



Avila celebrates the 50th anniversary of the doctorate of Saint Teresa of Jesus

From April 12 to 15, Avila welcomed the International Congress “*Saint Teresa of Jesus, an Exceptional Woman*” on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Teresa of Jesus as a Doctor of the Church. At the beginning of the congress, a message from Pope Francis was read in which he greeted all the participants and affirmed that “the flame that Jesus lit in Teresa continues to shine in this world that always needs courageous witnesses, capable of breaking down any wall”.

The Congress took place in two ways: with participants attending in person or online. Over four days, the Teresian doctrine for the world and the Church of today was presented in different themes.

At the end of the congress, participants received a new surprise: a video message from Pope Francis. This was the highlight of Congress. The Pope took the opportunity to recall that one of the characteristics of the Saint of Avila was her union with Christ and her determination to be with him in prayer.

She encouraged everyone to find their own path to holiness and pointed out that “Saint Teresa teaches us that the journey that made her an exceptional woman and a figure of reference through the centuries, that journey, that of prayer, is open to all those who humbly open themselves to the action of the spirit in their lives”.

Here is the link for the complete text of the video message:

https://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/pdfreader.html/ing/2021/04/ING_2021_017_2304.pdf.html

In addition, the Congress has raised funds, through the congress's website (<http://congresosantateresadoctora.es>), to help the Monastery of the Annunciation in Alba de Tormes (Salamanca), where the tomb of St Teresa is preserved. As well, the organizers have also decided to donate the profits from the Congress to help alleviate the difficult financial situation through which the monastery is going.

Extracts from the video-message of Pope Francis at the closing of the Congress “Mujer excepcional”

(...) Teresa of Jesus is exceptional, first of all, because she is holy. Her docility to the Spirit united her to Christ and she remained “all afire with the love of God”. She expressed her experience with beautiful words, saying: “Already I gave myself completely, and have changed in such a way, That my Beloved is for me, and I am for my Beloved.”. Jesus had taught that “out of the abundance of the heart, his mouth speaks” (Lk 6:45). The audacity, creativity and excellence of Saint Teresa as a reformer are the fruit of the inner presence of the Lord.

(...) Holiness is not only for some “specialists of the divine”, but rather it is the vocation of all believers. It is through Baptism that we receive the union with Christ, which mystics like Saint Teresa experience in a special way by pure grace. The saints stimulate and motivate us, but they are not there for us to literally try to copy them. Holiness is not copied, “for that could even lead us astray from the one specific path that the Lord has in mind for us. The important thing is that each believer discern his or her own path”, each of us has his or her own journey of holiness, of encounter with the Lord.

(...) Saint Teresa teaches us that the path that made her an exceptional woman and a

person of reference throughout the centuries, the path of prayer, is open to all those who humbly open themselves to the action of the Spirit in their lives, and that the sign that we are advancing on this path is to be ever more humble, more attentive to the needs of our brothers and sisters, better children of the holy People of God. Such a path is not open to those who consider themselves to be pure and perfect, the Cathars of all the centuries, but to those who, aware of their sins, discover the beauty of the mercy of God who welcomes and redeems everyone, and invites everyone to friendship. It is interesting that the consciousness of one’s own condition as a sinner is what opens the door to the path of holiness.

(...) Prayer made Saint Teresa an exceptional woman, a creative and innovative woman. Starting from prayer, she discovered the ideal of fraternity that she wanted to make a reality in the convents she founded. (...) In prayer she felt treated as a bride and friend of the risen Christ. Through prayer she opened herself to hope.

Source : *Osservatore romano*, 54 year, n.17 (2.694), 23 April 2021

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux at UNESCO

On April 16, 2021, the UNESCO Executive Council approved the candidacy of Thérèse of the Child Jesus for the 2022/2023 biennial, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of her birth. It should also be noted, by the way, that 2023 will also be the year of the 100th anniversary of her beatification (29/04/1923). This application was submitted by the French State and the Lisieux Basilica. For the 2022/2023 biennial, UNESCO wants to “honor the memory of the people who have worked in the fields of peace, education, science, social sciences and communication”. Thérèse competed with 60 personalities from 47 states. Among her competitors were three other Catholics: Copernicus (Poland), Nerses (Armenia) and Mendel (Czech Republic).

In mid-April, Thérèse won the first stage! She is the only woman among the 4 nominations selected. She will therefore represent France

at UNESCO! Belgium and Italy support this candidacy. UNESCO stated that “the celebration of this anniversary will contribute to giving greater visibility and justice to the women who have promoted, through their actions, the values of peace”. Given the celebrity of Thérèse of Lisieux in the Catholic community (the city of Lisieux is the second place of pilgrimage in France after Lourdes), the celebration of her anniversary can be an opportunity to emphasize the role of women within religions, in the fight against poverty and in promoting inclusion.

A French woman saint, with world influence, a Doctor of the Church: UNESCO could soon honor little Thérèse as a World Heritage Person. This is a surprising and extraordinary message that heaven is giving us in these times of the pandemic. However, it will not be until November 2021 that we will know if Thérèse will be officially honored by UNESCO.

Interprovincial second noviciate in India

As every year, the Interprovincial Council of India has organised, even at present, a second noviciate of 7 weeks in view of solemn vows. All the brothers preparing for solemn profession this year have come from all over India to take part: a total of 25 friars. It took place in Pushpadan, a Carmelite spirituality center which belongs to Manjummel Province in the city of Kozhikode. Previously,

the second noviciate was organized by each province in turn. But in recent years, this place was finally chosen because it was more suitable. Father Antony Ittikunnath is in charge of the program and is assisted by the priests in the community as well as many other qualified people from all the other provinces of India. Father Johannes Gorantla, the Definitor General responsible for India, visited the community on

April 28 and gave a lecture about the Declaration on the Charism.

Despite the difficult situation of Covid in India, the provinces have not abandoned the course. The 7-week program usually ends with a

retreat to prepare for the solemn profession. After the program, all the participating friars return to their respective provinces to make their solemn profession.

100th birthday of Father Boniface Honings, OCD.

Our brother was born on May 11, 1921 in Sittard (Netherlands). Today he lives in Rome at the Teresianum. His life is a life dedicated to God by means of teaching that should be celebrated: Doctor in Moral Theology, Professor at the Teresianum, at the Urbaniana Pontifical University, former Dean of the Faculty of Moral Theology at the Lateran University, Consultor for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Life Member of the Pro Vita Pontifical Academy.

As was fitting, Carmelite friars from various Roman communities, nuns and friends were companions at his feast. Unfortunately his family could not be present, because of travel restrictions due to covid. The Eucharistic

celebration was presided over by His Eminence Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, current Dean of the College of Cardinals. During his homily, the Cardinal recalled the political and ecclesial vicissitudes of the century in which our brother lived, his life as a religious and as a researcher, and concluded with an invitation to prayer, a return to the essentials of life, despite all the changes.

After the Eucharist, everyone came together (in compliance with health norms!) to share a fraternal meal. One hundred years, is quite something to celebrate!

Best wishes, Father Boniface, and may God fill the years to come with his grace.

Death of Father Domingo (Angel) Fernandez de Mendiola, OCD, 1924-2021.

Last Saturday, May 15, we received the news of the death of Father Domingo (Angel) Fernandez de Mendiola, OCD, at the age of 96, in the monastery of Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain). He joined the Carmelite novitiate in Larrea (Spain) in 1939. Doctor of

Dogmatics and History of the Church, author of a dozen works, director of the Institutum Historicum Teresianum (Rome), professor and rector of the Teresianum (Rome), several times Provincial of the Province of Navarre, he marked the Order and the Church

particularly with his 25 missionary years in India: Professor and last European Rector of the Pontifical Seminary of St. Joseph in Mangalapuzha (Alwaye), the largest seminary to date, one of the promoters of the creation of the Pontifical Institute of Theology and Philosophy in 1972, the first president of the Pastoral Orientation Center (POC) in Kochi, which will become the seat of the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Kerala.

Cardinal George Alencherry expressed his condolences to our Father General and thanked him for all Fr Dominigo had given to the Church in India: “It is with sorrowful heart that I learned early this morning of the death of Fr. Domingo Fernandez OCD

in Spain at the age of 96. Father Domingo led and presided over the formation of seminarians for about 25 years with the zeal of a great missionary, creating a community of priests deeply devoted to Jesus and committed to their faith. (...) The Discalced Carmelites contributed immensely to the formation of priests in Kerala. Erudite, kind and affectionate, Fr. Domingo was appreciated by all his students and teachers. He was humble, unperturbed, extremely courteous to all those who came into contact with him. The Church in India is deeply grateful to him.”

Let us thank God for this gift of our brother's life to God.

Meeting at the Kinshasa Teresianum Center (RDC- Democratic Republic of the Congo) of the Federation of Carmelite Nuns of French-speaking Africa.

The meeting of the Federation of Carmelite nuns of French-speaking Africa was held in Kinshasa from May 3 to May 20, 2021. The federation consists of 11 monasteries located in 6 countries (Cameroon, Burundi, R.D.C, Congo Brazza, Ivory Coast, Rwanda). Twenty-one nuns were able to travel, defying all obstacles (only the Carmel in Gitega, Burundi, could not travel due to travel restrictions).

The elections were held. Sister Aténaiz of the Holy Spirit of the Grand Bassam Carmel was re-elected for a second three-year term. Sister Françoise Aimée du Crucifié of Kigali

monastery is her first councillor and Sister Thérèse de Jésus of Lubumbashi, RDC, the second. Sister Marie Irène de Jésus of Yaoundé was elected third counsellor and bursar. Sister Marie Clémentine de l'Enfant Jésus of Kananga, RDC, is the fourth counsellor. Sister Marie Claver of the Good Shepherd of Cyangugu Rwanda was elected substitute.

Father General Saverio Cannistrà and Fr. Bergara, Procurator of the Order, reached the Federal Assembly on the evening of May 4. Father General gave a lecture on “Formation of Discalced Carmelite nuns in the light of

the new directives in *The art of seeking the face of God*", and answered the questions of the nuns present. During this Assembly, the nuns were able to reflect together on formation with a view to drawing up their own Ratio.

On the eve of Father General's return to Italy, the Friars and Sisters of the Commissariat organized a great evening of celebration in his honor: food, songs and dances of the country formed part of it.

After the departure of Father General, Fr. Bergara stayed for a week to give a session

on the contemplative life lived in actual fact according to the spirit of Carmel beginning from the latest documents of the Magisterium. The present challenges facing each of the Carmelite communities gave rise to many questions and meetings.

The Nuns had the joy of a fraternal visit from Cardinal Fridolin AMBONGO, Archbishop of Kinshasa. He shared news of his diocese with them and told them again how beautiful the contemplative vocation can be.