



GENERAL DEFINITORY OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES  
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Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Teresian Carmel:

We send anew our fraternal greeting as we conclude the General Definitory meeting which took place in Rome from June 5th through 10th. It was attended by the Father General and seven definitors. We met with hearts filled with the joy of the Resurrection, intensified during the 50 days of Easter, and with the fortitude of the Holy Spirit whose presence in us was renewed on the feast of Pentecost. We ask the Spirit to accompany and illumine the work of the general government and all the members of the Order, particularly mindful of the new superiors of the circumscriptions and communities that will hold elections during this semester of triennial chapters.

The community of the General House shared the spiritual exercises in the historic convent of Monte Compatri, a few kilometers from Rome, after the last Definitory meeting celebrated in March. The remains of the Servant of God John of Jesus Mary, “the Calagurritano,” a great figure from the early days of the Teresian Carmel, repose there. He contributed in various ways to the consolidation and growth of the Teresian charism in Italy, all of Europe, and other regions of the world. It was precisely on May 14th, a few weeks ago, that the 400th anniversary of the creation of the first six provinces of the Italian congregation occurred during the General Chapter of 1617 (Genoa, Rome, Poland, Lombardy, France, and Belgium). Without a doubt, it is a good occasion to remember and renew the missionary spirit that characterizes our Order.

The work of the Definitory during these days has been rich and intense. As usual, each of us presented the conclusions of the visitations made, and on this occasion, particularly participation in some provincial chapters. Firstly, Father General shared information on his fraternal visit to the Province of Flanders, programmed to coincide with the 4th centenary of the founding of the province. Currently, it has four communities (three in Belgium and one in Sweden) in which 25 friars live and has a quite high median age. The vocational outlook in that region of Europe is scant, and the Carmelite presence seems to move toward progressive reduction. Father General also visited some of the Discalced Carmelite monasteries in Flanders; the nuns are also living in a situation similar to that of the friars. Father Saverio additionally commented on some aspects of the semiannual meeting of the Union of Superiors General celebrated in Rome from May 24th to 26th with the theme, “Discernment of vocations in an intercultural world.”

Father Agustí Borrell, Vicar General, shared an explanation of his participation in four provincial chapters. The first was the Iberian Province’s that took place in Ávila from April 17th to 23rd. It was the first ordinary provincial chapter of that circumscription, which was created two years ago from five former provinces (Andalusia, Aragon and Valencia,

Burgos, Castile, and Catalonia and the Balearic Islands). Currently, the number of its friars and nuns is high, with more than 300 friars (including those of the Regional Vicariate of Uruguay-Bolivia-Paraguay and those of the West African Delegation), although admittedly the median age is high and the reduction in the number of religious is constant. Amid the difficulty and pain of the inevitable closure of presences, the reorganization that was carried out is showing its advantages and is opening up new perspectives and hopes. The internal cohesion of the province is growing and steps are being taken toward a better organization and coordination of aspects such as initial formation, promotion of vocations, publications, infirmaries, finances, etc.

Father Agustí was also invited to participate for a few days in the chapters of the provinces of Lombardy and Central Italy. These are provinces with a long and fruitful history which are now undergoing a decrease of religious and progressive aging. In both cases the urgency of re-evaluating the future with sound discernment of priorities and realistic possibilities, as well as the need of being open to relating with other provinces, is very evident. Along these lines, it is interesting to note the decision approved upon by the chapters of Lombardy and Central Italy to have a Novitiate in common (Cassano Valcuvia) and the Formation House (Arcetri, Florence) with religious of both provinces in the two communities.

Lastly, the Vicar General presided over the chapter of the Commissariat of Sicily celebrated in Locomono-Villasmundo from May 23rd to 26th. The chapter, taking into consideration the conclusions of the General Pastoral Visitation of last year, has become aware of the need to reduce the number of presences in order to favor the quality of community life and to dedicate attention to important activities such as promotion of vocations. He also discussed possible paths of collaboration with other circumscriptions, such as is already being done with initial formation.

Father Johannes Gorantla commented about several elements and conclusions of the different chapters of the Indian provinces which he, as Definitor General, has followed closely. We especially discussed the chapter of Tamilnadu, in which he personally participated during his pastoral visitation of the province. His presence was helpful for the preparation and carrying out of the chapter during a time when the province is reflecting on issues that are important for its near future: the provincial delegation of Chattisgarh, the mission in Sri Lanka, and the internal organization of the province.

Father Daniel Chowning talked about the development and conclusions of the pastoral visit to the Oklahoma Province which took place from the 2nd to the 24th of April. The province currently has 17 religious among its five communities: San Antonio, Oklahoma City, Little Rock, and two communities in Dallas. The median age is 67 years. There is a considerable amount of apostolic activity with a good measure of attention to the Carmelite pastoral activity. However, community life is undergoing some difficulties due to the abundant dedication to the ministry. The province is going through a reduction in numbers that invites rethinking the future, likely including limiting presences and commitments: it is necessary to "prune" branches to continue bearing fruit. The Definitory sent a letter to the Province with guidelines about this and other aspects to seriously discern about the future of the province. On another note, it is worthwhile to mention that Father Daniel had an interview with Father Gadhira, currently the only Discalced Carmelite in Iraq besides Bishop Jean Sleiman, archbishop of Baghdad.

Shortly afterward, Father Daniel Chowning participated in the assembly of Discalced Carmelite nuns of the United States (communities of both the 1991 and 1990 constitutions) with the Father General and Father Rafal Wilkowski (secretary general for

the nuns). The meeting took place in St. Louis from April 25th to 29th. The central theme for reflection was the apostolic constitution *Vultum Dei Quaerere*. The meeting had a pleasant family spirit.

For his part, Father Javier Mena reported on the pastoral visitation to the Province of Colombia which took place from April 24th to May 31st. The province has 70 solemnly professed religious; eight have made their simple vows, three are novices, and 11 are philosophy students, excluding friars of the provincial delegation of Ecuador. The median age is 50 years. The province has 13 communities in Colombia, four in Ecuador, and one in Argentina. Additionally, in the region of the province there are 11 communities of Discalced Carmelite nuns, most of which Father Javier was able to visit. He likewise kept in touch with the members of the Secular Carmel, which has 16 communities and about 300 members. There are other lay groups with various types of associations to the Teresian Carmel. A special outcome of social sensitivity born of the actions of a religious of the province are the so-called "Cities of God," which are experiencing notable growth. The province is generally going through a stage of serenity and consolidation after going through a turbulent period in the past years. Apostolic activity is intense, which at times makes the rhythm of prayer in community difficult. The economic situation is stable, although it would be convenient to strengthen the provincial economy with contributions from the communities. Other recommendations made from the visit are to maintain and consolidate the mission in Tumaco, accompany the recent foundation in Bucaramanga, and create a provincial group to continue running the Spirituality Institute and the Spiritual Life magazine. As we have been doing after each pastoral visit, the Definitory sent a letter to the province with some reflections and specific decisions.

Father Mariano Agruda presented, in the first place, his participation in the Chapter congress of the Taiwan-Singapore Delegation held from May 8th to 13th in Bangkok. The delegation is comprised of friars from four countries (Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, and Malaysia), which gives it a multicultural and multi-ethnic character and simultaneously requires hard work to favor cohesion and overcome individualism. In the chapter congress, the need to dedicate attention to vocational discernment and initial formation was brought to awareness. It was decided to create a new foundation in Kuala Lumpur.

After that participation, Father Mariano visited the Discalced Carmelite nuns of Nakhon-Sawan as well as the first Secular Carmel of that Thai region. Then he went to Yangon, the capital of Myanmar, to explore the region's missionary and vocational possibilities. There, they are preparing a foundation of Discalced Carmelite nuns from Singapore. Myanmar is geographically and culturally close to Thailand, with about 50 million inhabitants, 5% of whom are Christian. Father Mariano next went to Hong Kong, where he visited the Discalced Carmelite nuns who celebrated their 80th year of foundation, and he met with the Secular Carmel.

Father Daniel Ehigie made a fraternal visit to the religious in Kenya, a region that is part of the Province of Washington. There are currently seven communities in that region with 18 solemnly professed and 27 in formation. Logical priorities are discernment of vocations and initial formation. The principal place of formation is the house in Nairobi, where it is convenient to have a good team of formators. The religious have a great dedication to the apostolate, especially at the parochial level. The visitor requested that this not reduce their fraternal life and prayer. An initiative that is growing is the Tangaza University College, in which 22 religious families collaborate with active participation of our Order. It will soon become a university.

During his stay in Kenya, Father Daniel made a pastoral visit to the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Tindinyo, requested by the bishop of the diocese to the Father General. The community has ten solemnly professed and four in formation. The visitor offered recommendations regarding important points such as fraternal life, formation, or specifically Carmelite values. The personnel assistance that the monastery has offered to other communities in recent times have diminished the community's possibilities. Father Daniel also made a fraternal visit to the Kisii monastery.

Toward the end of April, Father Daniel Ehigie participated in the chapter congress of the Madagascar Commissariat. The circumscription continues to have a great abundance of vocations, which creates formation and discernment challenges, avoiding the temptation of indiscriminate acceptance. The commissariat is working to strengthen our charismatic identity among the religious. The most frequent apostolic activities are of a parochial type. Additionally, a good number of lay persons organized in different ways are active in the commissariat. During his stay in Madagascar, the definator visited the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Antananarivo and Moramanga.

Afterward, Father Daniel carried out a fraternal visit to the friars in Malawi, who belong to the Province of Navarre. There are currently five communities in that country with 15 solemnly professed, five who have made their simple vows, one novice, and one bishop. Formation is well attended. Vocations have become scarce and more friars are needed to keep up with current activities. It would be good to look for collaboration from other circumscriptions, plan adequately for the future, and continue working on vocational promotion, always keeping in mind the primacy of Carmelite values. In Malawi, Father Daniel also visited the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Zomba and was fraternally welcomed by the bishop of that diocese, Bishop George Tambala, who was his predecessor as Definitor General of Africa. Father Daniel also went to South Africa, where there are some religious from the province of Karnataka-Goa who carry out apostolates that are preferentially parochial. Then he visited the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Benoni, Cape Town, and Mafikeng.

Father Łukasz Kansy went to Austria, where he visited the friars of that semi-province and nine of the 11 monasteries of Discalced Carmelite nuns in that country. The religious currently number 23 and are distributed in three communities. One of the main characteristics is its intercultural character, since the friars come from eight different circumscriptions. The chapter celebrated at the end of April in Linz was a good experience in dialogue and reflection about the life and future of the circumscription. Regarding the nuns, there is a progressive reduction of nuns, and the median age in the monasteries is rising.

This overview of the activities of the definitors has allowed us a broad virtual survey of different locations of the world where our Order is present. We completed it with other information and comments about the development and decisions of the provincial chapters, now that the majority of those are concluded. The Definitory has examined the decisions of the different chapters and has given its *nihil obstat*, in some cases with concrete observations so that the chapter decisions respond realistically to our charismatic identity and agree with the letter and spirit of our Constitutions. In a way, a new stage of this sexennium begins, in which one of the principal objectives is to continue and intensify the project of revitalization of our charismatic life that the General Chapter of 2015 started.

The next extraordinary General Definitory will allow the first meeting of new provincial superiors with each other and the general government. It will be a good occasion to pool the richness and diversity of the Order and strengthen the sense of family and

coordination and collaboration among all. In our recent meeting, we set down some issues concerning that meeting, practical as well as regarding the content. As was announced in our previous letter (March 2017) and in the summons received by participants, the extraordinary General Definitory – the first of this sexennium – will take place in Ariccia from August 29th to September 6th. Particular attention will be given to the work of the provincial government using materials, expositions, and dialogue about the different aspects related to this important service (competencies, responsibilities, attitudes, resources, methodology...). Another topic that will be discussed is the re-reading of the Constitutions to create awareness of the moment in which we find ourselves and perspectives for the future. A specific matter to work on in the meeting is the geographic configuration of the circumscriptions and the presence of religious outside of the territory of their own province.

The Definitory discussed the situation of some entities of the Order that are in a particular way under its jurisdiction (the Teresianum, delegations of Israel and Egypt, etc.). In the majority of these, the generous disposition of provinces is necessary, especially when there is a need to find religious to form communities or to fill in offices. The Definitory renewed the appointment of Father Patrizio Sciadini as delegate to Egypt.

The Bursar General presented to the Definitory the quarterly report on the economic and financial situation of the General House, the Faculty, and the communities of the Teresianum and the Delegation of Israel. He also discussed the draft of the report regarding the economic state of the Order, which he will present at the extraordinary General Definitory meeting in September. Additionally, we analyzed together with the Procurator General some personal files that required the Definitory's intervention. We also analyzed and approved the project for the new church and convent in Minsk, Belarus, presented by the Warsaw province.

We have reason to worry about the situation of our brothers of the General Delegation of Venezuela due to the serious political, social, and economic difficulties the country is undergoing. For the time being, the chapter province scheduled for the end of June has been suspended, as well as the Father General's visit. The General Definitory decided to send economic help to the Delegation for its subsistence and so that they, in turn, can assist some of those with more urgent needs who seek help in our convents. We invite the entire Order to join in solidarity with our brothers in this uncertain time. Those who wish to, may send their donations through our Bursar General. With trust in the Lord, we continue praying for our Carmelites in Venezuela and for all the inhabitants of that country. We encourage our brothers to continue accompanying in faith, justice, and truth, those people who have been entrusted to them.

Before concluding, we are mindful our brother, Bishop Anders Arborelius, bishop of Stockholm, Sweden, who in the consistory to be held on June 28th will be created cardinal together with four other bishops, as Pope Francis recently announced. He is the first Swedish bishop since the Reform and will be the first Cardinal of the Order after the Italian Anastasio Ballestrero, who was Superior General from 1955 to 1967 and Cardinal from 1979 until 1998.

We also want to send a special greeting to all the members of the Secular Carmel remembering the letter the Father General sent them a few days ago with reflections and guidance about their participation as lay Carmelites in the task of evangelization. In that letter, the Father General invites the Secular Carmel – and all the Order – to embrace the call of the Church to participate in "the mission of evangelizing, of being a 'Church which goes forth,' a sign of the joy of the Gospel" (No. 1).

We began the Definitory meeting on the day after Pentecost and we concluded it on the Vigil of the Most Holy Trinity, which is, as Saint John of the Cross so quaintly said, is "the greatest saint in heaven." To the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit we entrust the life and projects of the Order so that we may know how to be completely open to his will, always growing in the communion of love in the image of the Trinity-God.

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