



GENERAL DEFINITORY OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES

Corso d'Italia, 38
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2021-2027 SEXENNium – LETTER N° 4

Rome, 16th June, 2022

Dear brothers and sisters of the Teresian Carmel,

We greet you with fraternal affection as we get in contact with you to share our reflections during the meeting of the General Definitory, which took place in Rome from the 6th to the 15th of June.

The previous Saturday, day 4, we had a meeting with the O.Carm. General Council, thus resuming the custom of a biannual exchange, which had been interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to congratulate them on the recent canonization of the Carmelite Fr. Titus Brandsma, an extraordinary model of defence of the truth and strength in persecution. As well, we were able to discuss issues of common interest, such as the restoration projects of the Wadi Es-Siah in Israel.

At the beginning of the meeting of the Definitory, we particularly remembered all our brothers and sisters who in various parts of the world find themselves in difficult situations, even dramatic, because of violence or poverty, with a special mention of Ukraine where, sadly, the war seems to have settled without prospects of a near solution. Since Fr. General's visit at Easter to our brothers and sisters present in the country, we remain in contact with them to accompany them closely in their difficult experience. We invite everyone to maintain a real and concrete interest in our brothers and sisters living in problematic contexts.

On the other hand, we discussed and celebrated the recent appointment of our brother Ángel Zapata, of the Commissariat of Peru, as bishop of the diocese of Chimbote. We accompany him with the prayer and affection of the Order and wish him all the best in this service that the Church entrusts to him.

The program of the sexennium

The first section of the Definitory meeting was dedicated to the priority topics of the sexennium, according to the indications and the spirit of last year's General Chapter.

In the first place, we noted that the program of reading and community reflection on the *Declaration on the Teresian Carmelite Charism* established for this year 2022, continues regularly and with considerable interest. This work on receiving the document also serves as preparation for the next chapters of the circumscriptions, which are called to make concrete decisions on renewal of the charism in light of the *Declaration*.

With regard to initial formation, Fr Martin and Fr Jean-Baptiste reported on the first steps taken by the international commission responsible for the revision of the *Ratio insitutionis*, which held its first meetings, virtual for the time being, and is collecting all the

necessary material and making appropriate consultations in order to carry out a broad and in-depth work.

We also commented on some aspects relating to the International College in Rome, where a good group of candidates from the various circumscriptions of the Order receive their Carmelite and theological formation. We remind the Major Superiors of the convenience of sending students to Rome to support this centre that is a privileged place for formation, study and living together with other young Carmelites from all over the world.

Another important area for the present and future of the Order is academic and concerns research. We talked about the meeting that will take place at the end of June at the Teresianum, with the participation of some friars and nuns to begin exchanging data, experiences and proposals in order to enhance academic and intellectual activity in the Order. Later this reflection should be deepened and progressively extended to the various regions of the world.

Regarding the academic centres, we called to mind the appointments that have been made recently for the Teresa-Saint John of the Cross International Center in Ávila. In accordance with the current Statutes, the General had renewed the management team of the centre, with the appointment of Fr. Jurek Nawojowski as director, Fr. Juan Antonio Marcos as deputy director, Myrna Torbay as secretary, Fr. Javier Sancho as administrator, and Fr. Danilo Ayala as librarian. Likewise, Fr. Jurek has been appointed superior of the community of religious.

Pastoral and fraternal visits

The General Definitory is at the service of the Order, and wants to be so in an active and close way. One of the instruments that help to put this desire into practice are pastoral and fraternal visits, which are usually carried out by the Definitors in the name of the General. In addition, the General himself tries to be present during the conclusion or at some other time of each of the pastoral visits to have direct contact with the circumscriptions.

Another important objective of the visits is to encourage everyone to live with enthusiasm and commitment the charism to which we have been called, taking into account the Chapter *Declaration on the Teresian Carmelite charism*, as well as to recall other priority objectives for the Order, such as initial and ongoing formation..

During the meeting of the Definitory we analysed the impressions and conclusions of the visits made during the past weeks.

Hungary

Fr. Roberto Maria Pirastu made a pastoral visit to the Semi-Province of Hungary from April 3 to 9, and the General was present for the last two days. The circumscription has 11 friars (8 solemnly professed, 2 simply professed and 1 novice); of these, 7 are located in the two active communities of Hungary: Budapest (temporarily resident in Attyapuszta because of work in progress) and Győr. In Hungary there is a convent of Discalced Carmelite nuns, in Magyarszek, which is part of the Federation of North France. On the other hand, there are 13 communities of the Secular Carmel, with about 220 members.

The situation of the circumscription is very precarious, given the scarcity of religious. Even so, the effort they make for the dissemination of Carmelite spirituality is remarkable. Accepting the request for help from the religious themselves, the Definitory has decided that the Semi-Province will become a General Delegation and have a direct follow-up by the Definitory itself, with the perspective of seeking as soon as possible a collaboration or integration with other European circumscriptions. In the meantime, it must continue working

to strengthen fraternity and to offer an adequate welcome to the candidates, who in recent years have not been lacking, although with a low perseverance. Following a process that has already begun, initial formation must necessarily have the collaboration of other circumscriptions. It is also appropriate to seek ways to consolidate their finance, which is weak, although they have received abundant state aid for the restoration of buildings.

Croatia

Fr. Roberto Maria made his pastoral visit to the Province of Croatia from April 22 to May 27. The General participated in the visit during the first days. The Province has 70 religious, of whom 55 are solemnly professed, and a good number of candidates in the various formative stages. Fr. Zdenko is Bishop of Gospic. The communities are 8, in 5 nations: 4 in Croatia, one in Serbia, one in Bosnia-Herzegovina, one in Austria and one in Italy (Rome). The Province has recently left the monastery in Sofia (Bulgaria), although it is still looking for ways to maintain a Carmelite community in that place. In the territory of the province there are 7 convents of Discalced Carmelite nuns and 7 communities of the Secular Carmel.

It is a province with considerable vitality, favoured by a relatively low average age of religious. Pastoral activities are varied and well valued by the local Church. Recent times have been marked by the consequences of a strong earthquake, in addition to COVID. The positive vocational reality invites us to take special care of formation, with the creation of good training teams. It is also appropriate to draw up a provincial project to indicate priorities and coordinate the various activities. Likewise, each community must elaborate its community project to promote community life and collaboration among religious. On the other hand, the province is going through a situation of economic weakness, for which we must go searching for solutions.

Brazil South

Fr. Martín Martínez made his pastoral visit to the Province of Southern Brazil from April 25 to May 27. The General participated in the visit from May 2 to 12, and during these days, a provincial assembly of the religious took place, a meeting of the Secular Carmel and one of the Discalced Carmelite nuns. The Province currently has 27 solemnly professed and 4 students, with an average age of 56 years. The Discalced Carmelite nuns have 15 convents in the territory of the Province, with a total of 103 solemnly professed, 17 simply professed and 16 novices. The Secular Carmel has about one hundred members, in 11 communities.

The atmosphere of the Province is positive and healthy, with a good relationship and collaboration among the religious. There is a certain weakening in some communities due to the decrease in the number of religious in recent years. Generous dedication to pastoral care, especially of a parish nature, can lead to a decrease in attention to other areas of religious and Carmelite life. We encourage the province to elaborate a provincial project and to address a process of internal restructuring (personal, community and provincial), to ensure fraternal life and prayer in all communities. Priority attention should be given to formation, with appropriate communities and trainers freed from other commitments. The time also seems to be coming to enter into dialogue with other nearby circumscriptions for greater collaboration and with a view to restructuring.

Lebanon

Fr. Christophe-Marie made a pastoral visit to the Semi-Province of Lebanon from the 6th to the 26th of May. Fr. General participated in the conclusion of the visit, from May 22 to 26. The Semi-Province currently has 25 solemnly professed, two simply professed, a novice and a postulant, in addition to 2 bishops; 3 of the religious are at the service of the General

Definitory. The religious are in 6 communities, and serve 2 houses of formation, 3 shelters, 4 schools, 2 parishes as well as a spirituality institute. In Lebanon there are two convents of Discalced Carmelite nuns, and one in Aleppo (Syria). There are also four communities of the Secular Carmel.

All of them are currently suffering from the difficult political and social context of Lebanon, which is going through a serious economic crisis. The activities they carry out are numerous and varied. Due to the decrease in the number of religious in recent years, some communities have been excessively reduced, and there is also a certain dispersion among the religious. It is convenient to work towards the next provincial chapter to move towards a common project and a possible restructuring of presences. At the same time there is need to strengthen vocational ministry.

Fraternal visits

From the 6th to the 13th of April, Fr Jean-Baptiste paid a fraternal visit to the Provincial Delegation of Cameroon, under the Province of Lombardy. It has 6 solemnly professed, 10 simply professed and 4 postulants. In Cameroon there are 3 convents of Discalced Carmelite nuns and 3 communities of the Secular Carmel. Thanks to the positive collaboration of various circumscriptions (Genoa, Central Africa, Avignon-Aquitaine, Congo, Nigeria), it has been possible to overcome the past difficult times and reorient and consolidate the Delegation. Steps are also being taken to move towards self-financing.

Fr. Philbert and Fr. Jean-Baptiste fraternally visited the Vicariate of Tanzania, province of Karnataka-Goa, from April 13 to May 3. The Vicariate has 25 solemnly professed, and more than 30 candidates in formation. They have 8 communities, and serve 7 parishes and a few schools. The Morogoro Student Body welcomes students from other African circumscriptions. The two Definitors also visited the convent of Discalced Carmelite nuns in Bunda, who are located in a region far from the presence of the friars. Given the high number of vocations, a priority of the Vicariate should be a serious dedication to formation, also with the help of other circumscriptions. On the other hand, the number of religious per community must be increased as soon as possible, in order to promote community life and shared prayer. Another area that requires attention is the search for sources of economic financing for the circumscription.

Fr. Christianus Surinono paid a fraternal visit to the Delegation of Japan from April 28 to May 13. The Delegation has 17 religious, who live in 4 communities. They serve 2 retreat houses, 3 parishes and 7 day-care centres. In the country there are 9 communities of Discalced Carmelite nuns and 8 of the Secular Carmel. In recent times there has been a certain internal crisis, and the number of religious has decreased. The situation is now normalizing, with greater practical attention to community life and the values of our charism. The help of other Asian circumscriptions is to be welcomed.

Fr Jean-Baptiste and Fr Philbert visited the Regional Vicariate of Burundi-Rwanda, Province of Krakow, in the in May, which has just celebrated 50 years of the Order's presence in that territory. The Vicariate is made up of 28 solemnly professed and about 30 candidates in the different formative stages. There are also 3 communities of Discalced Carmelite nuns and some communities of the Secular Carmel. Carmelite spirituality is well received in the region, and vocational prospects are very good. It is necessary to devote the necessary resources to discernment and formation, as well as to avoid that an excessive dedication to the apostolate leads to activism and the impoverishment of community life and our charism's identity.

From May 27 to 29, Fr. General and Fr. Christophe-Marie were in Egypt for a fraternal visit. They were able to speak personally with each of the religious. After the visit and dialogue in the Definitory, the General will send a letter with some indications and concrete decisions to

strengthen Carmelite life and the adequate mutual relationship between religious, as well as to consolidate formation, in collaboration with other circumscriptions.

Fr. Christophe-Marie participated in the plenary council of the Province of Avignon-Aquitaine that was held from April 27 to 29, in preparation for next year's provincial chapter. The Province has about 70 friars, in 8 communities (with a presence in Quebec, in Switzerland-Romandy and the mission in Senegal). The possible closure of a community is being considered for the next chapter. A central topic of study during the meeting was the use of the Internet in communities.

Fr. Martín Martínez participated in the Assembly of the General CICLA (Major Superiors of Latin America), which took place in Mexico from April 19 to 23. Collaboration between the circumscriptions of Latin America continues to be active and effective, for example on issues related to formation. During the meeting, various questions about the past, present and future of CICLA were analysed. Among others, some challenges proposed by the General were addressed, such as the restructuring of circumscriptions, interprovincial collaboration for formation and youth ministry, or an adequate sexual formation for living chastity. Another issue analysed by the ICRC is the convenience of having a team for theological-spiritual reflection.

Fr. General, together with Fr. Roberto Maria and Christophe-Marie, took part in the assembly of the European Conference of Provincials, held in Lisieux from May 31 to June 2. In it Fr. Fausto Lincio, Provincial of Lombardy, was elected as president, and the Statutes (which had been approved by the Definitory) were revised. One of the main topics of discussion was initial formation and interprovincial collaboration in this field; specifically, there was talk about the continuation of the "second novitiate", which will be held again this year in the Desert of Las Palmas, the meeting of formators scheduled for the end of January 2023 in Rome and the meeting of European students planned for the summer of 2024.

The life of the circumscriptions

The Definitory dealt with a number of specific topics from various circumscriptions of the Order. We cite just a few that may have a more general interest:

- We commented on the steps taken in Chile after the General Visit last February. In these days, Fr. Milton Moulthon (Colombia) and Fr. Nicolás García (Mexico) have been able to join the Commissariat; they will accompany the religious during the months of preparation of the next triennial chapter.
- We analysed the request of the Commissariat of Indonesia for a new foundation, of a parish type, in the diocese of Medan (Sumatra, Indonesia). In dialogue with the Commissariat we will discern the best way to start this new community, taking into account the norm modified by the recent General Chapter: "New houses of the Order shall not be established nor retained, unless a sufficient number of religious, that is, never less than three solemnly professed, can be assigned such that our particular form of life can be duly carried out and our apostolic service adequately provided in a suitable manner, taking into account the needs of the Church and the appropriate expansion of the Order" (*Norms* 161). In this regard, the Definitory asks all circumscriptions not to consider the foundation of new presences until all existing communities have a sufficient number of religious.
- We reviewed the proposed statutes of the Madagascar Commissariat, and we suggested some amendments, which will be applied in dialogue with the Commissariat.

- We received information about the convent and basilica of St. Pancras in Rome, which was transferred to the Warsaw Province and will soon be taken over again by the Province of Central Italy.
- On the other hand, we talked about the pending renovation works in the church and monastery of the Roman parish of Santa Teresa, dependent on the General House and entrusted to the Province of Venice, to which we give thanks for its willingness and collaboration.
- We received information from the Regional Vicariate of Belarus (Warsaw Province) on the status of construction works on the church and monastery in Minsk, and we discussed how to find financial support for this project. Likewise, we analysed the current situation of the adaptation project of the Kaunas convent of (Lithuania), which also needs financial help.
- The Regional Vicariate of Australia (of the Anglo-Irish province) has sent information on the current situation and future prospects, and on the need for the help of other circumscriptions to revitalize our Carmelite presence.
- We analysed the situation and prospects of the Zambian mission of the Province of Manjummel. In dialogue with the Provincial, the Definitory has suggested some indications to strengthen the communities and the Carmelite presence in the area.
- We received information from the Province of Korea on the initial training of candidates from China, which is complex for various reasons such as linguistic and cultural diversity, political situation, etc. In dialogue with the circumscriptions of the area we will continue to look for the best way to respond to this need.

The General Curia

The Procurator General, Fr. Jean-Joseph Bergara has presented some recent cases of friars and nuns whose process is being managed before the various Vatican dicasteries. We recall that the Procurator is at the disposal of the Major Superiors of the circumscriptions to advise and assist in the management of situations that require a canonical decision. It is necessary that those responsible for each circumscription act responsibly and intervene to resolve irregular situations as soon as possible, for the good of those involved and the Order.

The Bursar General, Fr. Paolo De Carli, presented some data and considerations on the financial situation in these first months of the year. There are no relevant developments, apart from the considerable increase in the prices of some services, which is also evident in Italy. On the other hand, we have seen that donations continue to arrive for Ukraine, which are distributed according to the needs of the friars present in the country.

With Fr. Jérôme Paluku, Secretary for Missionary Cooperation, we have above all analysed the intervention project in our church in Havana (Cuba), which he personally visited, and where it is necessary to carry out restoration works immediately. Efforts are being made to obtain financial aid, especially from the ecclesial entities of Germany. He also presented the current status of various projects for which the Secretariat is collaborating in obtaining grants in various parts of the world.

With the Postulator General, Fr. Marco Chiesa, we commented on the current liturgical calendar of the Order. In dialogue with the Dicastery for Divine Worship we are trying to obtain small modifications to correct some inaccuracies and inconsistencies. We also took advantage of the meeting to learn about the status of the causes for beatification and canonization that are more advanced.

Fr. Angelo Lanfranchi, as Archivist General, presented to the Definitory some considerations and proposals to guide and help those responsible for the archives of the different

places of the Order in the management and conservation of the archival, bibliographic, cultural and artistic heritage. This has already been done with some circumscriptions and communities that have requested it. It would be good to have a small commission that could advise on these issues, as well as think about producing a register of archives, libraries and artistic assets of the Order. An increasingly frequent issue is the suppression of convents and monasteries with a long history: in this case, when deciding the destination of the goods, it is worth taking into account the possibility of these being kept in the Order.

The Discalced Carmelite Nuns

With Fr. Rafał Wilkowski, secretary for the nuns, we discussed some issues related to the Discalced Carmelite nuns. In the first place, we recalled the request that the General has received from the Dicastery for religious life to coordinate the necessary process of revision of the Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelite nuns (1991), as established in the legislative text itself (n. 18). Fr. Rafał also explained his visit a few weeks ago to the community of Alba de Tormes, with the aim of following the process of dialogue and discernment on the future of the monastery. On the other hand, he shared the experience of his recent visit to the communities of Vietnam, where he offered a formation course, in which some 60 nuns participated. The Order is experiencing a remarkable vocational flourishing in this country.

Fr. Christianus also reported on his recent visits to the convents of Hera (East Timor) and Lembang-Bandung (Indonesia). For his part, Fr. Philbert explained his impressions of the visits to the convents of Uganda, Malawi and Tindinyo (Kenya).

At the end of the Definitory meeting, we bear in mind that the time for the triennial chapters of our circumscriptions is approaching. We remind everyone that, according to our laws, the provincial council is reminded that «The Chapter should be carefully planned by the Provincial Council, with opportunity being given to all the friars to submit requests and suggestions», and that, «all should make serious spiritual preparation» (*Norms* 207). The preparation of the provincial chapters will be one of the topics of the next meeting of the Definitory, scheduled for the month of September.

As the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel draws nigh, we wish the whole Order a happy celebration and we hope that the Virgin Mary, of whom we feel we are children and brothers and sisters, will accompany us with her example and protection in our commitment to live, like her, close to Jesus.

Fraternally,

Fr. Miguel Márquez Calle, General
 Fr. Agustí Borrell i Viader
 Fr. Pius James D'Souza
 Fr. Philbert Namphande
 Fr. Roberto Maria Pirastu
 Fr. Christianus Surinono
 Fr. Martín Martínez Larios
 Fr. Christophe-Marie Baudouin
 Fr. Jean-Baptiste Pagabeleguem