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Pope Francis

Pope Francis will begin a World Prayer for peace on the coming 28th March

Italy-Rome, January 31, 2015 (Communicationes).- Pope Francis will begin a World Prayer for peace on the coming 28th March, the date which marks the 500th anniversary of the birth of Saint Teresa of Jesus.

The prayer will begin at 06.00 (GMT). From this time, communities and fraternities can begin the prayer for peace at the hour and in the manner they consider most opportune and suitable.

A lighted candle, placed in a prominent place outside the monasteries and convents, will be the symbol of this prayer.

Shortly, the General House will send to all communities more information on this important initiative and suggestions for this prayerful time.

Camino de Luz

The relic of St Teresa's staff will be received by the Holy Father

Rome-Italy, January 31, 2015 (Communicationes).- At the General Audience on the 11th of March, Pope Francis will receive, in a solemn and special manner, the pilgrimage team of the *Camino de luz*, who have accompanied St Teresa's staff on the pilgrimage. The team have been invited to be present in the special front section of the hall where they can have contact with the Pope.

With regards to what is to happen and the Pope's decision not to visit Spain for the 5th centenary, the Vicar General of the Discalced Carmelites, Fr Emilio José Martínez commented, "We were all very thrilled and perhaps created great expectations about the possible visit of the Pope to Spain, but there is something that is clear: the centenary continues on, the centenary will not see the visit of the Pope, as well, the Pope has been, is and will continue to exist, and all of us will be spectators at what is happening on 11th and 28th March, God willing".

The Holy Father will receive the Teresian relic at the end of its pilgrimage through the five continents. For the Rome visit, a pilgrimage is being prepared from Avila and Alba de Tormes so that they can accompany Saint Teresa on this voyage.

Birth

Our missionaries also assist in the birth of children

Portugal, January 23, 2015 (Communicationes).- Fr Federico Trincherio.- I am simply telling you what happened to us on Christmas eve. The celebrations were over and all of us were sleeping... but around 1.30 in the early morning... they called me to the door. A woman was about to give birth. I ran quickly to awaken Arístides, our postulant and valuable infirmarian. After having taken a look, he told me that it was not convenient to go to the hospital since the birth was imminent.

In just a few minutes, the chapter room had been transformed into a delivery room. We had nothing but a wooden trumpet to listen for the heartbeat of the baby. Seated beside the woman giving birth was an old woman, the mother of more than eight children. While her rough hands prayed a whole rosary, she gave us very valuable advice on how to push, how to breathe and a whole lot of other things that were never explained to me when I was studying theology.

A precious little baby arrived into the world. After its umbilical cord was cut, the newly born was carefully placed into the arms of the old women who dried her, put clothes on her and embraced her, as if a chain of generations and wisdom was necessary to continue life's cycle.

Chronicles from the General Archives

The Habit

January 31, 2015 (Communicationes).- Fr Óscar I. Aparicio, OCD Archivist General.- Our habit is brown in colour – a Carmelite brown, which can be clear, cinnamon coloured, reddish brown or gray brown in colour. Carmelites, with our habit, have given rise to a variety of the colour brown itself.

At the beginning and on Mount Carmel, the first monks were dressed in an undyed, "rough" woolen tunic, with a scapular which had the hood attached. There were not three garments as now, only two. They also had a very rudimentary mantle which was striped. The mantle was completely closed and without hood until 1287, when it was decided to open the mantle in order to show the scapular. The brown tunic represented the penitence of the friar who wore it; the scapular was the yoke and cross of obedience and the capuche, which was something that pertained to children, represented the life of innocence that friars should have. The scapular afterwards became the symbol of penitence and protection of the Virgin Mary.

The mantle was striped with seven bars, 4 white and 3 black. It could have referred to the seven gifts of the Spirit; to the three theological virtues and the four cardinal ones; or the three black bars could be the burns suffered by the mantle as Elijah ascended to heaven in the fiery chariot.... or white for purity and black for penance.

When the Carmelites came to Europe, the striped mantle caused people to laugh. Then it became, as it continues to be, a vestment, more for ceremony than for friars to wear... In this way the striped mantle was changed to a white one in the Montpellier Chapter in 1287.

For the Discalced Carmelite friars, according to tradition, the first habit was made by Saint Teresa of Jesus and her nuns and the first to wear it was Saint John of the Cross in Duruelo, in 1568. The habit was the same as that of the Carmelites, but less ample and of coarse fabric. It was a symbol of a stricter life and greater penance. At the beginning they did not wear shoes (from which comes the name Discalced – without shoes), then they wore simple alpargatas (sandals made from woven grass) then from 1605, leather sandals with a closed heel, as the Italian Congregation had been doing.

The lay brothers wore the same habit, but shorter and without capuche. They did not wear the white mantle but a dark one. Little by little the priests and brothers began to dress in the same way and from 1927 both dressed with the same habit and the same mantle.

These few words serve to get to know the history of our habit with its characteristic Carmelite brown colour.