



## THE MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE OCD MAJOR SUPERIORS OF THE FRANCOPHONE ZONE

The meeting of the assembly of the Conference of the Major Superiors of the african francophone zone took place in Abidjan from 24 to 29 January 2021. The following were present: Fr Daniel Ehigie (Definitor), Fr Jerome Paluku (Secretary for the Missionary Cooperation Office), Fr Albert Tampwo (Commissario of Congo), Fr Jacque Mutimanwa (Councillor, Commissariat of Congo), Fr Federico Trinchero (Provincial Delegate, Central Africa), Fr Domenico Rossi (Provincial Delegate, Cameroon), Fr Jean-Fabrice Delbecq (Provincial, Avignon-Aquitaine), Fr Emile M'Bra (outgoing President of the Conference form the Provincial Delegation of West Africa) and Fr Jean-Baptiste Pagabeleguem (Provincial Delegate, West Africa).

The assembly discussed the preparation of our candidates for Solemn Profession (Second Novitiate), a program which is done in common annually. A decision was made that from next year (2022), the responsibility of planning and implementation of the program will be passed on to the circumscriptions such that each one

will take its turn to organize and host the event. In October 2019, the fourth African Teresian Congress was held in Yaoundé in Cameroon as a joint project of the Conferences of the Major Superiors of our 2 language zones (francophone and anglophone). The project was evaluated. They underscored the importance of the joint project as an effective instrument of communion between the two zones. Efforts will be made to contact the anglophone Conference so that planning towards the next Africa Teresian Congress can commence soon.

The issue of the situation of the mission in Senegal was raised. There are currently 2 Friars in each of the 2 houses in Senegal - the house in Kaolack and the other one in Dakar. This number of Friars is not sufficient to sustain the normal Carmelite life in the houses. Appeals for assistance were made by the mother Province (Avignon-Aquitaine). At the end of the discussions, the Provincial Delegation of West Africa confirmed that a Friar will be sent there as soon as possible, and the Commissariat of Congo also offered to send a Friar.

# The Carmelite Church in Cracow is designated as a Diocesan Shrine dedicated to St. Joseph

**O**n March 19, 2021, the Feast of St. Joseph, the Metropolitan Archbishop, Mons. Mzarek Jedraszewski, presided at Mass in our Church in Cracow. During the celebration, he read the Decree by which he designated the Carmelite Church as a Diocesan Shrine dedicated to St. Joseph. In his Decree, the Archbishop began with the observation that it was due to the influence of Carmelite devotion and popular secular tradition that the city of Cracow had chosen St. Joseph as its Holy Patron. In 1715 during a Swedish invasion, and again during a period of great epidemics, the city entrusted itself to the protection of its Holy Patriarch in front of the Saint's picture. This picture was eventually preserved in the Carmelite Church.

To this day, the Carmelites continue to foster and encourage devotion to St. Joseph among the city's population. The Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, situated a short distance from the railway station, is a favoured destination where so many of the faithful, from the simple passer-by to students concerned about their future, can come to entrust themselves to the intercession of the Guardian of the Holy Family. In his Decree, the Archbishop confirmed the Carmelite Friars in their mission as promoters of devotion to Joseph, through Sacramental ministry and popular devotions.

Fr. Damian Sochacki OCD is Rector of the new Shrine.

## BOUAR, Central African Republic Refugees at the Carmelite Monastery of St. Elias in Bouar

**O**n January 13, 2021, yet another failed coup plunged the population of the Central African Republic into panic. 2,385 persons, the majority of them women and children, fled from the rebel military and sought sanctuary in our Monastery of St. Elias. With the assistance of some ONG and agents of the United Nations, the friars were able to cope with the most urgent needs of the refugees. So for 40 days it was necessary to reorganise

the whole life at St. Elias. We had to live and share: the Friars with the refugees, the refugees with their fears and hopes and everybody with insecurity and uncertainty. During this tragic period seven babies were born in the monastery. On February 5, the Bishop of Bouar, Mons. Mirek Guewa, paid us a visit and, with the refugees, took part in some moments of prayer guided by our Friars. Then on February 9, Cardinal Dieudonne Nzapalainga, the Archbishop

of Bangui also visited, accompanied by the “Religious Platform” of Bangui which included Catholic members and some Protestants and Muslims. These all offered words of encouragement and support to the refugees. All the members of the Platform wanted to bless the new mothers and their infants, before concluding their visit with shared prayer. On that very day Bouar was liberated by the Central

African Republic army with Russian assistance. From February 13, all the refugees were able to gradually return to their homes. At our Sunday Mass on February 14, one lady, speaking on behalf of all the refugees, expressed their gratitude to the Carmelite Community. Since then only the Central African soldiers and some Russians remain here. These come to get water and to have showers.

## IRAQ (From Mons. Jean Sleiman OCD)

Pope Francis’ visit to Iraq, so ardently longed for by the Holy Father but so frequently postponed, finally took place from March 5-8, 2021. It has been seen unanimously as an historic event. It has certainly been the first visit of a Pope to Iraq. But, above all, it was a visit to the men and women of an immensely rich country that has been at the mercy of the most selfish and destructive international conflicts. It is a visit that will be inscribed in history as an heroic gesture of the Holy See against war and as being an effort to promote human rights and religious freedom of conscience.

In the footsteps of Abraham, the Holy Father wishes to reawaken true faith in God in a predominantly Muslim country. It is a country where fanaticism remains a constant danger, where Jihad, especially that of the Islamic State, has uprooted a 2000 year old Church, condemning over a million of its faithful to exile, leaving the future in doubt and shrouding the present in fear and trepidation.

The visit was short and rapid. The Pope met official authorities and representatives of various religions. He managed to dedicate about 30 minutes to reciting the Sunday Angelus in a large Christian village in the Plain of Ninive, a region that has been humiliated, vandalised and emptied of its inhabitants by the Islamic State. Shortly before this, he spent a while recollected in prayer in the heart of the city of Mosul. This city has also been ravaged and destroyed by the same Islamic State which had eliminated many Muslims as well as persecuting Christians and Yazidis. The Holy Father concluded his visit with Papal Mass at a stadium in Erbil, capital of the Kurd region.

The visit was indeed historic because the Pope presented himself as humble and loving, a witness to truth and hope.

+ Jean Benjamin Sleiman,  
Latin Archbishop of Baghdad

# IRAQ

## CARMELITE FRIARS IN IRAQ

In 2005 there were 4000 members in the Catholic Church of the Latin Rite, or 0.6% of Christians in Iraq. Carmel has had a presence in the country since 1623 in Bassora. Another monastery of the Friars was founded in Baghdad in 1721. Their missionary activity concentrated on assisting local Christian communities. The present situation of the mission is very precarious, as is true for the whole country. Christians, and particularly

Religious, are subjected to intimidation from extremists. We have one Iraqi native Religious, Fr. Ghadir. He resides in Baghdad and is assisted by friends of the monastery. Since October 2018, Sisters of the “Carmel of St. Joseph” run a school in Baghdad.

You can consult “The Family of Carmel of Iraq” on Facebook :

<https://www.facebook.com/carmeliraq/photos>

## Father Teófanés Egidio, OCD, received the Castilla y León Prize in Social and Human Sciences for its 2020 edition.

Father Teófanés was born in Gajates (Spain) in 1936. He dedicated his whole life to History. He was a professor of modern history at the University of Valladolid until 2001 and was the official chronicler of the city of Valladolid (Spain) for 17 years. He is one of the most recognised experts on the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The jury unanimously decided to award him this prize “for his permanent and brilliant dedication to teaching and historical research, which has provided the historiography of the Spanish 18<sup>th</sup> century with avant-garde lines of research, with a particular impact

on the history of mentalities. (...) The studies carried out by Father Teófanés Egidio were decisive in identifying the Judeo-converted origins of the family of Teresa of Jesus, or in the critical approach to the work of Martin Luther, of which he made the first translation into Spanish. In this way, he opened up new areas of study and interpretation of Baroque religiosity. All this makes him one of the great historians of Castilla y León.”

The award ceremony took place on Wednesday 21 April 2021.

Congratulations to Father Teófanés for this recognition.

# Pope Francis appoints two members of the Carmelite family as consultors to the CIVCSVA.

**W**e learned on March 12 that Pope Francis has named Mother Elsa Campa, prioress of the Carmelites of Alba and Villagarcía de Campos (Spain), and president of the Federation of the Discalced Carmelites, as consultor to the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

*Mother, for those who do not know you, can you introduce yourself?*

EC: My name is Elsa Campa Fernandez (Elsa del Corazon de Jesus) and I was born in the north of Spain, in a small village in the Principality of Asturias. I entered the Carmel of Oviedo on 10 July 1982; I made my first profession on 12 January 1985 and my solemn profession on 10 January 1988.

*What does this nomination mean to you as a woman and as a Carmelite?*

EC: As a woman, it is important that the Church gradually trusts us and considers us; that it wants to hear our voice; and

that it recognises all that, generation after generation, we women do in the Church and in society.

As a Carmelite sister, for me it is more work and more worries, because I already have a very busy day. However, over and above myself, it is a small recognition and an honour for the whole Order. And that fills me with joy.

*Then, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, we were informed that the Holy Father had also appointed Father Denis Chardonens, O.C.D., as a consultor of the CIVCSVA. He is from Switzerland, and member of the Province of Avignon-Aquitaine (France). He is the former deancon of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology and of the Pontifical Institute of Spirituality Teresianum in Rome. There, he teaches Trinitarian theology, dogmatic theology and fundamental spiritual theology.*

*Congratulations to both of you! We keep you both in our prayers.*