centred one in these fields; changing from unity as uniformity to unity in diversity. The Gospels themselves give witness to this diversity and call for inculturation. The same is applicable to consecrated life. It must be inculturated. We have spoken amply about this in numbers 85 to 87 of *Begin always anew*, the document from the last General Chapter in 1997.

14. Consecrated life, “a gift of God which the Church has received from her Lord”, belonging “to her life and holiness”¹¹, exists in and for the Church. For this reason the way of understanding it and of living it depends, in part, on the model of Church prevailing at a particular time. Vatican II teaches us to consider the Church as the People of God, living in communion, and to keep in mind the greater importance of the laity and the role of women¹².

15. Our Order also, as a part of the Church, lives immersed in a pluralistic world, which calls for an openness to unity in diversity: “a diversity faithful to what is essential in our charism which is enriched by diversity in all that is secondary and cultural”, as says the chapter document *Begin always anew*¹³. At the same time, the Order, more than ever, understands itself as a spiritual movement within the Church with its numerous witnesses and the teaching of our saints, doctors and blessed. It thus forms a universal family made up of friars, nuns and lay people, all on the journey towards a new humanity.

16. Taking into account the cultural challenges arising from a situation of exile and hope, from a world of change and permanent transformation, from the new situation in the Church and consecrated life affecting our charism, we propose to consider the fundamental aspects of our life. We would like to go deeply into our charism received from Teresa and John of the Cross, to look for new ways to bring it up to date and for restructuring of presences, beginning with the essential values of the Gospel and religious life.

¹¹LG 43, 44

¹²See *VC* 57 - 58.

¹³*Begin always anew*: 14.

PART ONE

RETURNING TO THE ESSENCE OF THE TERESIAN CARMEL

17. The expression, “returning to what is essential”, means simply the constant movement of re-taking the Gospel road, which invites us to continual conversion. “Return”, in effect, means, among other things, to repeat or accentuate the essential values of our charism in the here and now. For this reason it is not to negate what has been achieved in the recent or distant past, but to inject it with a growing dynamism which allows us to tend always towards the ideal traced for us by Jesus and the Holy Spirit, who guide the life of individuals, groups, the Church and the world. To return is an effort to put into practice what our Holy Mother, Teresa of Jesus, said to us: “they had always to remember that they were the foundations on which would be built up those who were to come”¹⁴.

In this first part of the *Instrumentum Laboris* we will call to mind, one after the other, the central points of the *Gospel*, of *consecrated life*, and of the *experience and teaching* of our Holy Parents, Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross, and what our renewed *Constitutions* put before us, particularly in the first chapter.

I. RETURNING TO THE ESSENCE OF THE GOSPEL

18. Christ is the centre of life and of Christian experience (Col 1: 15-29; Ep 2:20). He, the Son of God, took flesh to reveal to us the Father’s design and to communicate a new life to us (Jn 1: 1-18), to reveal the truth about God and about ourselves, a God who communicates himself to us, who are his children, called to union with him. To return to the essential values of the Gospel means, above all, to draw near to Christ by means of the New Testament and to be receptive to the inspiration of the Spirit. Moved always and in all things by the Spirit, Jesus carried out the work entrusted to him by the Father, with authority and liberty, he kept faithful to his sole response to the will of the Father, “Here I am, I am coming...to do your will” (Hb 10:7). St John of the Cross sums up the entire life of Jesus in this manner: “He had no other gratification, nor desired any other, than the fulfilment of his Father’s will”¹⁵. In our own life we too experience Jesus present and near to us, walking with us through the power of his Spirit.

19. In Christ, God has revealed everything. We can never say we know him perfectly: “There is much to fathom in Christ, for he is like an abundant mine with many recesses of treasures, so that however deep individuals may go they never reach the end or bottom, but rather in every recess find new veins with new riches everywhere”¹⁶. We must always begin with Christ: “First, have habitual desire to imitate Christ in all your deeds by bringing your life into conformity with his. You must then study his life in order to know how to imitate him and behave in all events as he would”¹⁷. He is the centre of our life and in him we possess everything: “Mine are the heavens and mine is the earth. Mine are the nations, the just are mine, and mine the sinners. The angels are mine, and the Mother of God, and all things are mine; and God himself is mine and

¹⁴*Foundations*: 4:6.

¹⁵1 *Ascent* 13:4

¹⁶ST JOHN OF THE CROSS *Spiritual Canticle* 37: 4.

¹⁷*Id. 1 Ascent* 13:3.

for me, because Christ is mine and all for me”¹⁸. For each generation, Jesus appears as the one who reveals the latest plan of God for human beings and for the world. To each person Jesus directs his call to follow him to become, like him, free from all forms of slavery.

20. Jesus is the living Gospel, “both the messenger and the message”¹⁹. He is the one whom Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus experienced as a “living book”: “His Majesty had become the true book in which I saw the truths. Blessed be such a book that leaves what must be read and done so impressed that you cannot forget!”²⁰. The whole of Jesus’ existence, every human act of Jesus was revealing-liberating, a proclamation of the Good News of God. Not only when he proclaimed the Good News by word but also when he acted in favour of those who suffered, the poor, sinners; when he denounced everything opposed to God’s plan in human history. “Anointed with the Holy Spirit...Jesus went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). In this way he is the open book from which we can all take inspiration for guiding our human and Christian existence and consecrated life.

21. An attentive and prayerful reading of the Gospels permits us to recognise the fundamental features of Jesus. He appears as a person free from everyone and everything that could hinder his mission of announcing the Good News of the Father: free from social and religious pressure, pressure from family and friends, as well as political and religious power and legalism. He is a free man because he loves everyone and lives to serve them, particularly the poorest and those in need, to liberate them for every form of slavery. He finds his strength in communion with his Father - Abba and teaches his disciples to pray to the Father with the confidence of children. Prayer marks the life of Jesus. We see him praying in all the most important moments of his life: at baptism (Lk 3:21), in the desert (Lk 4:1-13), before the great miracle of Lazarus (Jn 11:41-42), and his exclamation “Father, I thank you” (Mt 11:25), before choosing the apostles (Lk 6:12-13). He prays for Peter (Lk 22:32), passes nights in prayer (Lk 5:16; 6:12), he blesses the bread (Mk 6:41), takes part in the pilgrimages (Lk 2:41-42). While he was praying he was transfigured (Lk 9:28). He arouses the desire to pray which led his apostles to ask him to “teach us to pray” (Lk 11:1). He prayed unceasingly during the agony (Mk 14: 32-39), while suffering on the cross (Lk 23:34). At the hour of death (Lk 23:46; Mk 15:34).

22. Jesus is a person who lives for others. He is ever at the side of those marginalised by society. Jesus was close to those who had no place within the existing social system: publicans (Lk 18:9-14, 19:1-10); lepers – welcomed and healed (Mt 8:2-3, 11:5; Lk 17:12), the sick – cured on the Sabbath (Mk 3:1-5; Lk 14:1-6, 13:10-13), women – form part of the group that accompany Jesus (Lk 8:1-3, 23:49-55) children – are presented as teachers of adults (Mt 18:1-4, 13-15; Lk 9:47-48). Jesus had a special love for humble people and stated that they understood the mystery of the Kingdom better than the wise and learned (Mt 11:25-26). Samaritans are presented as a model for the Jews (Lk 10:33, 17:16). Those hungering for guidance are welcomed as a flock without a shepherd (Mk 6:34; Mt 9:36, 15:32), he gave them something to eat (Jn 6:5-11) and encouraged in them the solidarity of sharing (Jn 6:9). He restored sight to the blind (Mk 8:22-26, 10:46-52; Jn 8:6-7), while the pharisees are declared blind (Mt 23:16). Curing disabled people is a sign that Jesus can pardon sins without blaspheming (Mk 2:1-12). He cares for the possessed as a sign that the Kingdom of God has arrived (Lk 11:14-20). The adulteress is not condemned and even defended against the law and contrary to tradition (Jn 8:2-11) and prostitutes are invited to conversion (Mt 21:31-32; Lk 7:37-50). Foreigners are welcomed and taken care of (Lk 7:2-10) and the Canaanite woman manages to change Jesus’ mind (Mt 15:22). Sinners are called to be Jesus’

¹⁸Id. *The Sayings of Light and Love (Prayer of a Soul Taken with Love)* 27.

¹⁹Spiritual Canticle 6:7

²⁰ST TERESA OF JESUS *Life* 26: 5.

disciples (Mk 1:16-20), so much so that there was no doctor of the law nor scribe in the group of twelve. Zealots were in Jesus' group (Mt 10:4; Mk 3:18) along with Levi, the publican (Mk 2:14).

These attitudes of Jesus represented a very great challenge to the Jewish status quo, after all Jesus welcomed the "immoral" (prostitutes and sinners), the "excluded" (lepers and the sick) "heretics" (Samaritans and pagans), "collaborators" (publicans and soldiers), the "weak" and the "poor" (who had neither power nor wisdom).

23. Jesus denounced all divisions and fought against them vigorously. The existing divisions and oppositions of that time came from work relationships, from race and religion, all mixed together. This all contradicted the will of the Father, since they were the means of marginalizing many people, leaving them without hope of being able to obtain a better life. This situation was legitimized in the name of God through an erroneous interpretation of the Bible. The division between neighbour and foreigner disappears with Jesus. He states that being a neighbour no longer depends only on race or exterior observance, but on the attitude each one has before others no matter who they are (Lk 10:29-37). Another division was between pagan and Jew. Jesus destroyed this when he was willing to enter the house of the centurion (Lk 7:6) and heard the request of the Canaanite woman (Mt 15:28). The division between sacred works and profane (prayer, Mt 6:5-8, fasting, Mt 6:16-18, 6:1-14 and other activities) is given a new dimension. The division between pure and impure was suppressed when Jesus questioned all the legislation concerning legal purity (Mt 23:23; Mk 7:13-23), and even ridiculed it (Mt 23:24). The division between sacred and profane time had no meaning for Jesus. For him the Sabbath was made for man (Mt 12:1-12; Mk 2:27; Jn 7: 23-24). Lastly the division between sacred and profane places lost its meaning when Jesus taught that God can be adored everywhere, when it is done in spirit and truth (Jn 4:21-24; Mk 11:15-17; Jn 2:19), and not just in the temple.

24. By acting in this manner Jesus shook the pillars of the Jewish system: observance of the Sabbath, the temple, holy works such as fasting, prayer and alms, the law of legal purity (Mt 23:25-28), justice as dispensed by the Pharisees (Mt 5:20), even the law of Moses (Mt 5: 17, 21, 23, 31, 33, 38). Jesus denounced the attempt to reach God through one's own efforts and merit: "we are useless servants!" (Lk 17:10). In this way he set people free from the tyranny of the Law, from the tyranny of those interpreting the law, from the tyranny that, in the name of its greater wisdom, imposes heavy burdens on ignorant people (Mt 23:4). He proposes a new order: he reveals God as the Father of all, who is asking for fraternity among human beings. He unites love of God to love of neighbour and seeks that power is exercised as service. Jesus remains faithful in fulfilling the will of the Father, to whom he prayed with open confidence until death.

25. Jesus accepted his death as a supreme expression of freedom and fidelity to the plan of the Father: "No one takes my life from me; I lay it down of my own free will" (Jn 10:18). With his death it seemed that everything had come to an end and the hopes that the Prophet of Nazareth had raised appeared to have been quashed. When Jesus was crucified his Disciples abandoned him and God was apparently silent. However, at this moment, something happened beyond their wildest expectations. The Disciples experienced that Jesus was alive but now with a new life, the life with which God, had made him Messiah and Lord, and they began to announce this to the world. God had fulfilled all His promises and "ortogado" (?) salvation to humankind: "three days afterwards God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen, not by the whole people but only by certain witnesses God has chosen beforehand...all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name." (Acts 10:40-43). From this Easter event the faith of the Christian community was born recognizing in the words and actions of Jesus the definitive revelation of God. This faith is expressed by following Christ, conforming to his word

and being enlightened by his Spirit.

26. The apostolic letters *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* and *Novo Millennio ineunte* invite us to “contemplate Christ’s face”²¹ and to live in a special manner the Christological dimension of Christian life²². The Second Vatican Council, in speaking of consecrated life, insists in various places on the fundamental aspect of its commitment to follow Jesus, by saying that “the final norm of the religious life is the following of Christ”²³.

27. In returning to the essentials of the Gospel we come in contact with the Holy Spirit’s presence and action which is always close by, with and in the Christian community, in order to guide it to the fulness of truth (see Jn 14:16-17, 16:3). He is the one who inspires the Church in every age to give witness to Christ and to continue bringing into effect God’s plan for humanity (see Acts 1:4-8). In Matthew, Mark and Luke, the Spirit is the person inspiring Christ and believers (Mt 14:1; Lk 4:14, 2:26) and helps the disciples in moments of persecution (Mt 10:20). In the *Acts of the Apostles*, the Spirit is continually guiding the Church. His action creates community (Acts 2:42-47) and gives the stimulus to evangelise boldly (Acts 2:29, 4:13, 29, 31). At the same time he protects our freedom by helping us to overcome attachment to menacing and oppressive legalism (Acts 15:1-5, 28). For *Paul*, the Spirit is the new law (Rom 8:1-17); it is a Spirit of communion and diversity of charisms (1Cor 12: 1-13); dwelling within us (1Cor 3:16), transforming us into children of God (Rom 8:14-15) and producing fruit (Gal 5:22). In John’s Gospel what is mainly emphasised is the proximity of the Spirit in the Christian community (Jn 14:16-17) as the teacher who helps us to know and understand Jesus’ teaching (Jn 14:25-26, 16:12-15) and as an Advocate, he defends Christ and convinces the world of sin for refusing to believe in Jesus, of justice because he proves that Jesus has triumphed, and of judgement since evil has been conquered by Christ (Jn 16:5-10).

28. The analysis of the biblical foundations of religious life helped in the rediscovery of it as *a form of following Jesus*²⁴. It appears that, while Christ was alive, various groups followed him. This continued on after his death and resurrection as groups of Christians tried to express in various ways the following of Jesus. One of these groups is the consecrated life. It resembles the group of apostles, but with its own interpretation, it tries to lead a life resembling Christ’s and to witness that the fulness of life is found in Jesus.

Consecrated life therefore is *a way* of following Jesus. St John of the Cross asserts this when he writes to the community of Carmelite nuns in Cordoba, “Let them know what you profess, which is the naked Christ, so those who are inclined to join you may know with what spirit they ought to come”²⁵. The total commitment to God which we express through the vows represents a new way of fulfilling a personal and community vocation.

29. *A re-reading of the following of Christ, guided by the inspiration of the Spirit*, is what gives rise to consecrated life in the People of God. This re-reading is made by reflecting on Christ’s doctrine with its demand for total self-giving and by contemplating his example: he was born and lived in poverty and dedicated his whole existence and energy to the service of others in a celibate life obedient to the Father’s will. All followers of Jesus must place the Kingdom of God before family and property, and in so doing are invited to take up the cross by fulfilling

²¹NMI 16.

²²See *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, (TMA): 40

²³PC 2 (a).

²⁴Ib.

²⁵*Letter 16* to M. María de Jesús. July 18, 1589.

their own mission, discerned in the light of faith (Lk 14:25-35). In consecrated life these three demands are interpreted in such a way that leads to a total commitment to God and service to others by means of consecrated chastity, poverty and obedience.

II. RETURNING TO THE ESSENCE OF CONSECRATED LIFE

30. Following Christ leads us to live what is essential to consecrated life, through the evangelical councils, and to reproduce Jesus' lifestyle under the impulse of the Spirit who "constantly renews the Church and leads her to perfect union with her Spouse"²⁶. Religious life is governed by the same dynamism. Religious Institutes rose up as a gift of the Spirit to the Church, to live and express particular gospel values in a radical way, and to reply to crisis situations as well as meeting the needs of people. In this way they fitted admirably into the circumstances of the era and spoke a vital and intelligible language for their contemporaries. The Holy Spirit has raised up various forms of consecrated life throughout history. Those that are new do not destroy the previous, but help them to renew themselves and return to what is essential.

31. Charisms tend continually to be changed through experience, to be understood more deeply, to find expression in many forms according to the historical moment, propelled also by the signs of the times that stimulate them, as so many actions of God in history. This internal evolution of charisms and the forms and structures in which they must express themselves in order to be read, is what constitutes the vitality of charisms and each moment of their development. The manifestation of our charism in history is the work of God and of human beings. As works of God they are perfect; but as the work of human beings they are fragile, imperfect and transitory. Hence it is necessary to remain open to what is new in a discernment of faith (see 1 Thes 5:19-21). The years after the council have been marked by this tension in the effort to assimilate the changes and face up to the challenges arising from them.

32. The postconciliar Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* emphasised the *essential aspects of the whole of consecrated life: consecration, communion and mission*. These essential elements of consecrated life are better understood when we contemplate them from a human and Christian point of view. Christ, through his life guides us towards an encounter with God (Faith), with others (Love) and with created reality (Hope). This leads us to encounter God, to be open to others and to the creative and committed work of transforming the world according to God's plan (Hope). Basically, consecration is an expression of faith in a personal God, the sole absolute to whom we owe loving obedience; communion is a help, supported by charity, which leads us to form a family gathered together in the name of the Lord; the mission to announce and give witness to the Gospel, in all its consequences and social demands, is the vocation of every Christian; consecrated persons seek to emphasise this in a commitment of active hope by dedicating themselves completely to the service of others.

33. These three key elements of human and consecrated life – encounter with Christ, fraternity and mission – cannot be separated. There is an interdependence and reciprocal link between them. An encounter with Christ manifests itself in love of neighbour, and inspires a commitment to transforming people and society by witness, prayer and work. If God sets people

²⁶LG 4

apart and consecrates them, it is to send them with complete freedom to evangelize the world. Consecrated people consecrate themselves to God through Christ in a spirit of willing service to others according to the plan of God's Kingdom. Our Holy Mother, Teresa of Jesus, wished to give this apostolic dimension to the whole of the Carmelite life of prayer and fraternity²⁷.

34. Until the 12th century, consecration was specifically expressed by just one vow (the vow of monastic life: *conversio morum*). This sole vow implied the whole of religious consecration. From the XII century onward, religious began to express their consecration by making explicit mention of three vows: *chastity, poverty and obedience*. These stimulated commitment to God and to service of others. In so far as they *set the person apart* for God, they imply a total and generous gifting of self to divine love. They signify the urge within human nature to seek the absolute and through it to feel free in the face of all. Renouncing the world is not an escape, but rather a more radical way of relating with it. The vows do not break relationship with the things of this world (poverty), nor with society (obedience), nor with woman or man (chastity). Rather, through the vows these relationships acquire a different dimension through their total dedication to God. The vows consecrate, dedicate, make people free and available for the cause of the Father and Christ in the world, guided by the workings of the Spirit.

There is a Trinitarian dimension to religious vows, which was emphasised in the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*²⁸.

35. In this way consecrated life took on, from its beginning, a *communitarian ideal*: in imitation of the twelve apostles as a group, and the Christian community at Jerusalem. Since Vatican II, this fraternal dimension of consecrated life has been rediscovered. This is presented as a fraternal living together of the Gospel in a Church of communion. This is precisely one of its principal testimonies. It is a way of making the salvation of Christ Jesus present, rendering possible communion between human beings. In 1994, the Congregation for Institutes of consecrated life and Societies of apostolic life published a document called *Fraternal Life in Community – “Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor”*. The document recalls the changes wrought in ecclesiology and canon law in regard to life in common, which led to the emphasis being placed, within consecrated life, more on fraternal life in community rather than on life in common. It also points out the evolution of aspects of human life in society which had a decisive effect on the community of consecrated people: movements for political and social emancipation in developing countries, demands for personal freedom and human rights, the advancement of women, the communications' explosion, along with consumerism and hedonism. “All this has been a challenge, a call to live the evangelical counsels with more vigour, and this has helped support the witness of the wider Christian community”²⁹.

36. In the call to consecrated life, as in Christian life in general, “the task of *devoting themselves wholly to ‘mission’* is therefore included in their call; indeed, by the action of the Holy Spirit who is at the origin of every vocation and charism, consecrated life itself is a mission, as was the whole of Jesus' life. The profession of the evangelical counsels, in making a person totally free for the service of the Gospel, is important also from this point of view. It can therefore be said that *a sense of mission is essential to every Institute*, not only those dedicated to the active apostolic life, but also those dedicated to the contemplative life”³⁰.

²⁷See *Way of Perfection* (V) 3:10.

²⁸See VC 17-21.

²⁹CICLSAL, *Fraternal Life in Community* (FLC) 4.

³⁰VC: 72.

Mission is nothing else than the apostolic dimension of Christian life that is lived as much in prayer as in evangelizing service. This explains why St Therese of Lisieux, doctor of the Church, a contemplative nun, was declared Patroness of the missions.

III. RETURNING TO THE ESSENCE OF OUR CHARISM AND SPIRITUALITY

37. The charism of Teresian Carmelite life is part of the long tradition of following Christ in the religious life. There are three fundamental elements in Teresian Carmelite life: the *Rule*, which is our inspiration, *the experience and doctrine of St Teresa and St John of the Cross*, and *the post-conciliar expression of our charism and spirituality in our Constitutions*.

Returning to the essentials implies a renewed awareness of those elements which constitute the central nucleus of our charism in the Church. This will allow us to face up to the challenges of the signs of the times in the Church and in the world

1. The Rule of St Albert

38. Our *Constitutions* clearly sum up the fundamental elements of the *Rule* of St Albert when they speak of our earliest ‘pattern of life’ in Carmel. This synthesis appears in the list of the principal prescriptions governing our life, which are as follows:

a) “to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ, serving him with a pure heart and a good conscience, looking to him alone for salvation, as we obey our Prior in a spirit of faith, with our mind more on Christ than on the Prior.

b) to meditate unceasingly the law of the Lord, to nourish *lectio divina*, and to strengthen our hearts with holy thoughts, so that the word of God may be always in our hearts and on our lips, and guide us in everything we do;

c) to come together daily for the celebration of the sacred liturgy;

d) to put on the armour of God, as we live an intense life of faith, hope and charity, in a spirit of evangelical self-denial and a generous commitment to work, after the example of Paul the Apostle;

e) to renew community life being careful to observe the good of the community and the salvation of souls, sustained by the charity of fraternal correction; to hold everything in common under the guidance of a Prior placed at the service of his brothers;

f) above all to lead a life of unceasing prayer in silence and solitude, in accordance with the gospel admonition to watch and pray;

g) to use prudent discretion in all that we do, especially when this entails more than duty requires of us³¹.

39. These points of the *Rule* continue to be valid, but we need to incarnate and live them with the nuances of the signs of times. These fundamental elements of the *Rule of St Albert* ought to be looked at today from the various ecclesial, social and cultural viewpoints, which are like different windows which help us discover its integral richness and pertinence for responding to the new challenges of our Teresian Carmelite life, as expressed in different cultural settings. In this way, while still searching with dynamic fidelity, we will discover the value and relevance of the experience of those who have gone before us³². A re-reading of the *Rule of Carmel* made

³¹*OCD Constitutions: 3.*

³²See Document from the 1997 General Chapter, *Begin always anew* and the conferences from the 1998 Extraordinary General Definitory celebrated on Mt Carmel: *The Rule of Carmel*.

with this attitude, as the Order already has been doing and has crystallised in the Constitutions, will make it possible to unite our experience as today's Carmelites with that of our predecessors who, guided by the Spirit, lived and transmitted to us a charism and a spirituality: "*Let us keep before us our true founders, those holy fathers from whom we descend, for we know that by means of that path of poverty and humility they now enjoy God*"³³.

40. We need to reread the *Rule* made by our holy Fathers and, remain open to what its richness and structure for coming generations. The *Rule* guides us to what is essential in our vocation: purity of heart, forming an interior world that must be purified in order to be receptive to the living God. The *Rule* offers a plan for life based on the gospel, simple and unifying, centred on Jesus Christ and within ecclesial communion, with its place in salvation history. It also offers a structured plan for the individual. It states clearly and with restraint the three relationships within the human person: with God (prayer), with others (community acts) and with oneself (spiritual life and personal meditation). The *Rule* offers a plan for community life where community has its place, existing in dialogue with authority in the Church and those living in community, including those from outside (guests or people helping the friars) as well as with other communities. In a society where everything has its price, the *Rule* emphasises the importance of the gratuity of love.

At present the Order is found in all the continents and in the most diverse of cultures. This requires us to assume the fundamental elements of the *Rule* in the attempt to express them in other cultures. It is also important to keep in mind a feminine re-reading of the *Rule*.

41. Our Holy Parents fashioned, in this way, the *re-foundation* they made: the absolute primacy of God (to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ), the contemplative dimension as avid listeners to the Word, personal and community life, marked and re-clothed with the weapons of God, by the "penance of reason and discretion"³⁴, by the Teresian ideal of love, detachment and humility³⁵

42. Teresa came in contact with the *Rule* when she was well on in her spiritual life, when she was giving shape to a new plan to live her vocation and was interested in underlining the connection between the new way of life and Carmel in its origins. She adopted the *Rule* as the basic law of the house; she applied it with spiritual liberty and enriched it with the experience of her vocation. St John of the Cross has no explicit allusion to the *Rule*, however his teaching reveals and deepens for us its fundamental values: allegiance to Christ, God the sole absolute, abnegation, listening to the Word and responding to it through faith, hope and charity.

43. Our Holy Parents made an authentic "re-foundation". In going back to the roots of Carmel they opened up new horizons for the Order, in this way replying to the challenges of their era. First of all came their experience which they set down in their writings which shed light on our own journey. We have to go back to this experience and to this doctrine if we are to recover what is essential in the charism and spirituality of the Carmel of Teresa and John of the Cross.

2. The experience and teaching of St Teresa

New horizons.

³³ST TERESA OF JESUS *Foundations* 14: 4.

³⁴1 DN 6:2

³⁵See *Way* (V) 4:4.

44. Our Holy Mother was always innately very gifted for interpersonal relationships and friendship. Her own experience lies at the source of our vocational identity in the Church. She was centred on God, “caught up” by him and in him, the Trinitarian mystery. Her conscious awareness was totally occupied with the Divine Persons (God) which launched in her a strong and vivid interpersonal relationship, immersing her in the life of intra-Trinitarian relationship. She experienced the presence and nearness of the Father. “All one need do is go into solitude and look at Him within oneself”³⁶. In her *Spiritual Testimonies* she speaks to us about her experience of the Father who drew near to her and spoke very pleasant words. “Among them, while showing me what He wanted, He told me: ‘I gave you My Son, and the Holy Spirit’”³⁷.

45. Our Holy Mother tell us that by assuming our human nature through the working of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, not only assumed our frailty, work and limitations and thus understands our weakness, but he also revealed the direction and the limits of our human condition and, because of this, he is a companion and true friend: “We are not angels but we have a body. To desire to be angels while we are on earth... is foolishness... and in times of dryness, Christ is a very good friend because we behold Him as man and see Him with weaknesses and trials – and He is company for us”³⁸. For this reason St Teresa was opposed to the opinion of many theologians who demanded that one leave aside the humanity of Christ in order to be able to ascend to higher grades of contemplation. She states strongly that there is never need to separate oneself from Christ’s humanity³⁹. According to Teresa’s teaching, following Jesus under the action of the Spirit also implies accepting our human nature and living it as a grace, as a vehicle of grace. This also means experiencing its limitations and weaknesses. To become like Christ is also to become human, or if you wish, to become a person, to be a person.

46. Naturally, St Teresa teaches us as well that, joined to this process of humanization, there is also a process of divinisation. She also defines for us this combination of the human and divine. All Teresian asceticism searches for liberation and the strengthening of the human, the adornment of the person, so that we can be transformed into signs and instruments of the Man-God and the God-Man: “the holier they are the more sociable they are with their Sisters....be affable, agreeable, and pleasing to persons with whom we deal”⁴⁰. Teresa communicates to us her delightful discovering of God and his demands that reach into the core of our human relationships. According to her, the fact that God became human, opens the way for us and makes possible our own humanization, that is carried into the humanization of every structure, always for the service of others, as Vatican II reminds us: “the human person is and ought to be the beginning, the subject and the object of every social organization”⁴¹. In her project of renewing Carmel, Teresa was totally committed to this alleviation of structures. She managed to pass from a rigid, hieratic attitude, to a gospel humanism: “understand, my father, that I am a friend of intensifying virtue, but not rigour, as will be seen in our houses”⁴². St Teresa always defended tolerance and humanism in structures and in applying laws, since “a weighed down

³⁶Way 28:2.

³⁷*Spiritual Testimonies*, Avila, Incarnation, Jan 19, 1572. ICS edition n° 21:2, Burgos Edition 25:2.

³⁸Life 22:10.

³⁹See VI *Mansions* 7:9.

⁴⁰Way 41:7.

⁴¹GS 25.

⁴²Letter to Fr Ambrosio Mariono, 12/12/1576.

soul cannot serve God well”⁴³.

47. Joined to the experience of Father and Son, St Teresa was aware of the presence and action of the Spirit in her life. “It seems to me the Holy Spirit must be a mediator between the soul and God”⁴⁴. He it is who guides the life of people and communicates the faith to them, as to the Apostles. He accompanies us in prayer and lets us experience the presence of the Father and Son.

48. Her journey, as expressed in the way she lived and much later in what she taught, consisted of *prayer*, considered as *friendship*⁴⁵. It is *the* “means” and “place” *par excellence* of her experience of God. St Teresa emphasises the importance of encounter with the Lord in silence and solitude, yet, though already in the fulness of union with God, she could write “the Lord walks among the pots and pans”⁴⁶. God communicates himself by many paths⁴⁷, not only when we are “off in some corner”⁴⁸.

Prayer is the centre and axis of her spiritual message. Understood as *friendship* it extends to the whole of life, and leads to being God’s friends. For this reason, when she presents her *teaching* on prayer she insists on *being*: “what we must be like”⁴⁹. She also speaks of the re-creation of being (fraternal love, detachment, humility equalling truth) as “things that are necessary for those who seek to follow the way of prayer”⁵⁰.

49. This approach allowed her to give instruction on life in *community*, which is another extremely essential point in the experience and teaching of Teresa. She compares her communities to the group of the Twelve surrounding Christ and calls them the “college of Christ”⁵¹. It is the Lord who “brought us together here”⁵². Community arises because the Lord summons it and brings it together for a collective gift to him: “to give ourselves to the All entirely and without reserve”⁵³. He makes us a new family: “You will not find better relatives than those He sends you”⁵⁴. Right from the beginning, this prayer-as-friendship is centred on *Christ Jesus*⁵⁵. In him, the “living book”, she learned “the truths”⁵⁶ of God’s nature and our own, of our call to “being conformed” to him⁵⁷. It must be emphasised that Teresian humanism springs from this very point.

50. Consecrated persons are transformed into friends and spouses of Jesus, and must be a gift for others: in the Church and in the world. Prayer, for St Teresa, is not reduced to a few

⁴³Letter to Fr Jerónimo Gracián, 21/2/1581.

⁴⁴*Meditations on the Song of Songs* 5:5.

⁴⁵*Life* 8: 5.

⁴⁶*Foundations* 5: 8.

⁴⁷*Ib.* 5.

⁴⁸*Ib.* 16.

⁴⁹*Way* 4: 1.

⁵⁰*Ib.* 3.

⁵¹*Way* 27: 6.

⁵²*Id.* 8: 1-3.

⁵³*Way* 8: 1.

⁵⁴*Way* 9:4

⁵⁵*Life* 4:8, 9:4.

⁵⁶*Life* 26: 5.

⁵⁷*Way* 22.

moments, let alone locking us up in ourselves⁵⁸. Thus she educated her nuns to: “dedicate themselves to the good of souls and the increase of His Church”⁵⁹. “Those who truly love this Lord and know their own nature”, their own self becomes a gift⁶⁰. It is not the gift of self that sanctifies, rather it is in giving oneself that one becomes sanctified. In this way they are “fighting for Christ”⁶¹. Mary is the supreme expression of the Carmelite vocation: “you have such a good mother”⁶², we ought to “live our lives as true children of the Blessed Virgin”⁶³, then the reform is “Our Lady’s cause”⁶⁴. We are “her Order”⁶⁵.

51. This intimate experience of the three divine Persons and their action in ourselves and in history is vivid and nourishing in prayer that is friendship with the Trinity. Humanism rises out of the incarnation of the Word. Communion is a proclamation of the Gospel when it is fruit of the presence and action of the Spirit stimulating the mission to proclaim the Good News of salvation and to live in faith (humility-truth), hope (detachment) and love⁶⁶.

3. The experience and teaching of St John of the Cross

51. St John of the Cross was also strongly influenced – in his experience and teaching – by the mystery of the tripersonal God who is self-communicating. It was an experience that made him “go out”, to make a personal commitment of his life, to react positively to God’s loving-action in the soul: “if anyone is seeking God, the Beloved is seeking that person much more”⁶⁷. “The soul’s centre is God”⁶⁸. The saint, in explaining the nature of our being children of God, speaks of the desire to understand the deep ways and mysteries of the Incarnation which holds the person transformed in Christ by the action of the Spirit: “One of the reasons urging the soul most to enter this thicket of God’s wisdom and to know its beauty from further within is... to unite her intellect with God in the knowledge of the mysteries of the Incarnation, in which is contained the highest and most savory wisdom of all his works”⁶⁹. The believer desires to enter into these “caverns” of Christ to be absorbed, transformed and intoxicated, that is, to live and share in the divine sonship, “equals and companions of God”⁷⁰. This process of being transformed into children in the Son is brought about by the working of the Holy Spirit, who purifies believers of all that is not God and gives them the possibility of loving God with God’s own love, and to arrive at the fulness of God’s image which we are from the moment of our birth⁷¹. St John of the Cross emphasises that this participation of the life of the Trinity, through the working of the Holy Spirit, makes the soul like God, and so the soul can be raised to God’s image and likeness. “No knowledge or power can describe how this happens, unless by

⁵⁸*Way* 3:10;

⁵⁹*Foundations* 1: 6.

⁶⁰*Foundations* 5: 5.

⁶¹*Way* 3: 5.

⁶²3M 1:3

⁶³F 16:7, 27:10

⁶⁴F 28:7

⁶⁵F 28:37, 29:31

⁶⁶F 3:18.

⁶⁷*Living Flame* 3: 28.

⁶⁸*Living Flame* 1:12

⁶⁹*Spiritual Canticle* (B) 37:2.

⁷⁰*Spiritual Canticle* (B) 39:6.

⁷¹See *Living Flame* 3:79.

explaining how the Son of God attained and merited such a high state for us, the power to be children of God”⁷².

53. The encounter with God arises always from the *theological virtues*: the action of God in which, at one and the same time, he himself communicates and is communicated⁷³, who purifies and unites⁷⁴. Through the theological virtues, the saint explains the whole process of God gifting himself and the human response: “the sole proximate means to union”. In substance, Christian life is uniquely the life of the theological virtues.

This approach is also deepened through *prayer-contemplation*: “it brings to prayer no other support than faith, hope, and love”⁷⁵. The Holy Spirit is the agent of contemplation: “the Holy Spirit will not illumine it (the soul) ... more than in faith”⁷⁶. He is the “living flame” who purifies (true and profound “asceticism”) and unites, “makes divine”. The whole of the spiritual journey is made under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

54. It is a spiritual journey consisting simultaneously of *purification* and of *union*, marked by the saint’s own experience and taught by him. This journey passes through the *Night*, “moments” of *experiencing* purification more intensely, decisive “moments” in the journey *consisting of* union, which merited special treatment by the Mystical Doctor. *Union* is the vocation of humankind, a reality in evolution, dynamic, in development, which presides over the believer’s journey and “conditioned” and shed light on the whole of St John’s exposition⁷⁷. This union, which in its ultimate fulfilment is a profound immersion in the mystery of the Trinitarian life⁷⁸, brings to fulfilment our filial state in an efficient manner⁷⁹.

55. *Jesus Christ*, the Son, the means of our participation in the Trinitarian mystery⁸⁰, is also, through his passion and death, our own way, who justifies and verifies our “passion and death”, our “process of asceticism”: to “follow him to Calvary and the sepulchre”⁸¹. This is the meaning of chapter 7 of the second book of the *Ascent*, in which the saint offers us his understanding of “the mystery of the door and way which is Christ”⁸², *our way*⁸³. This is the word he uses in the tiny group of recommendations in *1 Ascent* 13:3; thus he sums up the *Night*: “we enter further, deep into the thicket”⁸⁴. It is to die to whatever “still impedes the inner resurrection of the Spirit” by “following in his (Christ’s) footsteps”⁸⁵. St John of the Cross presents Jesus as the Word of the Father, in what he said to us, in giving everything to us and in remaining silent. The Father has given us his Son as a brother, companion, our ransom and pledge. This ought to nourish in us a basic attitude: to fix our gaze on Christ since in him the Father has revealed everything,

⁷²*Spiritual Canticle* (B) 39:5.

⁷³*Spiritual Canticle* 1: 10; 12: 1-2, 4.

⁷⁴*2 Dark Night* 21: 11-12; *2 Ascent* 6.

⁷⁵*Sayings* 119.

⁷⁶*2 Ascent* 29: 6.

⁷⁷*2 Ascent* 5.

⁷⁸*Canticle* 39; *Living Flame* 2: 77-79.

⁷⁹*Living Flame* 1: 27; 3: 10, 78.

⁸⁰*Canticle* 39: 5-6.

⁸¹*Sayings* 165.

⁸²*2 Ascent* 7: 11.

⁸³*Ib.* 12.

⁸⁴*Canticle* 36: 10-13.

⁸⁵*Letter 7 to Beas Nuns*, Málaga, Nov. 18, 1586.

“since he has finished revealing the faith through Christ, there is no more faith to reveal, nor will there ever be”⁸⁶.

56. What is essential in the experience and teaching of St John is found, as in St Teresa, in the area of the Trinity: the three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are those who bring about the work of union of the human being with God⁸⁷. This is accomplished by means of a journey enlightened by Christ, the Word of the Father, and guided by the Holy Spirit. It passes through nights of purification which lead to maturity in faith, hope and charity. These three fundamental virtues are the means and preparation for union with God⁸⁸ and guide the practice of an authentic Christian prayer. The humanism of St John of the Cross complements that of St Teresa. This humanism is found in his sensitivity to the beauty of nature, his love for music, his concern for the sick and poor, and particularly in his poetical writings.

4. The charism and spirituality of the Teresian Carmel

57. *Vita Consecrata* invites Religious “courageously to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today’s world”⁸⁹. In the Carmel of Teresa and St John this historical dynamism of the charism has been incarnated and enriched by the sanctity of so many of our brothers and sisters who, in various times and places, were a living testimony of our Order, which they converted into a silent and eloquent basis for an authentic creative fidelity. Among other outstanding witnesses are Teresa of Lisieux, Elizabeth of the Trinity, Edith Stein, Raphael Kalinowski, and Teresa of los Andes.

It is of the utmost importance that the spiritual life “must therefore have first place in the programme of Families of consecrated life, in such a way that every Institute and community will be a school of true evangelical spirituality”⁹⁰. This charismatic experience is a particular characteristic of our Order which, through its *Constitutions* approved by the Church, has obtained the guarantee that “in its spiritual and apostolic charism are found all the objective requisites for achieving personal and communal perfection according to the Gospel”⁹¹.

58. Number 15 of our *Constitutions* presents the essentials of our charism and spirituality. Reflecting on this will help us to renew what truly is basic to our vocation and mission.

“Having considered our roots in history and our Teresian charism, we are now in a position to outline the principal elements of the way of life we profess:

a) We are committed to a consecrated life of allegiance to Jesus Christ. In this we are sustained by the companionship, the example and protection of our Lady. Her life of union with Christ we regard, as it were, the prototype of ours.

b) Our vocation is a grace by which we are called to a ‘hidden union with God’, in a form of life and fraternal sharing in which contemplation and action are blended to become a signal apostolic service of the Church.

c) This call to prayer embraces our whole life. Sustained by the word of God and the

⁸⁶2 *Ascent* 22:7.

⁸⁷See *Living Flame* 2:1.

⁸⁸See 2 *Ascent* 6:6.

⁸⁹*Vita Consecrata* 37.

⁹⁰Id. 93.

⁹¹Ib.

sacred liturgy, we are led to live in intimate friendship with God. By growing in faith, hope and above all charity, we deepen our prayer life. With our heart thus purified we are enabled to share more closely in the life of Christ himself, and prepare the way for a more abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In this way the Teresian charism and the original spirit of Carmel become a reality in our lives as we walk in the presence of the living God.

d) The very nature of our charism demands that our prayer and our whole religious life be ardently apostolic, and that we put ourselves at the service of the Church and of all humankind. This must be done in such a way that ‘our apostolic activity stems from our close union with Christ’. Indeed we must aim at that most fruitful of all apostolates which derives from the ‘state of union with God’.

e) It is for this twofold service, contemplative and active, that we share life as brothers in the community. United by the bond of love in fraternal life, we also bear witness to the unity of the Church, faithful in this to our Holy Mother, who wanted her communities to resemble ‘the college of Christ’.

f) This way of life, based on the primitive Rule and the teaching of our Holy Parents, must be sustained by constant evangelical self-denial”.

59. St Teresa also deals with practical ways of living of our charism and spirituality. “The way of life she proposed to us was to be marked with a distinctive style and character. She wanted social virtues and human values to be duly fostered. She inculcated a joyous family spirit, affability in community life, nobility of soul and mutual respect. Our young religious were to be carefully trained; study and culture were to be encouraged. The ascetical practices of our communities were to be at the service of a deeper theological life, and geared to the demands of the apostolic ministry. There was to be a bond of unity between our communities and of evangelical friendship between our religious”⁹².

PART TWO

BUILDING OUR FUTURE IN THE LIGHT OF OUR TERESIAN CARMELITE IDENTITY

60. In the Introduction, *A Glance at the Reality*, we spoke of the principal challenges arising from today’s social, cultural and ecclesial world and which seek a response from us. The Teresian Carmel of the future will respond from its own identity in the various social and cultural, religious, ecclesial and Carmelite spheres. In all these areas we now point out some challenges while indicating a few operative conclusions which will allow us to undertake practical ways of renewal while remaining faithful to our tradition.

1. Socio-cultural aspect

61. The phenomena of *secularisation* on one extreme and religious fundamentalism on the other find in Carmel’s experience an evaluation and guidance. The value of temporal realities have been sung by our mystics who discovered in all these the imprint of God. At the same time our saints saw them as means for going much further and opening oneself to Gods transcendence, present and close to us, but always greater than what we experience. The contemplative and

⁹²*Constitutions* 10.

prayer dimension of Carmel ought to be lived and presented as an opening to the transcendent, as a source of commitment and hope in efforts to transform the world, as a way for ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue according to the various social and cultural situations.

62. The challenges of *freedom* and *liberation*, fruit of the awareness of human dignity, demand a commitment from all people of good will in the defence and promotion of human rights. Carmel of the future cannot remain detached from these challenges, knowing how Teresa of Jesus, John of the Cross and our other saints, masters of the spiritual life, spoke of the dignity of persons created in the imaged of God and called to be transformed in him. St John of the Cross invites us to consider the greatness of the human being who has the vocation of living the divine life, for this reason “one human thought alone is worth more than the entire world, hence God alone is worthy of it”⁹³.

63. *Globalization* puts the world in communication and transforms it, yet at the same time is the cause of much poverty, marginalization and exploitation. Carmelite prayer, understood as friendly conversation with God and a journey of communion with him, allows Carmel of the future to be a sign and instrument of dialogue and communion. The contemplative experience of God, on the other hand, will emphasise the need to include God in working out *ethical values*. God is their foundation and without him nothing that is authentic can be created.

64. The Teresian Carmelites are willing to confront the challenges present in the Church and in the socio-cultural world of today. We wish to encourage an awareness of sociology which will help our Religious to discern better the world we live in. We also want our Religious to discern the Church and today’s world always from a perspective that is both realistic and incarnate. As a result, it is necessary that right from initial formation help be given to “be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live”⁹⁴ Our Religious should understand that they are corresponsable for modern society and learn to be involved. And in doing this also seek solutions no matter how insignificant they appear to be. We should learn how to be prophetic as indeed we are called to be, and not be inactive nor run away from problems. For this reason:

1. In on-going formation there would be present a deepening understanding of how things stand in the world of the day, in general, and of the various social and cultural contexts in particular.

2. As Teresian Carmelites we must live and transmit our spirituality as a way of authentic liberty and commitment to justice and peace.

2. Religious aspect

65. In today’s world there exists a great *thirst for spirituality* that often degenerates into spiritualism. According to the experience and teachings of our saints, the vocation and mission of Carmel is precisely to go to the root of true spirituality which is superior to superficial experiences of the sacred.

Our communities, centred on God as the Absolute, should be *schools of prayer* which continue to transform their members into true contemplatives, capable of discovering God’s intimate presence both in what happens in people and in our world, in what is positive and negative – a God who questions us and pleads with us.

⁹³*Sayings of Light and Love*: 35.

⁹⁴GS 4.

Such authentic contemplation will be capable of revealing the face of God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to people who are struggling to find him. As members of the Teresian Carmel we ought to try to diffuse love and knowledge of this God encountered in prayer, who also leads us to be committed to justice and peace.

Living and witnessing to *an experience of God* will take place in the midst of the challenges of each social, cultural and ecclesial environment. We need to give help in discovering God as a source of plenitude, as a liberator, as the God of hope, as a Father-Mother, as somebody always near.

66. In the effort to find the truth and meaning of life which is characteristic of humanity's journey in every age, the *Word of God* is a light which illumines and directs believers in Christ. Carmel which, from its beginnings, has held as an ideal meditation, night and day, on the Word of the Lord, has before it a need and a duty – the need to live listening to the Word and the duty of educating others to do so. It is an active reading made with the conviction that scripture arises from the life and experience of a people guided by God, who, in faith, have discovered his presence and questioning in history and that he gives them strength to reply. The Bible is the model experience with which we ought deal with our own experiences. The mission of Carmelite communities will be that of being centres of spiritual accompaniment in reading the Bible so that it can be transformed into a prayerful, contemplative and involved approach since “we speak to God when we pray; we listen to him when we read his divine words”⁹⁵. In this way a spiritualistic and reductive reading of scripture is avoided and help is given to discover God's call in everyday life and in one's own vocation and mission. Here lies a challenge for Carmel in the future to renew its life and fulfil its mission.

67. Carmel of the future is called to respond to *the thirst for God that exists in the present world*. Carmelite spirituality has immense possibilities for responding to this thirst for God and for leading people into a deeper relationship with God. All our communities of apostolic and contemplative life, friars, nuns and laity, ought to be committed to the task of living a deep spiritual life based on the Gospel and sharing it. Starting with this, the Teresian Carmel of the future will be able to offer a professional service in the Church whether it be in sharing, or in hospitality offering space and means for this experience to others, or in the creation of Spirituality Centres and Institutes. In Asia our Religious are called to commit themselves to an open-ended dialogue with the major non-Christian religions, especially in the area of spirituality. They do this in harmony with the Church in that part of the world. In order to succeed with this commitment we should find new forms of prayer, as well as ways of living an interior-life and community that are more in harmony with Asian religious expression. In the Western World The Teresian Carmelites are aware of what is happening; viz, the lack of faith and religious indifference of so many of our contemporaries; also, in the Church, how people, especially the young, are moving away from institutionalized religion. We believe that we can help all these people to discover the truth that lies there and to yearn for God hidden in the very centre of life. We do this by re-reading the teaching of our saintly Mystics, in union with the reflection and deepening that is happening in the Church. All this demands us to be, at the same time, more authentic people of prayer and more in touch with humanity.

68. As a consequence it follows:

1. There is a need to rediscover the importance of reading and meditation on the Word of God in connection with life in order to be able to educate the People of God in a prayerful reading

⁹⁵*Dei Verbum* 25.

of Scripture as a point of departure for an evangelising commitment. The present structures of our life already offer a convenient space to do this. We should not forget how important evangelical denial is for both witnessing and announcing the Good News. Mary, the prayerful Virgin who listened to the Word of God and put it into practice, is the model to follow. We should organize together workshops, lectures and retreats where we can introduce the Word of Life, then reflect and pray together. Such events should be occasions to mix with the Laity.

2. We are also committed to the promotion of the writings and lives of our Saints, in our Communities, with other Religious and with the Laity. Provinces should look for opportunities to offer courses and conferences. We should make an effort to reread the writing of our Saints so as to be able to present them as spokespersons for the Christian world, who will have something to offer in the areas of ecumenism, inter-religious dialogue and culture. One of the ways to achieve this goal is *to train people to become experts in the area of Carmelite Spirituality as well as Christian mysticism*.

3. We also reaffirm our wish to create national or regional Institutes and Centres of Teresian Carmelite spirituality for the purpose of evangelization, which will bring our friars into contact with the teaching of our saints interpreted according to the various social, cultural and ecclesial contexts. It is equally important that our Religious should be capable of using modern means of communication in the service of a pastoral, spiritual ministry.

4. It is essential to cultivate a renewed fidelity to the special times of personal and liturgical prayer in order to continue growing in a contemplative attitude which allows us to experience God in all circumstances, persons and happenings, and which leads us to a committed contemplation which gives witness to and proclaims the presence of God in our history.

3. Ecclesial aspect

69. Creative fidelity and the demands of our era have brought to the fore the relevance of the Teresian ideal of being *small praying communities that are fraternal and committed to proclaiming the Gospel*. These small communities, close to reality, will be called to be signs of the presence of God in the heart of history and in the world. When people are close to life as it is, it will of necessity create a diversity of *inculturated* Carmelite fraternities. This will demand a change of structures.

These communities will need to stay open to *sharing our charism and spirituality with the laity*, who will give the communities the needed nearness to reality in order to take on the great challenges and to form part of this reality. This requires deep revision of the models for life, of organization, of the channels through which witness is given to prayerful and apostolic fraternity. They will have to be communities that can live Carmelite life in a simple, humble and more spontaneous form in ordinary conditions, in order to transform themselves into true place of encounter for those who seek contemplative prayer.

70. In order to respond to the challenges within the Church:

1. Formation and renewal of fraternal life in community will continue to be one of the priorities of the Order if we wish to be faithful to the Teresian Carmelite charism. Along the lines of the Teresian ideal they will have to try to be communities that are prayerful and fraternal in the service of God's kingdom. This requires bringing about community projects that are authentic and viable and that help overcome growing individualism. Concrete forms of community organization will take into account the requirements set out in our Constitutions and in the various social and cultural settings which require diverse styles of organization and of life.

2. Since it is the individual person who is the foundation for all renewal, in initial as in on-going formation the criteria for discernment and accompaniment must be openness,

commitment and self denial. Only from this understanding of the person and this evangelical way, can the project for renewal be able to make sense and be effective.

3. Along the lines set down in the post-synodal document *Vita Consecrata*⁹⁶, our communities will have to be more open to sharing their life, charism and spirituality with the laity. New experiences in this field, accompanied by periodic evaluation, are necessary. Community dialogue, involving those in charge of areas of jurisdiction and with the laity, will manage to establish experiences of this type. The promotion of the Laity should be a priority especially in the area of formation, in this way they will be prepared to be co-responsible with us in serving Christian communities.

4. As evangelization is essential to our identity we ought to be open to collaborating with the Church in the field of evangelization, particularly in offering our service of spirituality also in missionary territories. We will also give importance to involvement in ecumenical as well as inter religious dialogue.

5. In particular, many of our Friars are involved in evangelization both at home and on the missions through parochial ministry, or in Churches that are not parishes. Those who are involved in Formation should take into account this phenomenon and provide suitable doctrinal and pastoral training. In this way we should know how to create or animate ecclesial communities from Teresian-Carmelite Communities.

4. Carmelite aspect

71. The point of departure is, and always will be, forming our communities in the charism of Teresa and John of the Cross with the type of fraternity and the essential values of our vocation in the Church. What remains evident is the necessity of a training in the charism that is capable of making people aware of their personal and community charism and open to giving witness to it and sharing it by participating in the various charisms. This requires an ecclesiology of communion that does not diminish the particular qualities of each charism and does not cover over the differences, instead it makes diversity a source of enrichment. Of particular importance is training in the relationship between the members of the Order and the laity, and in contact with the various contexts of communion and collaboration, not only in the apostolic field but also in how the sources inspiring our charism and spirituality are lived.

72. One of the means for making more efficient and putting new life into the service that the charism and spirituality of Carmel can offer to people is that of dialogue and collaboration between the various components making up the *Teresian Carmelite family*, as well as being open to *cultural diversity*.

In the spiritual and apostolic field, Carmel has many *affiliated* religious congregations and secular institutes. The spiritual source and the various frameworks of the Carmelite charism contribute to making present the wealth of the Carmelite charism and spirituality in the various fields of ministry, in formation and in the new evangelization. In the future we need to increase this work together. Along with this, what will give greater efficiency to the witness and mission of Carmel is a new relationship with Secular Carmel and the other groups that have been born and continue to be born in the heart of the family of Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross. In order to understand the role and mission of the Laity better it is important that our formation includes the teaching of the Church's Magisterium, especially as made known in such documents as *Gaudium et Spes*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, *Christifideles Laici* and *Vita Consecrata*, 54-56.

⁹⁶VC 54-56.

73. In accordance with what has been said above:

1. There is a need to promote dialogue and reflection together with the members of Secular Carmel, with the affiliated institutes and other Teresian Carmelite groups in order to discover new ways of living our charism and spirituality and placing it at the service of the Church. In this way the Spirit who gives us life may be more clearly seen in the way we relate to each other and in the way we work together to promote our common charism.

2. There is equally a need to promote dialogue with our contemplative Carmelite sisters in order to enrich the perception we have of our charism and spirituality with the feminine outlook which complements and gives balance to the masculine perspective through a dimension that is intuitive and affective, realistic, nuptial and maternal, Marian, and which is oriented towards acceptance, intimacy and compassion. For this special dialogue it will help to be supportive of the Associations and Federations now developing. We should respect and strengthen these decision making bodies, while at the same time acknowledging the legitimate autonomy of each Monastery. It will also be necessary to form our friars in this new style of fraternal relationship with our sisters. This can best be done through meetings and courses for this purpose. These will be particularly useful for those who exercise a ministry with our sisters.

All of this will be in accordance with the mind of the Church and the Order and in the light of the teaching of our Saints. We should remain open to the participation of our sisters in our discussions and, when ever opportune, invite them to our formal meetings, especially when they are the subject being discussed. This should always be done in such a way that their autonomy and freedom are respected.

3. We are in favour of the formation of our Carmelite family with all those groups in harmony with our ideal: Affiliated Institutes, Confraternities, and Associations, so that the spirit that gives us life is seen more clearly in the authenticity of our relationships, in our collaboration, co-ordination and promotion of our charism.

4. We confirm the value and importance of our traditional Carmelite devotions which should be adapted where necessary to the age we live in.

5. New wine new skins

74. All these considerations, which we have made from the viewpoint of returning to what is essential in what has been handed down from our Holy Parents, cannot be transformed into reality without a profound change of life, as we previously pointed out, and without adequate restructuring that helps us to live our fraternal life better as praying communities, while serving the Church from within our particular charism and spirituality.

75. This means, above all, being open to an organization of our communities that has *very diverse forms and is adapted to different cultures and situations*. This will take place in various ways: where a monastic structure prevails, with a good number in community; in other contexts, the reverse will happen, the solution will be to have much smaller communities that are more inserted into the reality of the people. In some places the accent will be placed on some aspects, in others these will have to take second place, but there will always exist a commitment to preserve essential values.

76. The challenge arising from what is essential is how to find the key to open the door leading to new replies for new situations. We are called to run the risk of faith in order to journey along the unknown ways of the Spirit. This demands that we bring our charism up to date and, at times, redesign our presences keeping in mind certain *criteria*, various *viewpoints* and *concrete methods*.

77. We need, above all, to live the identity of our charism and know how to transmit it in an intelligible manner, faithful to the Church and in dialogue with things as they stand. An authentic restructuring ought to be guided by these *criteria*. The *viewpoints* ought to be the signs of times and places, in a particular manner that of inculturation which leads to unity in diversity.

78. *Practical methods* open a range of possibilities that vary from *internal restructuring* of some of our presences and activities (rearranging our aims, finding new addressees, changing our role, reducing or amplifying it according to occasions, opening ourselves to collaboration with the Secular Order and associated laity) to the *redistribution of our resources* (strengthening some presences, diminishing others). On other occasions we may need to *close down some of our houses*, when they no longer correspond to the present day conditions of our Teresian Carmelite life, our personnel, or our needs. Lastly, and this is the way of creative fidelity, we might need to open up other presences, which would be more consonant with our charism and with present day challenges in different social, cultural and ecclesial contexts.

79. We therefore commit ourselves to:

1. *Encourage meetings at the Provincial or Circumscription level which will help us to be more aware of authentic ways for renewal.* At these meetings we will discern the vitality of our Centres and Houses, those that are more dynamic (*vitales*) and those that are not; those with little prospect for the future. Then will be the time to decide on what to do, either to strengthen or re-structure, to suppress or to establish something new. Thinking of the future we will favour the houses of formation, in which the commitment to the apostolate and spirituality is greater, and those which more directly respond to the permanent or new challenges of society and the Church, both on a universal as well as a particular level.

2. Organize in the Provinces and Circumscriptions a permanent formation programme that will help to deepen our understanding in the areas of theology of Religious Life today, in the Order's spirituality and *in human growth and development* as the foundation for renewal. We envisage that all the members of the Province will take part in these programmes, especially those who are presently working as Formators as well as those being prepared. In this way everyone will have a chance for a period of spiritual, intellectual and pastoral renewal. We encourage the young Religious to study systematic theology and other relevant studies so that some of them will be ready to continue this essential work of teaching theology.

3. At the national or regional level study ways of working more closely together so that we can live better as Teresian Carmelites. The area of formation will be particularly important, as will be the promotion of common initiatives that characterize our presence and apostolate in the Church. The General Definitory will do all it can to encourage and support initiatives that will come from working together more.

PART THREE

THE TERESIAN CARMEL ON THE PATH TO RENEWAL: OPERATIVE CONCLUSIONS

80. **Aim:** We wish to express in these operative conclusions the **life** and **mission** of the Order. Our wish is to follow our Saints and return to what is essential and to rise to the challenges of our time.

1. Fraternal dimension of our life

a) Community life

81. Each Circumscription works out with its Communities a common Community Project that should be feasible and able to be evaluated. It should keep in mind the weekly, monthly and yearly rhythms/cycles of each community, which help to further the growth process. The Project will help to overcome a growing individualism.

Each Community will try to get a sufficient number of Religious so that each can live the Teresian ideal of *small, praying, fraternal communities committed to announcing the Gospel*.

Foster collaboration between everyone. Every Region will implement a common project among the various Circumscriptions.

Every Circumscription will spread material and organize activity so that the Communities come to be introduced to the practise of *Lectio Divina*, of prayerfully reading the Bible together, and in the knowledge of Christ (*Canticle 37:4*), **per partire sempre da lui (NMI 29).**?

There ought to be organised meetings at both Community and Provincial levels to promote the study and reflection of Church Documents specifically on consecrated life (*Vita Consecrata, Congregavit nos in unum...*), and form a Teresian style of fraternal life.

b) Initial and On-Going Formation

It is important that our Formators be introduced to pastoral theology, both doctrinal and practical, so that they know how to create or revitalize local ecclesial communities based on the Teresian-Carmelite Community.

Activities should be organised periodically to deepen our awareness of the socio-cultural reality in which we live, thereby encouraging theological reflection that is both incarnate and existential. These activities should involve our students from the beginning of their formation.

We would like our Religious to see specialization in spiritual theology and related studies as of primary importance

During the time of initial formation there is to be organized a time of intensive study on the sources of our spirituality.

Before solemn profession and where it is judged opportune each Friar should have an experience of either his socio-cultural reality or of mission.

In order that our Religious be more pastorally effective they will continue to be trained in the

use of the means of communication. This training should be both adequate and critical.

On the levels of initial and on-going formation in the Circumscriptions our Religious should be trained in a new style of fraternal relationship with our Discalced Carmelite Sisters, with the Secular Order, the Associated Laity and Affiliated Institutes, according to the directives of the Church and of the Order, and in the light of the teaching of our Saints.

Regional meetings of Formators will be organized in order to work together in formation and to develop ways to teach prayer

c) Non-Clerical Brothers

When we promote our vocation to Carmel we need to make it clear that there is only one vocation, to live as a Priest or as a Brother.

The General Chapter favours the use, within the Order, of the denominations: “Discalced Carmelites” or “Discalced Carmelite Brothers” or “Discalced Carmelite Friars”.

The Definitory can invite to the General Chapter some non-clerical Brothers as Observers when none have been elected by their Provinces to the Chapter.

2. Discalced Carmelite Nuns

We need to encourage dialogue especially with our Discalced Carmelite Sisters at the Generalate and Provincial levels. Such dialogue will enrichen the understanding we have of our common charism.

It is also important to train our Friars to new ways of relating fraternally with our Sisters, that is not individualistic nor paternalistic.

The General Chapter asks the Provincial Superior to support the formation of Associations and Federations of Discalced Carmelite Nuns, in their Circumscriptions; working in collaboration with the General Superior, while respecting the autonomy and freedom of the Monasteries.

We ought to be open to our Discalced Carmelite Sisters joining in our discussions in some way or other, on the themes that concern them.

3. Carmelite Secular Order

Every Circumscription or Region will organize a session on the new OCDS Constitutions for all those Friars who are responsible for the Fraternities.

The General Chapter asks all the Circumscriptions of the Order to organize meetings for the Religious on the theme of ecclesiology and mission of the Laity, in the light of LG. AA. Ch.L and VC. These meetings should encourage a greater collaboration with and esteem for the Secular Carmel.

During the sexennium the Secretary of the Carmelite Secular Order will develop a *Ratio*

institutionis and a formation programme for the OCDS , as a basis for respective Provincial programmes of formation.

4. Apostolic & Missionary Initiatives

The Centres of Pastoral Spirituality in the Order will strive to offer the Church a trustworthy pedagogy of prayer.

At the Provincial or Regional level we should work on a joint pastoral plan for our spirituality, collaborating with our Institutes, Publication Houses, Reviews, Movements, Houses of Prayer, Parishes and Sanctuaries.

We approve cultural and educational Centres as apostolic projects in order to promote the human values of Saint Teresa and St John of the Cross and to respond to the desire of the Church for a new evangelization (VC 97).

On a cultural level we will promote in every Circumscription the translation into different languages the works of our spiritual authors, collaborating, also financially, with missionary countries.

Regarding the translation of other works or articles of spirituality by our Religious, in Reviews and Publishing Houses of the Order, this will be made easier, subject to the permission of the Review, author or respective Publishing House.

In every Circumscription, we are to be involved in the organizations working for Justice and Peace, as well the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) already existing in Provinces, are to be developed and we are to recognize that our Order is a NGO, so that we can develop and fulfill the prophetic dimension of our vocation as Carmelites.

In missionary countries our Friars try to appreciate all the positive aspects of other cultures and religions that both make possible and encourage inter-religious dialogue.

The Order ought to commit itself to ecumenical dialogue, using as its starting point its spiritual and mystical experience of our charism.

The General Chapter encourages the celebration of the centenary of the death of Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity in 2006. It is a time to deepen and spread her spiritual doctrine as a singular contribution to the Teresian charism.

The General Chapter thanks all those who have done so much to promote the awareness of St Teresa Benedict of the Cross (Edith Stein), it encourages those who are today publishing all her writings, to translate them into other languages, research thoroughly into her life, studying her Christian experiences and thinking, so that her theological and spiritual witness may shine out even more.

5. Means of Communication

We undertake to encourage collaboration between our Publishing Houses, with interchange of material, experience, projects and, whenever possible, personnel.

We equally commit ourselves to develop the use of the modern means of communication, so that our ministry of spirituality will be more efficacious.

6. Restructuring of our Presence

116. We exhort the Circumscriptions, where it is necessary, to make a restructuring of our presence, with a view to the development of initial formation and our ministry of spirituality.
117. Since in some Circumscriptions there are non-canonically erected Communities, or Religious from other Circumscriptions in the service of the local Church, the Definitory General must normalize this situation, in dialogue with the respective Superiors.

The General Definitory, in dialogue with the Provincial Conferences and/or Circumscriptions, will produce a restructuring project.

7. Institutions which depend on the Centre of the Order

119. The Circumscriptions will be willing to collaborate by providing lecturers for the Teresianum and formators for the International College, as requested by the Definitory.

We will think about the possibility of preparing a bi-lingual (Italian-English) academic programme for the Teresianum.

We ask the General Definitory to create a Commission for the study and the subsequent supervision of the Project to establish an International Centre of Spirituality (Avila, Spain) presented at the General Chapter, to endow this Centre with a capable governance, and the necessary means for study, research and the spread of our spiritual heritage.

We would like the Historical Institute to be reorganized and revived as before, so that it will continue its work at the service of the Church and Order.

The Definitory, in dialogue with the General Delegation of Israel, will study the Projects of the Delegation for *Stella Maris*, examine the possibility of re-establishing the courses of initial and on-going formation and supply with suitable personnel.

8. The Carmelite Family

We should encourage the formation of the Carmelite family where it does not exist, with those groups linked to our charism: Affiliated Institutes, Confraternities and Lay Associations.

We urge the continuation, on all levels, of what has been done together to bring about mutual understanding and collaboration with our O.Carm Brothers.

9. Collaboration with the Laity

Our Communities ought to be more open to share their life, charism and mission with the

Laity, where this is possible; along the lines of those established by the Post Synodal Document *Vita Consecrata*.

We favour the participation of the Laity in courses given by the Order on Teresian-Carmelite formation, and with financial assistance from the respective Circumscriptions.

We encourage and support new forms of aggregations of Laity to our Order and in this way our Religious will come to a better collaboration with them.

10. The Finances of the Order

Financial collaboration between the Provinces and the Centre of the Order will come to be based on two criteria: 1) Keeping in mind N°.253 of the Norms, the General Definitory will fix the amount (*la cuota ordinaria*) in consultation with the Provincial Council. 2) When Provinces obtain extraordinary benefactions from sales, inheritance or other items, the same Definitory will fix the percentage to go to the Centre of the Order, in agreement with the Provincial Council.

Projects which require help from the Centre of the Order ought to be duly supported by documentary evidence, then they will be considered thoroughly by the International Financial Commission that will meet at least twice a year. This Commission will examine the projects and check if there is a possibility to help, it will then present its report to the General Definitory so that they can be followed up.

A Fund will be created with the contributions of the Carmelite Family for the formation of vocations in developing countries. To the same end, we will look for a way to create an "International Foundation".

The reflection and evaluation on the Operative Conclusions will be made in the Plenary Council, Provincial Chapters, Extraordinary Definitories and at the next General Chapter.

CONCLUSION

132. We cannot deny a glorious and fruitful past which has contained its light and certain areas of shade. We certainly must face up to the new and great challenges in society and in the Church. Because of this we need a clear Christian, religious and Teresian Carmelite identity. Returning to what is essential is the way to keep alive this gift of the Spirit to the Church: a universal and multicultural Church, a sign and instrument of God's plan (as also for us) in this era of transition.

133. Carmel in the Third Millennium will have much to live and give witness to, if it is capable of returning to what is essential and of discarding those social, cultural and ecclesial accretions that are solely the fruit of an era, of a mentality or a social-cultural context. Gospel self-denial, contemplation, Teresian fraternity, will continue to be valid but with a renewed commitment to the dynamic values of creative fidelity, to accepting risks with decision and confidence, to conversion, justice and love, and to personal responsibility. Obviously, there is need to have the Holy Spirit as the foundation for moving

about in the dark night of faith guided by love. There is no doubt that we must always be setting out from prayer, like St Teresa and St John of the Cross, so that life “in Christ” and “according to the Spirit” can inundate our existence. Yet, at the same time, there is need to demonstrate the fruit of prayer in service to others. As St Teresa said, “the purpose of this spiritual marriage: the birth always of good works, good works”⁹⁷.

134. May Mary, Mother and Queen of Carmel, teach us to “go to the help others in their need”, but, above all, to present their needs to Jesus, proclaiming his wonders. May she, who knew how to do the Father’s will, “with willing obedience, intrepid poverty and welcoming in her fruitful virginity”⁹⁸, ask the Lord for all the graces we need to live as children of Teresa of Jesus and John of the Cross and be prophetic witnesses of God in the New Millennium.

⁹⁷*VII Mansions* 4:6.

⁹⁸VC 112.