



DEFINITORY GENERAL OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES
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2021-2027 SEXENNium– LETTER N° 8

Rome, 18th of June, 2023

Dear brothers and sisters of the Teresian Carmel,

With fraternal affection, we cordially greet you at the end of the quarterly meeting of the General Definitory, which took place in Rome from the 5th to 15th of June. Through this letter, we want to come close to all of you, present in the various parts of the world, and share with you some information and comments regarding our reflections during these days.

On Saturday, June 10, we had a get-together meeting for discussion with the General Council of the Carmelites (OCarm), at their home in the International Centre of Saint Albert. In particular, we shared our experiences regarding the structure of our respective Orders and the type of circumscriptions that compose them, which will be one of the topics of our next Extraordinary Definitory.

The Sexennium's Priority Topics

The Definitory continues to pay special attention to formation. The General Chapter identified formation as the first of the priority sectors for this sexennium (cf. Chapter Message "Let us walk together, Lord!" 11-16). The General also recalled this in the letter to the provincial chapters. Only with serious vocational discernment and dedicating the best resources to initial and ongoing formation will we be able to respond to the Lord's call to live and care for the charism he has entrusted to us.

The commission in charge of the revision of the *Ratio institutionis*, chaired by the Definitors Martín Martínez and Jean-Baptiste Pagabeleguem, continues with the work entrusted to it. After the first stage of consultations and collection of materials, it has entered the drafting phase. We hope to have a first draft of the new text later this year, so that it can be submitted for the consideration of the Order, in particular those who are directly involved in initial formation.

One of the important formation communities for the whole Order is the International College in Rome, which is at the service of circumscriptions for Carmelite formation and the study of the institutional cycle of theology at the Teresianum Pontifical Faculty. As we read in its particular *Ratio*, «The College fosters union in the Order; It aims to consolidate and help to assume the Carmelite identity, unity in diversity. It is like a mirror of the multicultural situation of the Order. It carries out a task of promoting the formation of Carmelite students from all over the world ». Now that some of the members of the community reach the end of their appointed mandate, the Definitory has discussed the situation and prospects of the College, with the intention of giving renewed impetus to this formation centre. For this, it is essential that we have generous collaboration from the provinces, and we ask them to be willing to provide suitable formators and to send students to the College. Currently most of them come from Asia and Africa, and the presence of Europeans and Americans should be increased.

We have also received information about the forecasts for the next course in the specialization community (*Missionary Seminary*), where live the religious who study for a License or Doctorate in the Roman faculties. Some of them receive scholarships from the General House, especially those who study at the Teresianum and belong to provinces with limited financial resources.

The Order's academic centres, beginning with the Teresianum and CITES, continue to provide their invaluable teaching, research and publication services. At the end of this month of June, the second meeting of the Seminar for reflecting on the academic and intellectual life in the Order will take place at CITES in Avila.

With regard to youth ministry, we recall the international meeting of young people linked to Carmel that will take place in Fatima (Portugal) on July 31, in the context of the 2023 World Youth Day.

The celebration of the anniversaries of Therese of the Child Jesus is also going ahead with various initiatives in different parts of the world. Many communities are following the program of reading Therese's texts for this year, proposed by the Definitory. Meanwhile, the study guides for next year are already being prepared, helped by the Paris Province.

Pastoral Visits

Colombia-Ecuador

Fr Martín Martínez carried out the pastoral visit to the Province of Colombia and the Provincial Delegation of Ecuador from April the 1st to May 17. During the visit Father General was present for the last three weeks. The presence of Carmelites in Colombia was initiated by the Province of Navarre in 1911, and they were erected as a province in 1964. It currently has 81 solemnly professed, 6 simply professed and 4 novices, and has a total of 14 houses. In Colombia there are 12 communities of Discalced Carmelite nuns, which form the Association of Saint Mary of Mount Carmel, and 24 Secular Carmel communities, with more than 400 members.

In the communities and in the Province a good level of fraternity is perceived, and a good practice of a review of life would allow progress in trust and transparency. One of the strengths of the Province is the care of vocational promotion and initial formation. Ongoing formation has also received attention in recent times, and many religious have had the opportunity to pursue higher education. The economy is stable and well organized, although there are issues that need to be analysed and clarified, moving towards a professional, transparent, supportive financial administration, and with diversification of sources of income. The pastoral life of the province is varied; parishes, centres of spirituality and mission, with a remarkable dedication to Carmelite spirituality. The Province is beginning a new triennium, with some changes of orientation and organization. Thinking about the future, the visitor recommended developing a long-term provincial plan, to ensure greater continuity in the projects.

As for the Provincial Delegation of Ecuador, the presence of the Carmelites began in 1918, with missionaries from the Province of Burgos. Since 2010 they are linked to the Province of Colombia. There are currently 17 solemnly professed, 7 simple professed and 2 novices in Ecuador. The monasteries of Discalced Carmelite nuns are 13, grouped into the Saint Joseph Federation. The Secular Carmel has 16 communities, with a total of 196 members. The lifestyle of the Carmelite communities of Ecuador is marked by simplicity, collaboration and cordial communication. Their pastoral ministry is diversified by the presence of a mission in Sucumbios, parishes with a Carmelite touch, houses of formation and the institute of spirituality in Quito. During the visit, the process continued of reviewing the relationship with the Province of Colombia, with its positive aspects and difficulties. Looking ahead, the possibilities of collaboration and restructuring with other nearby circumscriptions are being analysed, seeking an integration between the local lifestyle and a multicultural opening.

Uganda

Fr Philbert Namphande visited the Uganda Provincial Delegation of the California-Arizona Province from May 15 to 26. For a few days, he was accompanied by Fr. Jean-Baptiste Pagabeleguem. In Uganda there are currently 8 religious (5 ordained and 3 non-clerical brothers), and 5 postulants, all of them in the community of Jinja. In addition, 3 religious are studying in Nairobi, and 3 more are in the United States. The foundation of a second community is being prepared in Buyala, where a parish has already been accepted.

The community atmosphere is positive and pleasant. Taking into account the number and youth of the friars in Uganda, it would be appropriate for some religious of the mother province to continue accompanying them in this stage of growth and consolidation. During his stay in the country, Fr. Philbert also had the opportunity to visit the Discalced Carmelite nuns in Mityana.

Other visits

Fr Roberto Maria visited Hungary to continue accompanying the religious in the current situation and on the way to a new configuration more in line with reality, which makes collaboration with other circumscriptions necessary.

Fr Philbert was in Zambia, where he visited the religious of the Province of Manjummel who are in the mission. Currently there are five friars, in two communities, and they dedicate themselves preferably to the parish apostolate. After the recent provincial chapter, the arrival of some more religious is planned.

Fr. Philbert also visited the religious who are in Kenya, and who are part of the Washington Province. One of the open questions is how to continue accompanying the presence and growth of Carmel in the region, now that the mother Province has asked for collaboration from the Order.

Fr Pius James D'Souza made a fraternal visit to the Commissariat of Indonesia from May 7 to 23, and later presided over the Chapter Congress. The Commissariat currently has 65 solemnly professed, 42 simple professed and 12 novices. It has 8 communities, of which 5 are engaged in formation. An atmosphere of joy, fraternity and peace is perceived among the religious. The area that needs the most attention, taking into account the large number of vocations, is initial formation, for which it is necessary to have trained and experienced formators, who dedicate themselves primarily to the task of formation. In particular, it is essential to emphasize the Carmelite charism. Another aspect to work on in the Commissariat is the search for means of economic growth and self-financing.

Fr Christianus Surinono was in Thailand and Malaysia, which are part of the General Delegation of Taiwan-Singapore. The presence of the friars in four different countries invites us to make the effort to nourish the awareness of unity and collaboration among all. The criteria for formation and acceptance of candidates must also be clarified.

Fr Christophe-Marie visited Egypt, together with Fr. Paolo De Carli, Bursar General, with the aim of clarifying certain issues and preparing the coming appointments of the new leaders of the General Delegation.

Fr Christophe-Marie was also in the Province of Avignon-Aquitaine, where he took part in the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Roquebrune Desert and visited the formation communities. He also had the opportunity of speaking with the Archbishop of Toulouse.

The three-yearly Chapters

The Definitory discussed the provincial chapters and chapter congresses that are being held throughout the Order during the first half of this year. We commented especially on those circumscriptions that depend directly on the General Definitory (Commissariats and General

Delegations) for which, therefore, the Chapter Congress is presided over by the General or by a delegate of the General.

In addition to those things already mentioned about the visits, Fr. Roberto M. Pirastu was at the congress of the Commissariat of Sicily. Jean-Baptiste Pagabeleguem took part in the congress of the Commissariat of Madagascar, and is preparing to take part in that of the Commissariat of Congo. Fr. Martín Martínez was at the congress of the General Delegation of Venezuela. In addition, for various reasons, usually at the invitation of the circumscriptions themselves, there was a presence of the Definitory in some Chapters of provinces and semi-provinces: Malta, Central Italy and Paris (Fr. Roberto M.), Austria and Tamil Nadu (Fr. Pius), California-Arizona (Fr. Miguel) and Oklahoma (Fr. Miguel and Fr. Martin).

In the coming weeks, Fr. Pius will preside over the meetings planned in the province of Malabar for the consultation of the religious and the appointment of the new provincial government. As for the Province of Lombardy, steps are being taken, in dialogue with other nearby provinces, to settle the future of the circumscription.

We continue to receive the materials that must be sent to the General House after the chapters. The Definitory examines the Chapter determinations to give its *nihil obstat*. We remind you that the provincial's report on the state of the province and the financial report must also be sent.

The 2023 Extraordinary Definitory

The central topic of our meeting was the preparation of the next Extraordinary Definitory, scheduled in Lisieux from August 27 to September 3. We reviewed the timetable and the planned topics, as well as some organizational matters. The convocation has already been sent to the participants, and about this time they should receive the practical instructions for the trip and taking part.

The main topic of dialogue, as already announced, will be the structure of the Order, with attention to aspects such as the types of circumscriptions, interprovincial collaboration, possible unions or alliances, the criteria for new presences of the Order, etc. We are receiving the responses of the provincial chapters to the questionnaire that was sent to understand better the experiences and proposals on these issues. Some of the Discalced Carmelite Bishops have also confirmed their participation, which will help us to reflect on the present and future of the Order and our service to the Church and to humanity.

We hope that the Extraordinary Definitory will be a favourable occasion to reflect on the presence of the Order in the different regions of the world and to assess the strengths and weaknesses, possibilities and needs of each circumscription. The objective is to seek together the best way to grow in unity and fraternal collaboration in order to contribute to the consolidation and development of the Order.

During the meeting of the Definitory we will have the opportunity to deal with other important topics such as initial formation or the responsibilities of provincial superiors and the resources that can be provided by the General House (for example, the Procurator General).

Life in the circumscriptions

The General Definitory dealt with various questions related to some specific circumscriptions, among which we mention:

- It accepted the request of the Province of Karnataka-Goa to found a new community in Mapusa (diocese of Goa).
- At the request of the Commissariat of Sicily, it accepted the suppression of the community of Trappeto (Catania, Sicily).

- It granted permission to the Anglo-Irish Province to construct a new building at the *Boars Hill Spirituality Centre* (Oxford), according to the project submitted.
- It granted the Oklahoma Semi-Province permission for the sale of the *Mount Carmel Center* in Dallas, in the context of the project to strengthen the communities of Dallas and San Antonio.
- It noted and appreciated the decision of the Semi-Province of Lebanon to continue taking care of the Haifa (Israel) parish and school.
- It granted the Province of Washington permission to sell the property it owns in West Milwaukee, (Wisconsin).
- It gave permission to the Province of the Philippines to begin the foundation of a new community in Dong Nai, diocese of Xuân Lộc (Vietnam), after obtaining the consent of the diocesan bishop.

The General Curia

As you were informed in the previous letter, Fr Jean-Joseph Bergara, Procurator General of the Order for the past twelve years, has been appointed Delegate for Israel, and at the beginning of June he moved to Mount Carmel and took up his new responsibility. Appointed as the new Procurator General is Fr Juan David Noguera, from the Province of Central America, who has already been in Rome since last February, collaborating in the office of the Procurator General. Fr. Juan David will henceforth be in charge of all the procedures that the Order has to carry out before the various Vatican dicasteries, in particular those that refer to the friars, while questions related to Discalced Carmelite nuns will preferably be entrusted to the Secretary for the Nuns.

At the meeting of the Definitory, Fr. Juan David presented us with a summary of the current status of the cases he deals with: there are more than one hundred personal situations of religious from the Order that are in process.

Because of this, it is more than important to insist on the necessary collaboration of the provincial superiors to expedite the obligatory procedures and, on the other hand, it is necessary to take into account the response times of the Vatican dicasteries.

For his part, the Bursar General, Fr. Paolo De Carli, presented us with the financial balance of recent months. We analysed various issues related to the properties of the Order which are managed directly by the General House and reflected on how to help circumscriptions that have difficulties because of the political or economic situation in the countries where they are located.

The Secretary for Communication, Fr. José Pereira, updated us on the functioning of our different information channels: the website, Communicationes, Facebook, Twitter, etc. The news and data that are disseminated are many and varied, although it would be desirable for direct information to reach the Secretary on everything that may be interesting to make known to the entire Order.

Fr. Angelo Lanfranchi, Archivist General, introduced Professor Valeria Vanesio of the University of Malta to the Definitory. She, together with Professor Axel Alt, permanent collaborator of our General Archive, illustrated the work of ordering, restoration and cataloguing that they have carried out in the archive of the Order in Cospicua (Malta), and various proposals and suggestions that could be useful for archival work throughout the Order.

The Discalced Carmelite Nuns

Rafał Wilkowski, Secretary for the nuns, shared with the Definitory various recent elements of the life of Discalced Carmelite nuns. In particular, we commented on the process

of revising the 1991 Constitutions. It has begun with the brief questionnaire already sent to all communities, in preparation for the meeting of the presidents or delegates of the Federations scheduled for April 2024 in Nemi (near Rome).

At the same time, we discussed some monasteries in various regions of the world that need help and follow-up for various situations of fragility. In some of them a pastoral visit was recently carried out, either at the request of the Dicastery for Consecrated Life or of the Superior General.

Secular Carmel

Fr Ramiro Casale, Delegate for the Secular Order, shared with the Definitory his impressions after an extensive tour of Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela and Peru. In all these Latin American countries, he had numerous meetings with communities and assemblies of the Secular Order and found an atmosphere of enthusiasm and commitment to the life of Carmel.

With Fr. Ramiro we reviewed some Provincial Statutes of the Secular Order that were presented to the Definitory. We approved the Statutes of Austria, Madagascar and the Iberian Province, after introducing some minor modifications. We try to make the texts as clear and precise as possible from the juridical point of view, but above all that they are fully in accordance with the lay dimension of the Secular Carmel.

A specific question that we addressed concerns those people who have not renewed their promises when appropriate and who continue to be involved in the life of the Secular Carmel. We have taken some decisions to resolve such cases and to avoid, as much as possible, their recurrence in the future.

We concluded the meeting of the Definitory by bringing to mind Therese of the Child Jesus, now that we are in the year of celebration of the anniversary of her birth and beatification. Our meeting coincided with some commemorative events that took place in Rome, and we had the opportunity to participate in the Eucharist, at which the General presided, in our parish basilica of Saint Teresa where the relics of Petite Thérèse and her parents, Louis and Zélie Martin, were revered that day. May the Saint of Lisieux accompany us by her example and intercession on our journey of constant response to the Lord's call.

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