

Commission for the rereading of the OCD Constitutions

A Lamp for my Feet

Rereading the Constitutions for a Renewal of Life

Study Guide 12

Evaluation and proposals.
Thanksgiving celebration.



General House
Discalced Carmelites
Rome 2018

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1. Evaluation and proposals

1. THE JOURNEY ACCOMPLISHED

The OCD General Chapter, celebrated in Avila in May 2015, decided that, after the celebration of the V Centenary of the birth of Saint Teresa of Jesus and after reading the writings of Saint Teresa for six years preceding the celebration, the Order would undertake the rereading of the Constitutions for a renewal of life.

The object was to deepen our knowledge and identification with the Teresian charism in order to be able to really live it in the present times and circumstances. In the final document of the General Chapter, *It is time to walk!*, we read: “animated by the fruits of rereading the works of St. Teresa, we can continue our path of renewal by immersing ourselves in a rereading of our Constitutions” (ITW 14).

This proposed dialogue with the Constitutions is not limited to a study of the text and a revision of life, but it could lead to a possible revision of the text for the purpose of expressing the content of our spirituality in a current and meaningful way.

Work on the Constitutions was thought of as the priority commitment for the present sexennium (2015-2021) in two principal stages. The first half of the sexennium has been devoted to the rereading of the Constitutions in each

community. The second part of the sexennium will be focused on the possible revision of the text.

Immediately after the General Chapter, following the Chapter instructions, the General Definitory appointed an international commission which established the method of working and the timetable, and has been preparing the study guides and collecting the contributions of the communities.

On the 15th of October 2015, Fr General sent a letter to the whole Order in which he encouraged the friars to participate in a decisive way in the process of rereading the Constitutions. Among other things he said: “We begin, then, a passionate and demanding process of reflection, dialogue, prayer and commitment that ought to stimulate us to intensify the theoretical and practical identification with our ideal of life.” In the same letter, it was explained that this proposal of rereading was inspired by the method of *lectio divina*, because we wanted to approach our fundamental law with the desire to discover through the text the presence of God in our life, to establish a dialogue with him, and to be fully open to his will.

As for the specific work, it was requested that the replies to the last of the four stages (*Actio*) be gathered, both the concrete commitments to renewal as well as the suggestions and proposals for revision of the text of the Constitutions. It was decided that there would be in each circumscription a coordinator, appointed by the Provincial Council, with the duty of stimulating participation by the religious in his own jurisdiction and of drawing up a synthesis of the replies in order to send them to the commission. A first, commented summary of the results was presented to the Ariccia Extraordinary General Definitory (September 2017).

Throughout these three courses, our communities around the world have followed a demanding and fruitful



itinerary of reviewing both their way of living as well as the text of our laws. Participation has been significant, although it could and should have been greater. Undoubtedly, it has been a magnificent opportunity for personal and communal reflection for the renewal of our life, and from rereading the Constitutions there was no shortage of fruits for the life of communities and religious. Awareness has increased concerning the core values of our charism and on the shortcomings of our concrete manner of living them. Some communities adopted concrete commitments as a conclusion of their reflection and dialogue, as was suggested in the section “From the Constitutions to Life” of the Study Guides.

The distance between the life and the Constitutions is explicitly recognized by many. This distance exists not only through a weak practice of the directives contained in the Constitutions or through a lack of commitment to fidelity, but also through an understanding of Carmelite life different to what is set out in the text. Despite the positive evaluation on our existing Constitutions expressed by many, we have also received a significant number of suggestions concerning the text in order to improve it, update or modify it, which are being properly collected.

We have arrived at the end of the first stage of the process. According to the planned calendar, the Extraordinary General Definitory meeting in Goa (India) in February 2019 must decide the specific path to take from that moment in the light of the contributions from the communities, This was indicated by the General Chapter which suggested these possible options: a reelaboration of the Constitution, a timely review of the same, and/or drawing up a Declaration on the Teresian-Carmelite life, and it added: “Finally, the document chosen by the Extraordinary Definitory, elaborated by the commission and submitted again to the revision of the



communities will be presented to the General Chapter of 2021.” (ITW 32)

In this context, Study Guide 12 sets out to be an instrument by which everyone can evaluate this first stage of rereading the Constitutions and to present proposals for the work afterwards.

2. The replies from the circumscriptions

We would like in this section to present very succinctly to you the contributions from the different Circumscriptions and “Entities” (houses dependent on the Definitory), who have taken part in the process of rereading the Constitutions and who have sent us some responses to the Study Guides during these years.

At the time of preparing this Study Guide 12, we can share with you data relating to the six first Study Guides, as well as an initial approximation of the number of replies received to some of the remaining guides.

The total of Circumscriptions and “Entities” who, at the beginning of the process and once the Major Superiors were contacted, committed themselves to send their replies to the study guides was 64, 4 of whom were communities dependent on the Definitory: the General House, the Teresianum, the St John of the Cross International College and CITeS.

2.1. Statistics.

Here, we present you with a list of the replies that we have received until now:

Study Guide 1: 55/64 replies.



Study Guide 2: 55/64 replies.
Study Guide 3: 55/64 replies.
Study Guide 4: 55/64 replies.
Study Guide 5: 46/64 replies.
Study Guide 6: 46/64 replies.
Study Guide 7: 34/64 replies.
Study Guide 8: 22/64 replies.
Study Guide 9: 12/64 replies.
Study Guide 10: 1/64 replies.

We think it important to emphasize that just two Circumscriptions have never sent any contribution at all to the Commission for the Constitutions. The rest have sent at least a response to one Study Guide, or a synthesis resulting from discussion at an assembly in the Circumscription, including in a Chapter.

The first four Study Guides have been mostly answered. A decrease is noted in Study Guides 5 and 6, perhaps a result—as some Circumscriptions noted— of a certain fatigue in the friars at the time of studying the materials sent. Study Guide 7, as in the two previous ones, was worked on at the time of the Chapter and, as well, in the summer period in the Northern Hemisphere which could help explain the decrease in the number of replies received. With regard to Study Guides 8, 9 and 10, the data is quite provisional because a new contribution arrives nearly every day.

In any case, there remains reasonable doubt about the scope of the reflection among the friars about the decisive question posed by the 2015 General Chapter since some of the contributions correspond to only some communities and, in general, for various circumstances, the general objective of a review of our life in the light of the Constitutions and of the Constitutions in the light of our life has not been satisfactorily

carried out. Of course, it is just an impression in view of the responses received.

2.2. Content of the replies.

The commission has always sought to know the opinion of the Circumscriptions with respect to the chosen method of work and its overall objective. In this respect, we have not always received uniform replies. Some people consider the method too complex and ask that it be simplified; for others, however, it helped understand the text and favoured its study. With regard to the purpose of this reading of the Constitutions, some circumscriptions regretted that it was not clear. We have always tried to explain it by going back to what was said by the 2015 General Chapter.

As regards the current text of the present Constitutions and Norms, they were worthy of a positive grading in the contributions received by the commission. However, very frequently, while recognizing them valid as written, the need was stated of renewing some points of our laws. In other words, their content was valued yet, at the same, the majority of the Circumscriptions and Entities recognized that it is necessary to bring them up-to-date, keeping in mind the recent magisterium of the Church and the demands of the world, as well as the real mode in which the Teresian charism is incarnated today.

In the light of all the contributions received, the commission has prepared, for now, the syntheses of the replies of Study Guides 1-6, which were presented to the General Definitory and to the Extraordinary Definitory in September 2017. Besides, the Commission has prepared—and constantly brings up-to-date—a draft to which is added to our legislative texts the modifications proposed by the various Circumscrip-

tions, with the exception that these suggestions have an exclusively theoretical value and whatever modification to the Constitutions and Norms, including even a proposal in this regard—at least for the moment—, falls beyond the scope given to this commission by the General Definitory.

3. AT THE END OF THIS STAGE

Taking into account the work done so far and in order to make a proposal to our Major Superiors, we ask you the following questions and request that the replies be sent to the Commission before the 15th of July 2018:

A. *Evaluation of the work done:*

1. How did you appreciate the methodology followed in rereading the *Constitutions*? Point out positive and negative elements.
2. Thanks to the rereading of the *Constitutions*, what fruits and of what kind have flowed on into your own personal life, that of the community, and of your Circumscription?
3. Do you think that the objectives set out in n^o 24 of the 2015 Chapter document “*It is time to walk*” have been accomplished? Give reasons for your reply.

[This is the text quoted: “24. Therefore in referemce to our Teresian charismatic identity, rereading the Constitutions will help us to assimilate more personally, to share communally, and to set out to live concretely the model of life that Teresa of Jesus has proposed to us (*interiorization*); to see if in the life of our communities and circumscriptions there is a real reciprocal relationship of roles — within a world of shared roles—, in which each one assumes his responsibilities and accepts the corrections according to the style that Teresa has bequeathed to us



(*integration*); to verify if we are clear about the goals toward which we want to direct our collective action (*goal achievement*); and finally, to check if we are taking seriously the challenge of inculturation, assuming the life of people, their culture and their real problems (*adaptation*).]

B. Proposals for the future:

1. Do you think that this way of rereading and study of the Constitutions will help us to renew and update our life according to the demands of today's world and the characteristics of the candidates who ask to enter our Order?

2. As was made evident in the summary you read at the beginning of the study guide, the majority of the Circumscriptions have made numerous proposals to amend our Laws. In view of this objective data, what would be your proposal for the future? We offer you some possibilities:

A. Re-write our *Constitutions* and/or *Norms*.

B. Revise our *Constitutions* and/or *Norms*, by bringing about some selective modifications.

C. Draw up a *Declaration* on our life and mission in the Church, the nature of which, would take into account both doctrine and our charism and would help us to live the Constitutions.

D. Other proposals (indicate which).

2. Thanksgiving celebration

Greeting: *In the name of the Father.....*

Motive

M. C. or Reader. *At the end of this stage of rereading our Constitutions we wish to thank God for our Constitutions; for their spirit and their letter, for the grace and charism they express, for the Superiors who drew them up, for the teachers who transmitted and explained them to us, for the saints who lived and enriched them. Because they all were inspired and encouraged by you, Lord, we wish to bless you and give you thanks.*

Initial prayer

President: In thanking you, Lord, for “the work of our Holy Parents who, right from the beginning, sought with their whole soul that the charism be expressed adequately in a form of life and consolidated with laws”, we ask that we embrace the following of Christ proposed in the Gospel as the supreme standard of life according to the Constitutions of the Teresian Carmel. This we ask through Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Reading from the Word of God

Lector: *A Reading from the letter of the Apostle St Paul to the Philippians. [Phil 4: 1, 4-9]*

“Therefore, my brethren, whom I love and long for, my joy and Crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace will be with you”.

The Word of the Lord.

Psalm

R/ Enter his gates giving thanks.

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Serve the Lord with gladness.
Come before him, singing for joy. R/

Know that he, the Lord, is God.
He made us, we belong to him,
We are his people, the sheep of his flock. R/

Go within his gates giving thanks.
Enter his courts with songs of praise.
Give thanks to him and bless his name. R/

Indeed, how good is the Lord,
Eternal his merciful love.
He is faithful from age to age. R/

Readings for the meditation:

1. From our Holy Mother Teresa of Jesus:
[Select these texts or others that are suitable]

From the Interior Castle [I: 2: 17]: “Let us understand, my daughters, that true perfection consists in love of God and neighbour; the more perfectly we keep these two commandments the more perfect we will be. All that is in our rule and constitutions serves for nothing else than to be a means toward keeping these commandments with greater perfection. Let’s forget about indiscreet zeal; it can do us a lot of harm. Let each one look to herself.”

From the book of Foundations [F 3: 18]: “The nuns were gathering esteem in the town and receiving much affection. In my opinión, rightly so, for they were not interested in anything else than how each one could serve our Lord more. In all matters they lived the same way as at St Joseph’s in Avila since the rule and constitutions were the same. The Lord began to call some women to receive the habit, and the favors He gave them were so great that I was amazed. May He be ever blessed, amen. In order to love, it doesn’t seem that He waits for anything else than to be loved.”

From the book of Foundations [14: 5]: “If we say that these are the beginning steps in order to renew the rule of the Virgin, His Mother, our Lady and Patroness, let us not be so offensive to her or to our holy fathers of the past as to fail to live as they did. Since, because of our weakness, we can not do so in every way, in matters that are not essential for sustaining life, we must proceed very carefully. For it is all a matter of but a little effort, and that becomes delightful, as was the case with these two Fathers. And once we are determined to undergo this effort, the difficulty passes, for all the pain is but a little in the beginning.”

From the book of Foundations [F 27:11]. “May it please His Majesty to give us abundant grace, for with this, nothing will prevent us from advancing ever in His service. And may He protect and favor all of us so that this excellent beginning, which He was pleased to initiate in women as miserable as we, may not be lost through our weakness. In His name I beg you, my daughters and Sisters, that you always ask our Lord for this and that each one who enters in the future bear in mind that with her the observance of the primitive Rule of the Order of the Virgin, our Lady, begins again and that she must in no way consent in any mitigation. Consider that through very little things the door is opened to very big thing and that without your realizing it the world will start entering you lives. Remember the poverty and hardship that was undergone in obtaining what you now quietly enjoy. If you note carefully, you will see that in part these houses, most of them, have not been founded by men but by the powerful hand of God and that His Majesty is very fond of advancing the works He accomplishes provided we cooperate. From where you think a useless woman like me, subject to obedience, without even a

maravedi, with no one to help me in any way, could get the power for such great works?”

From the Way of Perfection [W 4: 1]. “Now, daughters, you have seen the great task we have undertaken What do you think we must be like if we are not to be considered very bold by God and the world? Clearly, we must work hard, and it helps a great deal to have lofty thoughts so that we will exert ourselves and make our deeds comply with our thoughts. For if we strive to observe our Rule and constitutions very carefully, I hope in the Lord that our prayers will be heard. I am not beseeching you to do something new, my daughters, but only that we observe what we profess; and to observe this is our vocation and obligation —although there are many degrees of observance.”

From the Way of Perfection [W 4: 2]: “Our primitive rule states that we must pray without ceasing. If we do this with all the care possible —for unceasing prayer is the most important aspect of the rule— the fasts, the disciplines, and the silence the order commands will not be wanting. For you already know that if prayer is to be genuine, it must be helped by these other things; prayer and comfortable living are incompatible.”

From the Way of Perfection [7: 8]: “Oh, how good and true will be the love of the Sister who can help others by setting aside her own advantage for their sake. She will make much progress in all the virtues and keep her rule with great perfection. Better friendship will this be than all the tender words that can be uttered.....”

Cf. also Letter 150, to Father Jerónimo Gracián, 19th of November 1576.

2. From the Exhortations of St Rafael Kalinowski.

(Cfr. The proper office of the Teresian Carmel)

“The Holy Scriptures praise nothing more than a perfect and holy life lived in the exact and perfect fulfillment of each one’s duties. In the Old Testament our Lord and God taught his people and told them: ‘You must be holy because I am holy’.

The Eternal Father gave us our Lord Jesus Christ as our teacher, master and guide. He confirmed and ratified the Old Testament injunction where he taught us that we must emulate the holiness of the Father: ‘You must be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect’. How does one become perfect and holy? The Doctors of the Church, the leaders of souls, and the masters of the spiritual life answer: If you would be perfect and become holy, fulfill your duties faithfully.

Once a desert father was asked by a certain young hermit what books he ought to study in order to advance in holiness. The old man replied: My practice is to read two books only. In the morning hours I read the Gospel, and in the evening, I read the Rule. The first teaches me the way I should walk as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. The other teaches me what I should do to be a good religious. That is enough for me.

Let us therefore be students of the laws of God so that we may conduct ourselves according to them. ‘When you walk, these will guide you; when you lie down, watch over you; when you wake, talk with you’. Wherever we may be or go, may they go with us to direct our footsteps. May they be so near us when we sleep that they may fill our thoughts as soon as we awaken. His voice will speak to us in them. He will refresh us for the day ahead. Through his laws we will gain the victory over our doubts. We will cast away every obstacle. We will free ourselves of that sluggishness of nature which is the enemy of

strength, the foe of devotion, and the lover of ease. The law of life will help us overcome our fears in time of temptation and to follow eagerly in the way of obedience. May it always be at hand to counsel us, so that by it we may find the strength to follow God's call with generous hearts and willing souls.

Silence

Homily

Magnificat

President: May our lips proclaim your marvels and our works give witness that you live among us.

Let us sing the Magnificat (or the Te Deum).

Thanksgiving prayers

[They can be expressed spontaneously or by using these formulas]

President: Lord, at the conclusion of this stage of rereading our Constitutions, we thank you for this Order you brought into being by inspiring our Holy Mother Teresa, and we thank you because you have given us the desire to respond to your call to live radically our baptismal consecration in this family.

- We bless you because you gave us “an appropriate formula of life for our common aim, to be abided in the future”.
- We thank you because at the time of the Council you inspired our Fathers to return to “the sources of all

Christian life and to the original inspiration of the Teresian Carmel,” and gave them the desire to adapt the Rule and Constitutions of Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross to the circumstances of our times.

- We thank you because you called us with a personal vocation to this family which unites faithfulness to the spiritual tradition of Carmel with a desire for permanent renewal.
- We bless you because Mary our Mother fills with her presence the life of our Order, which desires to live only in allegiance to Christ and his Mother.
- We give you thanks because the Church recognizes us as a community that intends to live intensely the mystery of Christian prayer and which gives witness to it through its own life.
- We bless you because our manner of living stands out perfectly in our two Holy Parents, whose life and writings belong to the patrimony and the fulness of the vocation to our Order.
- We give you thanks since this plan of life demands fulness of love for God and our brothers and sisters, which goes beyond the confines of law.
- We bless you because you call us to take part in your poverty which empowers and liberates us to live in solidarity with our fellow human beings.
- We praise you Jesus, since with your obedience you point out to us the way to follow, living in communion with you, our offering to the Father.
- We glorify you because with the exquisite gift of your grace, you consecrate and make our hearts ready to make your love present in our world.

- We thank you, Lord, for the growth of our Order and we ask you to keep us all faithful.
- ...

Final prayer:

Having reached the end of this stage of rereading the Constitutions, we are inspired at its conclusion to pray all together to give thanks and to renew our commitment.

Merciful Father, who inspires our intention
to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ
and in service to his Gospel,
and who gives us this *form of life*,
in thanking you for the Teresian charism we have received,
we want to renew our desire
to bring into practice generously this ideal of life,
expressed in some way in our laws.

Faithful to the grace with which you call us
and continue calling us to the Teresian Carmel,
we wish to study in depth
the doctrine and norms proposed here,
so that with a Gospel spirit we may adjust by them
our way of thinking and of acting.

We desire that this effort we are making,
to adjust our life to the demands of our charism,
while extinguishing gradually our selfishness,
would lead us to the freedom of the children of God,
who is the fulness of love.

Respectful of our laws,
yet free from the slavery of the letter,
we do not wish to quench the Spirit (cfr. 1Th 5: 19),

rather, we seek to serve God's people,
so that this same Spirit
is manifested through fidelity to our charism.

While we are awaiting our blessed hope,
the coming of the Lord (cfr. Tt 2: 13),
above all we wish to maintain charity,
which binds everything together
in perfect harmony (cfr. Col 3: 14),
so that, the race won, we will receive the crown
from your hands, Lord and just Judge (cfr. 2Tm 4:6-8),
who, in the evening of our life, will examine us in love (Asc 57).

To you be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



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