



GENERAL DEFINITORY OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES
Corso d'Italia, 38
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SEXENNIUM 2015-2021 – LETTER N° 16

Rome, 16th March 2019

Dear brothers and sisters of the Teresian Carmel:

The General Definitory held their three-monthly ordinary meeting in Rome from the 4th to the 16th of March 2019, with Fr General and the seven Definitors present.

The meeting took place just a month after the celebration of the Extraordinary Definitory in Old Goa, India (4-10 February), about which detailed information has been transmitted to the entire Order through the usual means (website, social networks, etc.). The presence of the Provincial Superiors in India allowed us to celebrate with solemnity the FOURTH Centenary of the arrival of the first Discalced Carmelite Friars to this Asian country. Deeply moving was the Eucharist celebrated in the place where the first monastery of the Order in India had been, where Blessed Denis and Redemptus began their Carmelite life. All the participants in the Extraordinary Definitory had occasion to experience the fraternal and festive reception given by the friars of India, which we deeply appreciated. In a special way we could feel the warmth of the hospitality offered to Fr General and the Definitors who, once the Old Goa meeting was over, continued a pleasant and demanding tour to some of the communities and institutions of each one of the seven provinces of the Order in India, as well as to some communities of Discalced Carmelite nuns. This enriching visit allowed us to come into direct contact with a significant part of the Carmelite reality in this country where, nowadays, our presence is much more numerous with all its vitality and its complexity, with its great possibilities and hopes for the future.

The Extraordinary Definitory in Old Goa was dedicated to the central project of the Order in this six-year term, which is the renewal of the life of our charism from rereading the Constitutions within our present situation. The meeting analysed the conclusions of the first part of the process based on the synthesis and proposals drawn up by the International Commission and the General Definitory. As stated in the Message of the Extraordinary Definitory (“Walking in the Truth”), the decision taken from this analysis and the subsequent discernment was to draw up a Declaration on our charism and carry out a review of the Norms, without undertaking, for the moment, the rewriting of the Constitutions.

The General Definitory has taken the first steps to implement these decisions. As for the Declaration on our charism, the General and the Definitory accepted the initial work in this new phase, and for that reason during these days they have already begun reflection and dialogue on the orientation, the outline, and the content that it should have. The objective is to prepare in the coming months a first draft that can later be evaluated and progressively enriched by contributions from the whole Order (starting with specialists in

the various fields, young religious, etc.). For the revision of the Norms, a commission will be formed with representatives from the General Government and other religious who will prepare the proposals for amendment, starting with the suggestions that have come from the communities and the circumscriptions during the first stage of the process. In both cases, effort will be made to keep to the aim of providing specific proposals before the next Provincial Chapters so that all circumscriptions can review and give their opinion on them. The Extraordinary Definitory of September 2020 will also have the opportunity of working on these materials. Finally, the General Chapter of 2021 will take the corresponding decisions on the Declaration and on the Norms.

Moving on to the follow-up of the circumscriptions of the Order that the General Definitory makes, on this occasion we concerned ourselves with the pastoral visitation to the Genoa province carried out by the Vicar General, Fr Agustí Borrell, from the 2nd to the 29th of January this year. As usual, the Definitory analysed the report prepared by the visitor, which had been presented to the Provincial Council and the Provincial Assembly at the end of the visit. The Province of Genoa has seven communities in Italy, two in the Czech Republic and five in the Central African Republic (although the latter was not the subject of the pastoral visitation). There are currently 39 solemnly professed friars, and five in temporary vows in the communities in Italy, 10 solemn professed and one in temporary vows in the Czech Republic, and 18 solemnly professed and 11 in temporary vows in the Central African Republic. In recent times, the Province has experienced a certain growth, due to its presence in the Czech Republic, and especially in the Central African Republic, while in Italy the decline has remained moderate.

The overall situation of the province is calm and stable, with a defined lifestyle and good fraternal harmony in the communities as well as in the province as a whole. Apostolic activity is remarkable and varied (shrines, houses of spirituality, parishes, missions, pastoral ministry of spirituality, publications, etc.). Highlights in the life and activity of the province are devotion to the Child Jesus, with the shrines in Prague and Arenzano, and the missionary interest which is evident with their presence in the Central African Republic and in the multiple publications and initiatives throughout the province to make people aware of the missions and to support them. Likewise, dedication to promoting vocations is also considerable, especially through the minor Seminary in Arenzano and to initial formation in its various stages.

The visitation has served to encourage the friars to continue renewing their identification with the Teresian charism, to maintain and deepen fraternal relations in the communities and in the province. Some issues were also addressed that may need special attention in the immediate future, such as ongoing formation, the economic situation, and collaboration with other circumscriptions of the Order.

Regarding the follow-up of previous pastoral visitations, we received the report from the province of Lombardy, which follows the restructuring process based on the indications of the visitation: concrete actions are being carried out, such as the suppression of the communities of Cassano Valcuvia and Ferrara, or the rethinking of the parish assignments in Parma and Legnano with the aim of adapting the commitments to the real possibilities of the friars and of promoting the renewal and revitalization of the communities and the province.

For its part, the Province of Central Italy is taking progressive steps to apply the agreed process of restructuring. Thus, the parish of Anzio has been entrusted to the Province of Andhra Pradesh, and the houses of Caprarola and Capannori will shortly be taken back

by their respective dioceses. Likewise, in the context of their respective processes of restructuring, the Province of Portugal has suppressed the community of Aveiro, and the Commissariat of Sicily, the community of Palermo-La Kalsa.

As for the Malabar province, the Definitory is maintaining its dialogue with the province to continue accompanying it closely in the adequate treatment of the most important issues that were faced during the general visitation. In this sense, the final report and the conclusions of the visitation, approved by the Definitory, are the fundamental reference points for decision-making. A specific question is, after analysing and evaluating the information and requests received, the Definitory made the decision to suppress the Regional Vicariate of North Malabar so that the communities and religious who formed it return to integrate themselves fully into the province.

Among other things, we analysed the financial report of the 2018 business year, presented by the General Bursar. The balance is slightly positive, despite the fact that the fixed income (contributions from the provinces, rents...) are limited and the administration depends to a great extent on the extraordinary receipts, among which stand out the contributions from our Nuns' monasteries whom we must thank for their great generosity. As for expenses, an important part is devoted to the study centres of the Order.

For his part, the Secretary for Missionary Cooperation presented the financial situation under his management, aimed at collaborating with specific projects in mission territories. In particular, he detailed the projects to which funds had been allotted, as well as the contributions from the Provinces to the Missionary fund created by the decision of the last General Chapter. (Last year, only approximately half of the circumscriptions contributed). We also received the annual accounts of the General Postulator.

We also received the economic balance of the Israeli Delegation, which has a moderately positive result, especially thanks to the considerable increase in the influx of pilgrims in recent months and to the good work of receiving pilgrims, both in Stella Maris and in El-Muhraqa. On the other hand, the laborious and slow efforts towards conservation and exploitation of our heritage in Israel continue their course.

As usual, with the Procurator General, we addressed the efforts made in the name of the Order before the organizations of the Apostolic See, which relate mostly to personal questions regarding friars from different circumscriptions. We also commented on the current situation of the Church in the face of the increase in allegations of sexual abuse, and we recalled the need for everyone, especially the superiors, to act with transparency, clarity and determination in cases that may affect our Order, following the directives of the Church and taking into account the civil laws of each country.

The Definitory also addressed, among other matters, the following specific topics:

–Fr. Michal Zelechowski, of the Warsaw province, will transfer to become part of the formation community in the International College. For the next scholastic year, there is expected to be a good group of students in the initial course.

–The Definitory approved the canonical establishment of the Maronggela formation house in Indonesia.

–We accepted the petition of the Genoa province to build a new monastery for the Bangui formation community in the Republic of Central Africa.

–We granted partial help for building the monastery and church in Minsk (Byelorussia).

–We accepted the proposal to negotiate a loan for the use of part of the former military camp at Stella Maris by a Catholic Youth pastoral centre.

–We renewed the appointment for a triennium of Fr Francisco Javier Sancho as Director of CITES in Avila and of Fr Rómulo Cuartas as Assistant-Director and Bursar of the same.

–We discussed the preparation of the IV Carmelite Congress for Africa and Madagascar, planned for Yaoundé (Cameroon) from the 14th to the 18th of October, 2019. The central topic for reflection will be fraternal life in the African context.

At the end of this three-monthly meeting of the General Definitory, we are preparing to take part, with the entire community of the General House, in our community retreat which will be an opportunity to renew our willingness to serve the Lord and the Order. We desire for the whole Teresian Family—friars, nuns and laity—that our Lenten journey may help us to purify and intensify our life of friendship with God and prepare us to take part fully in the Easter of the Risen Christ.

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