



GENERAL DEFINITORY OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES
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SEXENNIIUM 2015-2021 – LETTER N° 22

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Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Teresian Carmel:

The General Definitory held its quarterly meeting in different sessions from the 7th to 22nd September 2020. We met again after some atypical months marked by the pandemic that continues to profoundly condition the life of humanity at this time. After a few weeks of strict confinement in many countries, the security measures were relaxed in June and the whole world is trying to move forward in coexistence with the coronavirus, seeking a balance between a return to normal activities (social, work, economic, cultural, religious...) and the necessary precautions to reduce contagion.

The life of the Order has also been returning to a certain normality, although with notable limitations. During the months of June and July, most of the circumscriptions were able to celebrate the pending Chapters, and little by little they are beginning the path of the new triennium. For our part, the General and the Definitors were able to travel again and be present at some Provincial Chapters, visit communities, and have some brief days of rest or meetings with family and friends.

In our sessions during these days, we shared the intense experiences of the last few weeks and dialogued about the situation in the different circumscriptions. Now, having celebrated the Chapters, it is time to think about the calendar for the next few months, despite the uncertainty that lingers over any programming. For us and the whole Order, we feel more than ever the desire and need to respond with decision and creativity to the present situation without being carried away by fear, discouragement, or comfort.

As you will recall, the Extraordinary Definitory in preparation for the General Chapter was initially scheduled this year at the end of August in Mexico. Realizing that it would be impossible to convene on those dates, it was postponed until the end of November. During these days we consulted the Provincials and other friars who must participate in it and we noted that for many of them it will be impossible to travel, even with the hypothesis of convening the meeting in another part of the world. Under the present circumstances, it is also unlikely that most of the Chapter members will be able to travel to Italy next May, the date scheduled for the celebration of the General Chapter. For these reasons, the Definitory finds it necessary to postpone both the Extraordinary Definitory and the General Chapter. The new dates will be communicated as soon as possible, depending on the evolution of the pandemic and on the decisions that the different countries will establish in terms of preventive measures and travel requirements. Currently, we foresee that the General Chapter may be held around the month of September 2021, and the Extraordinary Definitory a few months earlier. In making these decisions, we have also taken into account the communiqués from the Congregation for the Institutes of Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CIVCSVA) of last April 2, which authorized “the postponement of the General and Provincial Chapters to a new date,” and of July 1, according to which “General or Provincial Chapters may not be held in a telematic mode, nor in part in person and in part by telematic means, but only in person”.

The draft of the Charismatic Declaration was an important theme in our Definitory meeting these days. In his letter of September 2019, the General asked the Chapters to reflect on the text sent to the whole Order and to present their comments and suggestions. In this way, the Declaration that should finally be approved by the next General Chapter will be able to take into account the greatest possible number of sensitivities. So far, we have received responses from about two-thirds of the Order's circumscriptions. These join the contributions that came from the meetings with the young friars from the different regions of the world held during the past months of November, December and January, as well as those of some communities and individual friars who wished to express their opinion.

In general, the Declaration's text has been well received, and most of the responses received express their positive assessment of the document. We noticed that in many places the text is already providing a stimulus for a review of the life of the friars and communities based on our charismatic identity. At the same time, there are numerous and various concrete proposals to revise, modify, or complete the current draft in certain aspects. All of them will be carefully evaluated in order to enrich the text and prepare a new version of the draft.

Another important topic of the Definitory meeting was again the presence of friars from one circumscription in the territory of other circumscriptions. The Provincial Chapters of 2020 were the limit the Definitory indicated in the determinations published in September 2017 on friars working individually at the service of a diocese, and in March 2020, on communities of a Province present in the territory of another. These determinations are intended to safeguard important values of our lifestyle and system of organization, such as community life, the sense of belonging to the Order, collaboration among the circumscriptions, and the principle of territoriality.

We have received and analyzed in detail the responses from the Chapters and Provincial Councils on these issues. We are grateful for the collaboration of the Provinces that have respectfully accepted the reflections and decisions of the Definitory in a spirit of service to the Order. After evaluating the responses received and the concrete proposals to regularize the current situations, we have reached some conclusions to advance the application of the previous determinations. In summary, they are as follows:

- 1) The houses of a Province which have been temporarily taken over by another province shall again become dependent on the local Province, and the friars present in them shall pass into the service of that Province under the conditions provided by our laws. In each case, concrete agreements may be made between the two Provinces concerning the length of stay, the financial relationship, etc. Practically all the Provinces involved have accepted this way, with some exceptions for which a specific solution will be sought.
- 2) Those friars who are outside the territory of their own Province without forming part of a regularly established community (most of them are at the service of some diocese), should return to their Province without further delay. Once the length of time granted in 2017 for regularizing such situations has expired, where the Provinces themselves have not done so, the Definitory has initiated contacts with the respective dioceses to inform them of this decision and to implement it.
- 3) As for the communities initiated by some Provinces on the territory of other Provinces, this is an anomalous situation which must be avoided from now on. For those presences that are already consolidated, the way to regularize them is being analyzed in dialogue with the Provinces involved. The preferable solution would be for the local Province to assume these foundations as its own communities, although this will not be possible in all places. In these cases, we will study whether the conditions exist to grant an extension of the current situation

through a temporary dispensation from territoriality. It will always be necessary to reach an agreement with the local Province with which the friars of these communities must have a direct relationship, with the perspective of a possible future integration into it.

We must remember that the expansion of a Province beyond its present territory normally has a missionary purpose in those places where the Church or the Order is not present. In this sense, therefore, the assignment of new territories to current Provinces is not excluded. It is also possible and positive to think about help from the Provinces that have more vocations in order to maintain the presence of the Order in the territories of the Provinces that are in numerical decline: however, this should not be done with parallel structures but in direct collaboration with the existing Province in a true family spirit and a willingness to serve the Order.

As usual, we reviewed with the General Treasurer the accounts of the first half of the year 2020. The economic management continues with normality, although it has also had to adapt to the situation created by the pandemic of COVID-19.

Furthermore, the General Definitory has made some appointments, especially those that correspond to the General Delegations. During the last few months the following delegates have been named: Argentina (Ricardo Prado Rovella), Israel (Attilio Ghisleri), Japan (Paolo Ose), Taiwan-Singapore (John Chua), Venezuela (Cristóbal Domínguez de Jorge) and Egypt (Fr. Makhoul Farha, from the Semi-Province of Lebanon). Moreover, last July the Definitory proceeded to the appointment of Fr. Jacob Ettumanookaran as Provincial Superior of Malabar, accepting the suggestion of the Congregation of Religious which had evaluated the state of the Province. In all these cases, the respective councilors have also been appointed (the current composition of the various governments of the circumscriptions of the Order can be consulted on the website of the General Curia). Fr. Karol Milewski has also been appointed bursar of the General Delegation of Israel.

We ended the Definitory meeting by asking for the intercession of our Mother Teresa of Jesus for the whole Order. These days are the 50th anniversary of her proclamation as Doctor of the Universal Church (September 27, 1970). We, who consider ourselves members of the family initiated by her and feel called to live and actualize in our time the charism she received, see in her life and writings the exceptional testimony of a Mother, Teacher and Model. As Paul VI said in his homily on that day, her official and public recognition as a Doctor of the Church should serve to give Teresa “a more authoritative mission to carry out from now on within her religious family, in the praying Church and the world, by means of her enduring and on-going message: the message of prayer.”

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