



DEFINITORY GENERAL OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES
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Dear brothers and sisters of the Teresian Carmel:

Once again, we greet you at the end of our three-monthly meeting of the Definitory General which took place in Rome from the 5th to the 14th of March, with the participation of Fr General and the seven Definitors. While in the liturgy of these days we followed the rhythm of Lent which prepares us to take part in the paschal mystery of Jesus, we discussed many topics relating to the life of the Order and we tried to remain open to the light of the Spirit in order to make the most timely decisions to help our religious family to continue responding with renewed fidelity to the call received from the Lord.

At the beginning of the meeting, our time was occupied with the pastoral and fraternal visits we had recently made. Fr General told us about his pastoral visit he carried out in the Andhra Pradesh Province (India) from the 7th of January to the 1st of February. Our Carmelite presence in this area began in 1971, thanks to the missionary activity of the Manjummel Province, which led to the establishment of the Andhra Pradesh Province in 2011. At present it has 53 solemnly professed members and 63 in formation. Its mean age is quite low: only 8 religious are older than 50, and vocations continue to be abundant. At present the Province has 16 monasteries. They take care of 16 parishes, 5 schools, a professional technical institute and 7 boarding houses for teenagers with family difficulties. The religious carry out an enormous apostolic activity, with a great availability and spirit of work. In some of these initiatives exists good collaboration with some female congregations. The Province has considerable real estate heritage of which it would be better to take advantage.

The General noted in the visit some fundamental elements which needed serious revision and a change of mentality: prayer in common was rare, the communities are very small (the largest community has only three members), the sense of community is weak, individualism is growing, not sufficient energy is devoted to formation, everything is directed to pastoral activity. The Definitory has ratified the directives adopted during the visit, which try to help the circumscription to mature and consolidate itself as an authentic Carmelite Province where the permanent values of the charism of the Order are lived; for a more direct follow-up, the pastoral visit remains open.

On the other hand, Fr Agustí Borrell carried out during the months of January and February a pastoral visit to the Province of Central Italy. Created in 2014 by the union of the old Roman and Tuscan provinces, it has at the moment 50 solemnly professed members in 11 communities, besides 14 other religious serving the Order, or in other situations. The medium age is 76 years. In the student house, in common with the Lombardy province, there are at present 5 students: one from the Lombardy province, one from the Commissariat of Sicily and three from the Central Italy province, two of these come from Albania.

The communities maintain an atmosphere of serenity and good community living and follow an appropriate rhythm of prayer in common. Apostolic activity is centred on all the celebrations and confessions in the churches of the monasteries, which have a varied typology: spirituality centres, shrines, and parishes. Many of the monasteries are large buildings and can relate a long and fruitful history. On the other hand, in the province there are at present 14 monasteries of Discalced Carmelite Nuns and 19 communities of the Secular Order. The mission of Albania has been entrusted to the province, a recent foundation, where there is at present a community made up of three young Italian friars. In a context marked by the aftermath of the dictatorship, they take care of the recently constructed spirituality centre and play an active part in the pastoral ministry of the local Church, especially in the evangelization of the youth.

The Central Italy province has experienced in recent time a strong reduction in the number of friars and a rapid increase in the medium age. The present precarious situation in the majority of communities requires working out as soon as possible a restructuring and revitalization project for the province that would allow it to concentrate its energies on priority objectives and give preference to community life as envisioned in our charism, as well as an environment that is adequate for receiving vocations. The General Definitory, in dialogue with the province, will propose the way of making this possible and carrying it out, which will inevitably imply a reduction in foundations.

From the 15th of January to the 10th of February, Fr Javier Mena carried out a pastoral visit of the Delegation of Ecuador, which is part of the Columbian province. It has 20 solemnly professed religious and 7 candidates in various stages of formation. It has five communities who take care of 4 parishes, a Spirituality Institute and a few social works. In the region there are 12 monasteries of Discalced Carmelite nuns and 7 communities of the Secular Order. All the nuns' monasteries were visited in order to encourage communion and collaboration among them, especially in 6 of them who do not yet form part of the Association of Saint Joseph. The Visitor invited the Delegation to continue occupying itself with youth and vocational ministry and to maintain its missionary spirit by taking advantage of the foundation in Orellana El Coca. He also sought to bring into effect some specific decisions such as revitalizing the Guayaquil community, leaving the García Moreno school, and to reorient the Spirituality Institute by an offering that is not exclusively academic.

From the 19th to the 23rd of February, Fr Javier took part in the triennial meeting of the friars and nuns of the CICLA North. One of the topics for discussion was the adoption of a regulation governing these meetings in the future, as well as the preparation of a formation program for the Discalced Carmelite nuns. Also, there was comment on the situation of the community of Discalced Carmelite nuns in Cuba, who are having difficulties consolidating themselves in a situation that is as complex as Cuba. The commitment was renewed of continuing to offer the necessary help, both from the friars of the CICLA North and the nuns of the Mexican Federation.

Fr Johannes Gorantla carried out a fraternal visit to the Manjummel province where he was able to visit 17 of the 37 communities that the province has in India (as well as 11 in other countries). At present, the province has 269 members. Recently, the growth in numbers of the friars enabled the creation of various new communities. A special interest exists in expanding the Order in the North of Kerala, in the pastoral ministry of Carmelite spirituality, and in helping the missions.

Fr Johannes was present at the inauguration of the Discalced Carmelite nuns' monastery in Kolayad, a foundation from the Thiruvalla monastery. Following this, on the 2nd of February, he took part in Hyderabad in the meeting of Fr General with the provincials and other superiors of the circumscriptions in India. From the 3rd to the 5th of February, he organized a meeting of

the General with the prioresses, presidents, and councils of the three associations of the Discalced Carmelite nuns in India.

Finally, Fr Johannes spent some days in Sri Lanka. He visited the nuns' monasteries in the area and encouraged them to develop the desire to create a Federation. With regard to the friars, they have a missionary presence of 5 friars from the Tamil Nadu province, in three communities. However, it is noted that the establishment of the Order is proving to be slow and difficult.

Fr Daniel Chowning gave a report on his fraternal visit to the province of Malta. They have 21 friars in 4 communities. Particularly important is the sanctuary of St Therese of Lisieux in Birkirkara, as well as the spirituality centre in Tas-Silg. As in many provinces, they are concerned about vocations. Fr Daniel also visited the Discalced Carmelite nuns' monasteries in Saint Margaret and Rabat. After that he went to France, where he visited the three friars of the Avignon-Aquitaine province who are beginning a foundation in Lyon: at present they offer their service of spiritual accompaniment in the Saint Bonaventure basilica and take care of the Secular Carmel as well as the Discalced Carmelite nuns. Fr Daniel also paid a visit to the Discalced Carmelite nuns' communities in Fourvière and Yzeron.

Among many other activities, Fr Mariano Agruda, had a meeting with the associations of the Discalced Carmelite nuns of the Philippines and Thailand. In the Philippines he visited the nuns' monasteries in Davao, Mati, Naga, Cebu, Angeles, Manila, Bacolod and Iloilo, as well as the novitiate of the friars in Tugbok. In Taiwan, he visited the friars' novitiate in Hsinchu, and the nuns' monasteries in Chiung Ling and Sheng Keng. Together with the friars he analysed the present state of the project for mission in China, which is continuing on ahead thanks to the collaboration between the province of Korea and the Taiwan-Singapore delegation. Two Chinese candidates are making their novitiate in Korea, and some aspirants are being prepared. The possibility of opening a formation house for them in Taipei is being studied. Also, they have recently obtained information on the community of discalced Carmelite nuns present in China.

For his part, Fr Daniel Ehigie made a fraternal visit from the 7th to the 30th of January to the recently established regional vicariate of Ruanda-Burundi of the Krakow province. He visited the nuns' monasteries in Kigali and Cyangugu (Ruanda) and in Gitega (Burundi). The vicariate has 26 solemnly professed friars and 23 in formation. It has 3 communities in Burundi and 2 in Ruanda. Besides the formation houses, they take care of 2 parishes and a spirituality centre. The religious are making an effort to adapt themselves to the new structure of the vicariate, which requires greater involvement of all to build a true fraternity. Also, they must keep in mind the recent history of the two countries, which have suffered strong ethnic conflicts, which are gradually being overcome.

Continuing on, in Butare (Ruanda), from the 1st to the 3rd of February, Fr Daniel took part in the meeting of the preparatory commission for the IV Carmelite Congress of Africa and Madagascar, which is planned for the 14th to the 18th of October in Yaoundé. The topic will be "The Teresian Carmel in Africa and Madagascar, in dialogue with its own cultures: a look at community life". From the 5th to the 9th of February, he assisted at the meeting of the English-speaking Conference of Major Superiors of Africa. Then, from the 10th to the 19th of February, he visited the Washington province's provincial delegation of Kenya. There he took part in the ordination of 3 Deacons and a priest. Our Carmelite brother, Mons. George Tambala presided at the ceremony. Fr Daniel also visited the Discalced Carmelite nuns' houses in Kisii and Nairobi.

From the 19th to the 23rd of February, Fr Daniel visited the Cameroon mission which belongs to the Lombardy province (with the collaboration of the Genoa province). It has 9 solemnly professed members and 13 in training (some in Central Africa). The friars are

progressively orienting themselves towards an apostolate that is not just of parishes, but also consisting of the pastoral ministry of spirituality. Being studied is the possibility of having a presence in the English-speaking zone of the country. For this, a relationship with the Vicariate of Nigeria and the Buea nuns would be a positive thing. Quite significant is the popular interest in Br Jean Thierry Ebogo, a young Cameroon novice, who died in 2006 and whose cause for beatification is in progress.

As well as these reports of the pastoral and fraternal visits and other activities of the Definitors, we discussed other topics concerning the life of the Order. Fr Paolo De Carli, Bursar General, presented the financial report for 2017, which showed a moderately positive balance. The economic and financial situation is stable, thanks above all to the contributions from the provinces and the donations from the nuns, as well as from some rents. This allows us to finance, in particular, the needs of the centre of the Order as well as the study centres.

We also received a financial report from the Secretariat of Missionary Cooperation, which continues to support financially the various missionary projects that are submitted. During last year, it specifically helped 14 projects in various parts of the world. Let us remember that basically it is nourished by the annual contributions of the Order's circumscriptions, in agreement with the decision of the 2015 General Chapter. As well, the Postulator General presented the financial report for last year.

With pleasure, the Definitory received a visit from Fr Attilio Ghisleri, Delegate General in Israel for a couple of months now. He gave us a report on the current situation of the Delegation with regard to religious, activities and heritage. He also presented the financial report of the Delegation for the year 2017. The financial situation is good, though we must think about the necessary works of maintenance and some expenses in order to preserve and make rentable our properties in the area.

As usual, we reviewed with the Procurator General the records of some religious of the Order (friars and nuns) who find themselves in special situations, as well as certain unresolved situations that need to be presented to the Vatican congregations.

Once again, the Definitory discussed aspects concerning initial formation. In this regard, they had been informed by Fr Łukasz about the progress made in the project of a second common novitiate for the European provinces which will begin in 2019 in the Las Palmas Desert (Castellón). In spring of this year (2018), a group of European students will spend some weeks in Salamanca taking courses of Spanish in preparation for the experience.

On the other hand, we had to face up to the situation of the International College in Rome and its prospects for the future. We recalled what was said in the Ariccia Extraordinary Definitory, when the Provincials revealed their impressions of the college, which we reviewed and kept in mind in our discussion. At the present time, the prospects are worrisome because of the continual reduction of the number of students from the various circumscriptions who are attending the college. This will eventually affect the Theological Faculty of the Teresianum, which, for the institutional cycle, has only students from the Order. We also discussed the steps that have been recently taken to formalize the academic statutes of CITeS in Avila and its linking to the Teresianum. We also discussed some data concerning the *Seminarium Missionum*, which presently numbers 31 students (26 from the Order and 5 diocesan) who are doing specialization courses (licence and doctorate) in various Roman faculties.

The following other specific questions that have been the object of attention for the Definitory:

- It read and commented on the letter sent by the Provincial of Lombardy giving information on the steps being taken by the province to put into practice the restructuring process requested in the recent General Pastoral Visitation.

- It granted authorization that the Novitiate of the delegation of Tanzania (Karnataka Goa province) be transferred to Mbeya (Tanzania).
- It approved the new Statutes for the regional vicariate of Nigeria (Anglo-Irish province) with some clarifications.
- It granted permission to the commissariat of Indonesia to begin a foundation in Banda Aceh (Sumatra), in the place where blessed Denis and Redemptus were martyred.
- It granted the necessary permissions for works and expenses in particular circumscriptions (Lebanon, Colombia, West Bengal).
- It granted permission to the South Kerala Province for a new foundation in Mavelikara in the diocese of Quilon, Kerala.
- It granted permission to the Vicariate of East and North-East Bengal, in India, for a new foundation in Dudua, in the diocese of Jalpaiguri, as well as a new foundation in Khawlailung in the diocese of Aizol, Mizoram.
- It commented on the letter that Fr General will send to the Order on the occasion of the 4th Centenary of the death of Mary of the Incarnation Acarie, a Discalced Carmelite nun, promoter of the introduction of the Teresian Carmel into France, and at the same time, the letter to be sent to the Secular Carmel.

Before bringing this letter to an end, we wish to recall that nearly three years have passed since the Avila General Chapter (May 2015). We are therefore arriving at the middle of a sexennium marked by the chapter petition to renew the life of our charism in the light of the Constitutions. We are continuing this endeavour confirmed by the Ariccia Extraordinary General Definitory in September last year. The first stage of the Chapter project centred on the rereading of the Constitutions on the part of all the communities is coming to its end. We request the communities and all those responsible for each circumscription to continue to encourage this commitment that is essential for the spiritual vitality of the Order. During the coming northern spring, the international commission will analyse the contributions received and present them to the General Definitory who, in their September meeting, will use them in preparing the Extraordinary General Definitory planned for the 3rd to the 11th of February 2019 in Goa, India. There they must decide the option to revise the text of the Constitutions in agreement with the directives of the 2015 general Chapter.

During these days the Definitory received notification of the coming beatification of Sister María Felicia de Jesús Sacramentado, “Chiquitunga” (María Felicia Guggiari Echeverría), a young Discalced Carmelite nun from the Carmelo of Asunción (Paraguay), who died in 1959. The beatification ceremony will take place on the coming 23rd of June in Asunción and will be a new occasion for joy for the Teresian Carmelite family in Paraguay, America and throughout the world and, at the same time, a call and a stimulus to live deeply our vocation, as well as an example of the many brothers and sisters who have preceded us.

We are sending out this letter when, in Rome, spring is knocking at the door. After a winter, which left us with the experience of cold, darkness, and even snow, we are decidedly going towards light and colour. Life and hope triumph always. We are assured not only by the natural cycle of seasons, but also our faith which in Easter, the Christian spring, shows us true life in all its splendour. Let us continue to prepare ourselves to relive the Paschal mystery with the Lenten journey, which for us and for our whole community in the General House will be intensified in the coming days by our community retreat. We pray for you all, pray for us.

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