



General Definitory of the Discalced Carmelites
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Teresian Carmel,

Receive our fraternal greetings at the conclusion of another meeting of the General Definitory held in Rome from the 5th to 10th of December. Fr. Saverio Cannistrà presided with the presence of the seven General Definitors. Our meeting was held just after the conclusion of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, which made possible for the whole Church a rediscovery of the loving Mercy of God so present in the experience of the Saints of Carmel. With Pope Francis, we feel that “now, at the conclusion of this Jubilee, it is time to look to the future and to understand how best to continue with joy, fidelity and enthusiasm, experiencing the richness of God’s Mercy.” (*Misericordia et misera*, 5)

Recently, our Order rejoiced at the canonization of Elizabeth of the Trinity, celebrated at St. Peter’s in the Vatican last October 16, and likewise the beatification of Fr. Marie-Eugene of the Child Jesus held on November 19 in Avignon. Father General participated in both celebrations. With him were the Postulator General, some Definitors, and many other members of the Teresian Carmelite family especially from France. May these examples of dynamic fidelity that have preceded us in the vocation to the Teresian Carmel be for all of us an inspiration on the road of discipleship.

From 27th of November to the 2nd of December, the General and the Definitory gathered together in our monastery of Stella Maris (Haifa, Israel), with Fr. Fernando Millán, Prior General of the Carmelites and his General Council. During this meeting, Fr. Agostino Montan of the Josephites of Murialdo spoke on the relationship between consecrated life and the local Church (regarding the revision of the document *Mutuae Relationes*, which is in the final drafting stage by the corresponding Vatican Congregations). During those days, we visited the Carmelite sites on Mount Carmel such as the Wadi-es-Siah and El Muhraqa, as well as some biblical places in Galilee. This initiative is part of our custom of dialogue and fraternity that has become a constant feature of these meetings and has served to strengthen the cordial and fraternal relationships between the general governments of our religious families.

With vivid memories of these events, we started our work in the Definitory, in which themes of dialogue and discernment are never wanting. In the first place, we listened and commented extensively on the reports from the pastoral visitations made during the past months. The first was the visitation made by Father General to the Province of Warsaw. Because of

diverse circumstances, this visitation was made in three phases, between the 29th of March and the 30th of September. The province comprises 113 religious and 4 postulants. They are distributed in 16 communities, 9 of which are in Poland, 4 in the Provincial Delegation of Byelorussia, 1 in Rome (Parish of San Pancrazio), 1 in Usole (Russia) and 1 in Korona, Florida (USA). There are 21 monasteries of Discalced Carmelite Nuns and 10 OCDS communities within the territorial boundaries of the Province. It is a young province (created in 1993), blessed with numerous members, with a low median age. This brings much potential for the near future. Notably, the religious engage in the pastoral administration of shrines, promotion of our spirituality, parish ministry, and missions. In the same way, other projects of considerable dimensions are underway, although it is necessary to discern their pastoral sense and economic viability. The province needs to grow, above all, in unity and collaboration among its religious and the communities, and work on a clear and common vision for the future. The next provincial chapter and the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Province in 2018 will be a good occasion for this.

For his part, Father Rafal Wilkowski presented his report of the pastoral visitation of the Province of the Philippines. He was delegated for this visitation by Father General, who personally participated at the Concluding Assembly. The Philippines is the youngest Province in the Order, having been erected at the General Chapter of 2015. The Province is composed of 44 professed religious, with 23 in formation in 6 communities, one of which is a missionary presence in Vietnam. The median age of the religious is around 45 years. There is a significant presence of Discalced Carmelite Nuns and the Secular Order in this region. The friars undertake considerable pastoral tasks, above all, ministry in parishes and shrines. They are encouraged to strengthen and coordinate ministerial efforts in the area of spirituality. In a region where there is no lack of vocations, it is especially necessary to work on discernment and initial formation.

Father Agustí Borrell reported on his recent pastoral visitation to the Province of Venice. The Province presently comprises 90 solemnly professed members, 9 students and 4 Novices, in addition to 22 other religious at the service of other circumscriptions and institutions of the Order. The median age is 62 years. The Province has 13 communities, counting those in Rome (Parish of St Teresa on Corso d'Italia), Snagov (Romania) and Brussels (Belgium). There are 7 monasteries of Discalced Carmelite Nuns and 10 of the Secular Order within the territory of the Province. The pastoral activities of the religious are both intense and varied: shrines, parishes, a Catholic school, spiritual guidance of Carmelite groups, publications, etc. The presence of MEC (Movimento Ecclesiale Carmelitano) is significant. This movement, born from the Venetian Province, is composed primarily of lay people and mentored by a number of friars. The friars are remarkably committed to their fraternal and prayer life. The Province continues to advance toward a growing inner unity. The presence of a good number of students and novices seems to be a sign of hope in the face of diminishing numbers experienced during recent years, similar to what is happening in the rest of Europe. Presently, the Province is called to make a calm evaluation of its situation and plan for the immediate future with realism and determination, open to a relationship and collaboration with other circumscriptions.

Father Daniel Chowning, for his part, completed the pastoral visitation of the Paris Province during the month of November. There are four communities with a missionary presence in Baghdad (Iraq). Forming part of the Province are 35 solemnly professed friars, 3 in temporary

vows, and 1 Tertiary Brother. The median age is 64 years. He also visited some communities of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns. All the communities of the Province live with great fidelity to their fraternal life and prayer. Their dedication to the apostolate of promoting our spirituality in diverse and creative forms is outstanding. They have a special interest in youth ministry and vocational promotion. This is an opportune moment for the Province to consider its priorities for the future and to embark on a common project in which all are involved. They are encouraged to devote their best efforts to initial formation. During his visitation, Fr. Daniel presided at the Mass of thanksgiving for the canonization of St. Elizabeth of the Trinity at the Flavignerot Carmel. He also attended the Beatification of Fr. Marie-Eugene.

Fr. Daniel also made a fraternal visit to the Province of Avignon-Aquitaine that has 4 monasteries in France, one in Switzerland, one in Canada, and one in Senegal, Africa. The friars also live with great fidelity to their fraternal life and prayer. The publishing house, Editions du Carmel, provides a great service to the promotion of Carmelite spirituality.

Fr. Mariano Agruda presented to the Definitory his itinerary through different countries of Asia. First of all, he was in Vietnam where he visited the community of friars and the 5 local aspirants preparing to enter the postulancy in the Philippines. He also visited the Carmelite nuns of Da Lat y Binh Trieu. From there he went to Cambodia to visit the monastery of Kandal, the only Carmelite presence in the country, in which there are 8 Korean nuns and an aspirant. Later on, he was in Malaysia where he visited the 8 nuns of the Carmel of Seremban. Also in Malaysia there are 4 numerous and active communities of the Secular Order. The Delegation of Taiwan-Singapore, of whom 8 friars are Malaysian, is taking steps to make a foundation in that country. He made his following fraternal visit to Japan where there are 6 communities of friars and 9 monasteries of nuns. The percentage of Catholics in Japan (less than 0,5 % of the population) presents an important challenge for the Order in that region.

Fr. Javier Mena reported on his recent fraternal visits. On October 1, he attended the ordination of Fr. Oswaldo Escobar as Bishop of the Diocese of Chalatenango (El Salvador). He subsequently participated in the meeting of superiors and formators of the Círculo Sur (Interregional Teresian Carmelites) in Argentina with the objective of concretizing the collaboration of the distinct circumscriptions in the area of formation. They are moving toward a common novitiate and student house for theologians. Meanwhile, the two Brazilian provinces are also dialoguing about the possible collaboration of a common novitiate that is already in process. Subsequently, Javier made a fraternal visit to the province of South Brazil that comprises 31 friars, 2 simple professed, and 5 postulants, distributed in 8 communities. From the 25th to the 27th of October, he participated in the pre-chapter provincial assembly of the Province where Fr. Marcos Juchem Junior was elected Provincial for the new triennium. He encouraged them to prepare adequately for the Provincial Chapter. Furthermore, he visited 11 monasteries of our Discalced Carmelite sisters present in the Province. Finally, after a brief stay in Belo Horizonte, he spoke with Fr. Geraldo Alfonso, the recently elected Provincial of Southeast Brasil, about the preparation for the Chapter.

The Definitory for South Asia, Johannes Gorantla, was in the Province of Karnataka Goa, where he fraternally visited the 10 monasteries of friars and 5 monasteries of nuns (from Mangalore to the Baroda). He expressed his satisfaction about the life and the apostolate that the

Province carries out in these monasteries. Subsequently, he participated in the plenary councils of Tamilnadu, South Kerala, and Manjummel, and in a meeting of the Provincials of India. In all these meetings he insisted on the need for further deepening in the process of rereading of the Constitutions. Furthermore, in each situation he confronted the most significant and urgent problems of the circumscription. In this sense, he invited everyone to prepare seriously for the Provincial Chapters and that they should seek through serene dialogue the good of the Provincial family. It's important to work on adequate projects that grow into Provincial unity and in fidelity to the essential values of the charism and to avoid, on the other hand, plans that do not correspond to our vocation as religious and Discalced Carmelites.

In this context, the Definitory discussed the presence of friars from a Province in the territory of other Provinces, in established communities, or even outside of communities, and often at the service of a diocese. This is a practice that has increased in recent times. The Definitory recalls that it is necessary to respect the valid norms and to solicit corresponding permissions for new foundations, and in agreement among Provinces. Still more important is to discern adequately the meaning of the presence of friars outside the territory of the Province, who should respond to missionary and charismatic criteria, and not to other purposes. In particular, the fact that a friar does not live in community should be considered only in very exceptional and justified cases, and above all, with the necessary permissions according to our norms. This theme will be the subject of conversation in the General Extraordinary Definitory in the month of September in order to decide some common criteria of action.

Fr. Łukasz Kansy reported to the Definitory about the meeting of the CEP (European Conference of OCD Provincials) that met in Linz, Austria from the 7th to the 11th of November. The participants reflected on “new dependencies” (internet, social networks) from a presentation by the Jesuit Giovanni Cucci, professor of the Gregorian University of Rome. From his part, P. Agustí Borrell spoke in the meeting about the process of rereading the Constitutions in today's European context. Following this, P. Łukas presented to the Provincials a proposal from Fr. General about creating a community to welcome friars from all over Europe after solemn profession for a year of charismatic formation and community living. The initiative responds to the awareness of the difficulty of offering an adequate knowledge of the Saints of our Order during the stages of theological studies, and of seeking to favor as well a mutual knowledge among the friars from the different countries. This could take place in Salamanca with an international community. The European provincials recognized the benefit of the project and welcomed it with interest, even though there were some questions and difficulties in its effective realization. The Definitory has decided to take the necessary steps to concretize the viability of the proposal and to put it into practice as soon as possible.

With the approaching of the Provincial Chapters, the Definitory wishes to remind the provinces of the importance of this fundamental moment in the life of the circumscriptions. It is necessary to prepare with time and seriousness and use the Chapter as a privileged moment for in-depth conversation about the state of the Province and the adequate steps for revitalization. The General will send a letter to the friars of each circumscription with some reflections and indications for a fruitful preparation and success of the Chapters. Some directives about juridical aspects related to capitular practices will also help. As has already been communicated, once the Chapters are over an Extraordinary General Definitory will take place from August 29 to

September 6, 2017 in Ariccia, Italy. In this meeting we will address themes of interest to the entire Order and practical questions referring to the Provincial government with the goal of facilitating the work of Provincial superiors and of growing in consensus, unity, and coordination between them and with the General Government.

Regarding the centers for studies, the Definitory commented on some concrete questions they have been working on such as the academic relationship between the Teresianum and CITEs, the agreement between the Faculty and the OCD Edition for the edition of the *Teresianum* magazine or the economic forecasts of the Faculty for next year. We also took up themes referring to the International College, recalling, for example, that Fr. General has written a letter to Provincials inviting them to send theology students to Rome.

Also, and as usual on this occasion, the Definitory received current information from the General Treasurer on the economic state of the General House and the Procurator General on processes in place relative to some friars of the Order.

The General Definitory, as requested by the Province of Portugal, gave permission to begin the foundation of the monastery of Dili, in East Timor. This recent missionary presence depends on the collaboration of the Iberica and Navarre Provinces.

The program for ongoing formation for the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, promoted by Fr. General, continues in a working phase. We have already received and confirmed the friars and nuns who will work on it, and in the next days a small group among them will meet to decide on the distribution of work to be done in the next weeks. Furthermore, the Discalced Carmelite Nuns received with interest the Apostolic Constitution, *Vultum Dei Quarere*, on the contemplative life of women and are beginning to apply the principles it contains. We are now waiting for the practical instructions that are being drawn up by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life.

Regarding the Secular Order, Fr. Alzinir Debastiani informed the Definitory about the situation of some communities that in certain parts of the world are very active and flourishing. We have received requests from certain Provinces for the approval of some modifications of their Statutes, as well as the program for ongoing formation in some circumscriptions.

We concluded the sessions of the Definitory close to the feast of St. John of the Cross who continues to be our master and model of life. He himself helps us to live fully the joy of the imminent Nativity with the surprise and admiration of Mary before the mystery of the Incarnation:

“The Mother gazed in sheer wonder
on such an exchange;
in God, man’s weeping,
and in man, gladness,
to the one and the other
things usually so strange.” *Romances: The Birth*

With our best wishes for a Blessed Christmas and New Year of 2017, full of the Lord's grace, we greet you fraternally

Fr. Saverio Cannistrà, General

Fr. Agustí Borrell

Fr. Łukasz Kansy

Fr. Johannes Gorantla

Fr. Daniel Chowning

Fr. Francisco Javier Mena

Fr. Mariano Agruda III

Fr. Daniel Ehigie