



INCONTRO INTERNAZIONALE
Carmelitane Scalze- Nemi, 2024

Camminiamo insieme, signore
Si dialoga per comprendere



Message of the International Meeting of Discalced Carmelites

Nemi (Italy) April 14-19, 2024

To the entire family of Carmel:

Our dear Sisters and Brothers:

After the International Meeting of the Discalced Carmelite nuns that took place in Nemi (Italy) from April 14 – 19, 2024, we want to share with you the road we have traveled and entrust ourselves to the prayers of all our brothers and sisters in the Carmelite family.

“What were you talking about on the way?” Why did we come here?

In April, 2023, our brother, Fr. Miguel Márquez, wrote a letter to all the Discalced Carmelite nuns (who observe the Constitutions of 1990), in order to respond to a concern expressed by many communities regarding the way to proceed with the revision of our Constitutions at this moment in our history. At this time we are faced with the challenge to delve into the sources that have given us birth as a family in the Church and, at the same time, to rekindle the fire of our origins, to begin again, going “always from good to better.” (Foundations, 29,32)

In this letter, Father General gave us the directions he had received from the Dicastery¹ to convene an Assembly of Sisters¹ representing all the Federations and

¹ Cf. Letter of Fr. Miguel Márquez, April 9, 2023.

Associations of the world. Taking these instructions from the Dicastery into account, a meeting was planned in Rome, which brought us to Nemi. In this way, a group of 58 of our Sisters came together. We arrived with our hearts on fire, our “backpacks” filled with dreams, hopes, challenges and expectations. All of us were waiting for a new Pentecost.

“We had been hoping...”

We had hoped to be able to quickly begin sharing reports from our Federations and Associations. We had hoped to express our expectations, the positions we had adopted and the rationales behind them. We wanted to walk a path of communion, but we knew that we were bringing resistance with us and that we ran the risk of not being sufficiently open to the working of the Holy Spirit.

We began without knowing the full program, without knowing what was scheduled during each afternoon, or even during the next day. Instead, we let ourselves be led and introduced to the school of disciples who open their ears every morning to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the churches, and to Carmel.

“They recognized Hiim in the breaking of the bread.” What happened.

The team of our Brothers, together with Sister Lidia Wrona, cm, the moderator of the meeting, invited us “to become truly Discalced” in order to create a community of discernment. In what, exactly, did we have “to become truly Discalced?” This was a very rich metaphor to divest ourselves of our own “reasoning and indisputable arguments to convince everybody else of our point of view. (Which) would wreck the whole idea of shared discernment,” as Father Miguel told us in his letter of February 2, 2024.

Some words of Pope Benedict XVI, taken up by Fr. Miguel, became the motto of this meeting: "Dialogue in order to understand. Not to convince." This is what we have done: we tried to understand each other to discern together the path that we should follow in the renewal of our Constitutions.

We had a guide in Sr. Lidia, who has helped us "to truly become Discalced." She invited us at every meeting to listen deeply, without haste, without looking for quick answers. We were encouraged to listen while welcoming each other, to respond while thinking, to seek to meet one another in everything.

The lights we received each day, beginning with that given by our brother Salvador Ros on "The Meaning and Constitutional Thought of St. Teresa," together with those we received from our Brothers Miguel Márquez and Rafal Wilkowski, and the continued work of our Brothers Agustí Borrell and Juan Pablo Patiño, have been fundamental in this journey; as was the presence of Brothers Angelo, Alfredo, José and Ramiro, as translators for the four working languages (Italian, Spanish, English, French).

We have done our best, immersing ourselves in the "work dynamics" that were proposed, being obedient to what we perceived as the movement of the Holy Spirit. The result – what we what we feel has happened in Nemi – is that the Holy Spirit has renewed the unity of our Order in this small cenacle. The celebrations of the liturgy, organized by Sisters of the four different language groups, also revealed the Teresian joy that unites us as Sisters.

An important moment for us was the meeting with Sr. Simona Brambilla,² who gave us "an ecclesial word" when she told us, "the revision of the Constitutions

² A religious from the Institute of the Consolata Missionary Sisters and Secretary for the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

becomes an open and prayerful journey in the Spirit, and each step on this journey is such a step only when it responds to this objective."

The method of conversation in the Holy Spirit in our small groups brought about a real transformation. This, together with our sharing in the Plenary Assembly, made it possible for us "to put our feet on the ground" gently, in a very Teresian style. Little by little, we became increasingly sincere, clear, and concrete in naming the realities we live in our different parts of the world, the hopes that encourage us, the problems we struggle with, the poverty and wealth we must face.

We felt that by putting our own things in common, it became something that belonged to all of us. And so, by listening and offering, by walking in truth, we have come to find ourselves in the truest part of our vocation. This is what we wish to transmit: our identity as Discalced Carmelites is our treasure, we all acknowledged it together.

"While we were talking and discussing" all this, Jesus approached us and together we recognized him in the breaking of the bread in our daily Eucharist, in the sharing of the bread of our own life, in every encounter.

"They told what had happened to them on the road."

In the Audience that we had with Pope Francis on Thursday, April 18, the Holy Father invited us to "discover new language, new ways and new means to give greater impetus to the contemplative life that the Lord has called (us) to embrace, so that the charism of Carmel may be preserved – the charism which is always the same – and that it may become understood and attract many hearts, for the glory of God and the good of the Church." With the momentum of these words,

added to all that we had been working on personally and in groups, we came to these conclusions in the Plenary Assembly:

- It is important to communicate our lived experience in Nemi to all our communities:
- We want to have a Constitutional text (ad experimentum) that contains the essential elements of our identity and our Teresian charism;
- We adopt the following texts as a basis of the Constitutions: Sacred Scripture, the Rule of St. Albert, the Way of Perfection, the 1977 Declarations, the 1991 Constitutions and the new ecclesial documents (Vultum Dei quaerere and Cor Orans among others);
- We will take into account the contributions of all the Federations and Associations, together with all the work that was done at the Nemi Meeting;
- An International Commission of Sisters will be formed, with the participation of some Brothers, for the drafting of the Constitutional text in the spirit of Nemi. This commission will promote the contributions of the individual communities and the Federations and Associations and will offer a methodology for it.

“Look what this has done for me.” Conclusions.

At the end of this meeting, we found that something had changed. We returned to our communities open and astonished to see what the Holy Spirit has been revealing to us, day by day, in the exchange and mutual listening that we had together.

We have “incarnated” a response of communion by welcoming the diversity among us, seeking more what unites us than what separates us. It has been

an experience of the universality of the Order. The Teresian "let us strive to be" unites us in the essential, and in the face of a world that is on fire, we have a genuine desire to walk as Sisters and deliver the "prophecy" of the familial spirit we have experienced.

What happened here has been a true synodal process, a *kairos*. "It is time to walk" as a Teresian Carmelite Family, with a "universal face" that gives birth to the life of God in each Federation and Association, in each community and in every Sister and Brother, so that all may have life and have it in abundance. Let us walk together, Lord!

Words are not enough to thank Sr. Lidia for accompanying us during the meeting, as well as our confreres who prepared everything down to the smallest detail. Their absolute and generous dedication in a countless number of gestures and services has been fundamental in this meeting. From them we learned truly to be more like Sisters to one another.

In this spirit, and ready to look to the future with evangelical hope, with unshod feet, that is, with the freedom born of abandonment to God,"³ we follow in the footsteps of the "Captain of Love."

³ Pope Francis, Audience for the Superiors and Delegates of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, April 18, 2024. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/es/bollettino/pubblico/2024/04/18/180424b0html>.