



GENERAL DEFINITORY OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES

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Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Teresian Carmel:

We greet you fraternally at the end of the new quarterly meeting of the General Definitory which took place in Rome from March 3-9. We began the meeting with the blessing of the new meeting room which was renovated during the last months in the General House. We are grateful for the generosity of our Sisters of the Order who made this possible with their donations.

The meeting was held while we continue to experience the effects of the pandemic that has been affecting humanity as a whole for the past year. We are gradually recovering all the positive aspects of the previous way of life; however, it is essential that we adapt to the new situation in order to make the best possible use of it. It is necessary to accept the current reality with serenity and a spirit of faith and to intensify more than ever a friendly closeness and solidarity among all despite the physical distance. The peace and strength that come to us from our friendship with God should impel us to accompany so many people who are suffering the consequences of a pandemic that is exacerbating the poverty and pain of those who already suffer from the injustice and inequality in our world.

In the midst of the Lenten season, we are invited above all to follow Jesus on the road to Jerusalem, to share with him the complete self-giving out of love that leads to resurrection. We ask the Spirit to help us in our desire to accept the call to conversion in order to live the renewing encounter with God who dwells within us.

In this context, the first topic of the Definitory meeting was the preparation for the General Chapter. As is well known, next May is the sixth anniversary of this six-year period, and therefore, the Ordinary General Chapter should be celebrated. Circumstances have made it necessary to postpone the Chapter meeting. After consulting with the Congregation for Institutes of Religious Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, we decided to convoke the General Chapter for August 29 to September 19, 2021, in Rome. It is our hope that by then the health situation will have improved sufficiently to allow for the necessary travel and the holding of the meeting. In any case, the date of the Chapter will have to be ratified by the Definitory at our June meeting.

The Superior General has already signed the official convocation of the General Chapter, and in the next few days we will send to those responsible for the various circumscriptions the practical indications and preliminary consultations to encourage active participation in the preparation of the Chapter on the part of the whole Order (themes, ideas, proposals, suggestions...). It is worth emphasizing that the General Chapter is the supreme authority of the Order, and that its primary responsibility is to “promote the spiritual vitality, unity and development of the Order and to ensure its ongoing renewal, with the collaboration of all the friars” (*Constitutions* OCD 170). Now more than ever, in the face of all kinds of

developments that are taking place in the Order, in the Church and the world, the General Chapter should be an experience of true reflection and shared discernment under the guidance of the Spirit in order to give a new impulse to living our Teresian charism at the present time. We ask all the members of the Order, friars, nuns and laity, to accompany the preparation of the General Chapter, particularly with confident prayer before the Lord.

On the other hand, the Definitory has continued to deal with the presence of friars in the territory of other circumscriptions. The process of regularization undertaken in recent years continues. As for the friars who are at the service of dioceses without a stable community, the decision has already been communicated to all the bishops, and the dates for the conclusion of the contracts are being agreed upon. With regard to the communities that are in monasteries of other provinces, the agreements of collaboration are being revised to adapt them to the legislation of the Order so that the friars will be at the service of the local province. We remind you that these written agreements must be presented to the Definitory before May 31 for approval. As for the communities that have been established in territories of other provinces without the necessary permissions, the form and the time in which these presences will be concluded, or will be accepted by the local province if it considers it favorable, is being specified in each case. Only exceptionally, and for very justified reasons, a dispensation of the territoriality will be granted. We are grateful for the good disposition of those who are collaborating with openness so that this process reaches a good conclusion. We are conscious that it is demanding and sometimes uncomfortable, but at the same time, we verified that it was totally necessary and urgent to carry it out for the good of the Order. These measures try to recover the forms of organization foreseen in our laws, to favor our lifestyle centered on a relationship with God that is manifested in prayer, community life and the apostolate, three elements that must always remain united and that mutually nourish each other.

The Definitory dealt with the Secretariat for Information, which at the present time is a particularly important and active area. Through the website and social networks, the Secretariat is responsible for disseminating news, data and documents of the General Government and of the whole Order that may be of interest. We express our sincere gratitude to Fr. Emilio Martínez, who during these last years has been in charge of the Secretariat with interest and efficiency, combining this responsibility with his academic commitments at the Teresianum. The Definitory elected as the new Secretariat for Information, Fr. José Pereira from the Province of Avignon-Aquitaine. He is already in Rome to begin his new service. We will continue to count on the invaluable collaboration of Lorenzo Barone, a member of the Secular Carmelites, as webmaster of the General House. At the same time, we approved the project of the new web page prepared by the webmaster. In the next few weeks, the necessary technical work will be carried out so that it will be operative as soon as possible.

The Definitory received and discussed some information about the communities and centers that depend directly on the General Government. The General, as Grand Chancellor of the Teresianum, recently participated in the faculty council, as well as in a meeting of the General Union of Major Superiors who discussed the future of the numerous centers of theological studies present in Rome that depend on religious orders and congregations. Regarding the formation community of our international college, we announce that Fr. Dieudonné Ruhanyura from the Regional Vicariate of Burundi-Rwanda, and Fr. Richardus Lodo from the Commissariat of Indonesia, have been assigned to the community. With regard to the communities dependent on the General Government, especially those of formation and academic centers and the General Curia itself, the Definitory has established that the maximum age for friars assigned to them to return to their circumscriptions is 75 years. This decision takes into account that friars are called to these communities for a time in order to render a specific service, and that teaching in the academic world is not permitted beyond this age.

As usual, we received detailed information from the General Treasurer, Fr. Paolo De Carli, on the financial situation of the General House and the relationship with the provinces. We have analyzed the final economic balance of the accounts for the year 2020, which presents a fairly balanced balance sheet, although the income has also been affected by the new situation in which we find ourselves as a result of the pandemic.

With the Procurator General, Fr. Jean-Joseph Bergara, we analyzed the canonical processes of some friars of the Order on which the Definitory had to make a decision in order to that their cases continue in the corresponding Vatican dicasteries. Once again, for the good of the Order and of the people involved, we ask Provincials and those who have some responsibility in this field to follow with attention and diligence the procedures established to resolve irregular situations.

Other issues discussed by the Definitory were the following:

- We received and analyzed the report presented by the Commissariat of Indonesia on its history, current situation, and future prospects. It is a circumscription with a remarkable vocational vitality and must dedicate particular attention to initial formation and to the consolidation of the charismatic identity.
- At the request of the Province of Karnataka-Goa, we canonically erected the friary “Dhyana Sadhana” in Mysore (Karnataka, India).
- We accepted the request of the Province of South Kerala to transfer the College of Philosophy to Ambalapuzha.
- We received and commented on the report of the Caribbean Commissariat one year after its general pastoral visitation.
- We also received the report of the Commissariat of Sicily on the implementation of the directives of the Definitory and the decisions of the Chapter. At the request of the Commissariat, the Definitory suppressed the community of Enna (Sicily).
- We discussed the pending pastoral visitations which, due to the health situation and travel restrictions, could not be carried out. In dialogue with the circumscriptions concerned, each Definitory in charge has expressed his willingness to carry them out in the coming months, depending upon the conditions that the health situation and travel regulations allow.
- Fr. Daniel Ehigie reported on the Assembly of the Conference of Major Superiors of the Carmelites of French-speaking Africa and Madagascar which was held in Abidjan from January 24-29 of this year in which he participated. Among other topics, we discussed intensifying collaboration between the African circumscriptions, as well as possible support for our presence in Senegal. An evaluation was also made of the Teresian Congress which was held in Cameroon in 2019.
- Regarding the extraordinary fund created to aid initial formation in the face of the economic difficulties caused by the pandemic, we are grateful for the contributions received, especially from the provinces of the Iberian region. This has made it possible to respond especially to the requests received from the circumscriptions of Latin America.

At the conclusion of the working sessions of the Definitory, we prepare ourselves for our retreat that we will share with the entire General House community. We ask for the grace of the Lord to accept his Word and that it may renew us interiorly and help us in our Carmelite way of life and service to the Order.

We extend our wishes to the whole family of the Teresian Carmel that we may live a Holy Week and Easter in full communion with Jesus Christ and his Paschal Mystery.

Fraternally,

P. Saverio Cannistrà, General

P. Agustí Borrell

Fr. Łukasz Kansy

P. Johannes Gorantla

P. Daniel Chowning

P. Francisco Javier Mena

P. Mariano Agruda III

P. Daniel Ehigie