



## OCD and OCarm met at Monastery in Bocca di Magra

**O**n April 2-6, 2024, the General Councils of the OCD and of the OCarm met at the Discalced Carmelite Monastery of Santa Croce, Bocca di Magra, Liguria.

As has become the tradition since 1991, the two Councils meet twice a year, in June and December, to update each other on developments in the two branches of Carmel and discuss matters of mutual concern. Every three years, the Councils meet for an extended length of time to reflect on an agreed theme. This time they reflected on some lessons from the life and writings of St Therese of the Child Jesus with the guidance of Fr Emilio J. Martinez, OCD, professor at the Teresianum, Rome. Father Emilio reflected on two themes concerning St

Therese: abandonment and mission.

At the same time, we shared and discussed a wide-range of topics about issues of mutual concern ranging from information sharing and areas of possible cooperation and collaboration: Carmelite Formation; formation of formators in the Carmelite tradition; collaboration in the renewal of Mariology and Marian life of the two traditions of Carmel; the updating of the Constitutions of the Nuns of both traditions, etc.

To read the Final Message: <https://www.carmelitaniscalzi.com/en/2024/04/23/st-therese-of-the-child-jesus-and-the-holy-face-invitation-to-growth-through-abandonment-love-and-mission/>



# INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF OCD NUNS

*Nemi (Italy) - 14<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> April 2024*

## Daily Chronicle

### SUNDAY 14.04.2024

World-wide representatives of Discalced Carmelite Nuns gathered this evening at the *Centro ad Gentes* in Nemi, to commence work on the revision of their Constitutions.

They were accompanied by the OCD Fathers Miguel Marquez, Agustí Borrell, Rafal Wilkowski and Pablo Patino. Frs. Alfredo Amesti, Ramiro Casale, Angelo Lanfranchi and José Pereira to assist with simultaneous translations and Sister Lidia Wrona, *Carmelite Missionary*, who would facilitate the meet-

ing, were also in attendance.

After the evening meal, Fr. Miguel opened the meeting with a moment of prayer and some communications. All the Nuns were then introduced and a power point map situating each Federation geographically facilitated information about each group of monasteries. To conclude the day, Sister Lidia announced 9 working groups, formed according to languages. She also showed a short video outlining the content of discussion for the first group reunions.

### MONDAY 15.04.2024

Our day began with the recital of Lauds and celebration of the Eucharist at 7.00.

After breakfast, we assembled in the aula magna where Fr. Agustí Borrell gave a

synthesis of yesterday's events and Sr. Lidia, CM, presented and explained the programme for the coming day.

Fr. Salvador Ros, OCD, then gave a zoom conference on "*The constitutional feelings*

and understanding of St. Teresa”, based on three documental fonts: the Carmelite Rule, the first Constitutions and The Way of Perfection.

In the light of this conference, discussions began in the various language groups, adopting the Synodal Method of ‘Conversation in the Spirit’. The morning programme concluded with a general synthetic sharing of each group’s discussion.

In the afternoon, Sister Simona Brambilla, a *Consolate Missionary* and Secre-

tary of the Dicastery for Consecrate Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, presented a reflection on the significance of the renewal of Constitutions and the importance of such a moment in any spiritual family, as an opportunity for renewal.

After a discussion and brief dialogue, the language groups continued their work until it was time for the recitation of Vespers and our evening meal at 20.30.

## TUESDAY 16.04.2024

We began our day again with celebration of the Eucharist with Lauds. The Sisters of the Latin American Federations organized today’s Liturgy.

Back in the Meeting Hall, Sr. Lidia, Facilitator, introduced the agenda proposed for this morning’s work. Fr. Agustí then gave a brief resume of what occurred on Monday and we had a sharing of what the language groups had discussed in yesterday afternoon’s sessions.

Fr. General, Miguel Sanchez, gave an enlightened talk about “Teresian Carmel Today”, with sincere realism about its problems, challenges and hopes.

We were treated to an interesting discussion panel, organized by two of the Carmelite nuns, where they compared views and the realities about two differ-

ent geographical regions: Holland and Indonesia.

The afternoon session began at 15.00 with a general sharing of reactions to what had taken place during the morning session. Fr. Rafal then presented a paper on the theme of Constitutions seen in the light of a *Propositum Vitae* (Resolution or Determination for Life) expressed in juridical format. This was followed by group discussions and a Plenary Synthesis. To conclude proceeding Sr. Lidia and Fr. Agustí recapitulated the day’s programme with brief resumes.

We recited Vespers and had our evening meal before the Sisters of the English speaking Federations conducted a rehearsal of tomorrow’s Liturgy which they are organizing.

## WEDNESDAY 17.04.2024

**A**s on preceding days, at 7.00 we began with the celebration of the Eucharist with Lauds, led by our English speaking Sisters.

The working day's proceedings began in the Assembly Hall at 8.45. Fr. Agustí gave us a synthesis of all that had taken place yesterday and Fr. Rafal made some brief complementary additions to his talk on Constitutions. He also answered some relevant questions on the theme.

Sr. Lidia then referred to today's programme with some explanations. She reminded her audience of the need to be guided by the Synodal methodology of Conversation in the Spirit during their group sessions.

At 13.00 we had our usual lunch time break and returned to a General Assembly at 15.30. Here we had a general discussion and sharing about what had been discussed in the morning groups. We were reminded again to pay attention to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

Before returning to group reflections, Fr. Miguel gave us some practical directives about Thursday's programme and our audience with the Holy Father.

Our evening concluded with the recital of Vespers, directed again by the English speaking group. We spent some time in personal prayer before our evening meal which was followed by a sisterly get-together!

## THURSDAY 18.04.2024

**W**e had an early start to this special day with breakfast at 5.30. Immediately after breakfast the whole group of OCD Nuns, Friars and Sr. Lidia set off for the Vatican and our meeting with Pope Francis. After a short wait in St. Peter's Square the whole world-wide phalanx of Carmelites were conducted into the Pope's presence. His Holiness invited us to undertake "the task of new languages, new pathways and new methods that can energise the contemplative life with greater enthusiasm and enterprise. The Lord has called you to embrace this contemplative life in a way that preserves its charism – the charism remains the same – so that it may come

to be appreciated more and attract many hearts, for the glory of God and the benefit of the Church".

Following on the Pope's Apostolic Blessing and a visit to St. Peter's Basilica, we returned to base for our midday meal.

It was back to work again in a General Assembly at 15.30. The Sisters were invited to spend some time in personal prayer and discernment about all they had experienced during these past few days – what had been shared in their smaller group work and at their plenary syntheses.

This momentous day concluded with Vespers and Mass, followed by and supper at 19.30.

# Audience to Discalced Carmelite Nuns Superiors and Delegates

2024-04-18

Good morning and welcome!

I am pleased to meet with you as you gather for reflection and work on the revision of your Constitutions, those of 1991, or the previous ones, I don't know, in any case those that you are working on. This is a significant undertaking, not only because it responds to a natural human need, the contingencies of community life, but also because it is a "season of the Spirit", an occasion to devote yourselves to prayer and discernment. Remaining inwardly open to the working of the Holy Spirit, you are challenged to discover new language, new ways and new means to give greater impetus to the contemplative life that the Lord has called you 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. When a Carmel works well, it attracts, it attracts, doesn't it? It is like light with flies, it attracts, it attracts.

Revising Constitutions means precisely this: *recollecting the past* – we must not deny this – *in order to look to the future*. Indeed, you make me think of how the contemplative vocation is not about tending embers, but rather about fanning into flame a fire that can continue to burn and provide warmth to the Church and the world. The memory of your history and the elements in the Constitutions that have matured over the years is thus a source of richness that needs to remain open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, to the perennial newness of the Gospel and to the signs that the Lord shows us through the experiences of life and human challenges, and in this way a charism is preserved. It does not change, it listens and is open to what the Lord wants at every moment.

This is generally true for all Institutes of consecrated life, but you, as cloistered women, realize it in a particular way, because your lives embody the tension between separation from the world and immersion in it. Far from seeking refuge in interior spiritual consolations or a prayer divorced from reality, yours is a journey in which you allow yourselves to be touched by the love of Christ and union with him, so that his love can pervade your entire existence and find expression in all that you say and do. The path of contemplation is inherently a path of love. It serves as a ladder that raises us up to God, not to separate us from the world but to ground us more deeply in it, as witnesses of the love we have received.

This is the lesson that, with her wisdom and ardent faith, your holy Mother teaches you. She was convinced that the mystical and interior union by which God binds the soul to himself, “sealing” it, as it were, by his love, permeates and transforms our whole life, without ever withdrawing us from our daily responsibilities or suggesting a flight into spiritual matters alone. She made clear that time devoted to silence and prayer is necessary, yet need to be seen as the wellspring of the apostolate and of all the daily duties that the Lord calls us to carry out in service to the Church. As she says: “Martha and Mary must entertain our Lord and keep him as their guest, nor must they be so inhospitable as to offer him no food. How can Mary do this while she sits at his feet, if her sister does not help her? His food is that in every possible way we should draw souls to him so that they may be saved and may praise him forever” (SAINT TERESA OF AVILA, *The Interior Castle* VII, IV, 17-18). That is the quotation, which you know better than I do.

In this way, the contemplative life will not risk degenerating into a spiritual inertia that withdraws from the tasks of daily life – a priest who did not know this type of mysticism called them “the drowsy nuns”, who live in sleep – and it will continue to provide the interior light needed for discernment. And what is the light that you need to revise your Constitutions and address the many concrete problems of monasteries and of community life? That light is none other than

*the hope of the Gospel*, yet always rooted in your founding fathers and your Mother foundress and in Saint John of the Cross.

Evangelical hope differs from illusions based on human calculations. It entails surrendering ourselves to God, learning to read the signs he gives us to discern the future, having courage to make certain bold and risky decisions, even without knowing where they will eventually lead. Above all, it means not thinking only in human and defensive terms when reflecting on whether to preserve or close a monastery, on structures of community life, on vocations. Defensive strategies are often the fruit of a nostalgic longing for the past – that does not work, nostalgia does not work – whereas evangelical hope grants us joy in contemplating our history up to the present, but also empowers us to look ahead to the future with those roots that we have received. And that is called preserving the charism, the dream of moving forward, and that really works.

Look ahead. That is my wish for you. Look to the future with evangelical hope, with unshod feet, that is, with the freedom born of abandonment to God. Look to the future with roots in the past. May your complete immersion in the Lord's presence always fill you with the joy of sisterhood and mutual love. May Our Lady accompany you on this path. With all my heart, I bless you, your deliberations in these days, and your communities. I bless the nuns in the monastery. I ask you, too, to continue to pray for me; for me, not against me.

Source:

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2024/04/18/0308/00657.html#it>

## FRIDAY 19.04.2024

This morning's work focused on an International Commission for the revision of the Constitutions. The groups discussed the criteria for the Commission's composition, its tasks and work programmes, as well as the profiles and possible nominations of members. The Assembly approved a final message to be addressed to all Carmelite Nuns world-wide and to the entire OCD Order. All the participants were asked to compile a personal evaluation of the meeting

in all its various dimensions. Finally, Fr. Miguel, our General Superior, who had convoked the Assembly, explained the steps that would be initiated immediately, especially with regard to setting up the international working team as soon as possible. He then expressed his personal joy and appreciation for these days and brought the meeting to a conclusion. He sincerely thanked those who had made it possible and all the participants.

## SATURDAY 20.04.2024

We assembled at 6.45 for our final celebration of the Eucharist in thanksgiving to the Lord. We then set off on our return journeys to our homelands. We carried in our hearts the joy of having shared an intense and enjoyable experience of communion in the family of Teresa. The process of renewing our Constitutions continues, with renewed enthusiasm. We have established some concrete steps to be taken as well as a working

methodology. Above all, we want to transmit and infect everyone who will be concerned with the style of dialogue that we were introduced to and experienced ourselves: we have learned that when we open ourselves to listen sincerely to the Spirit and to our Sisters, our lives are enlightened and transformed. May "the spirit of Nemi" continue to guide us in a continuing renewed manner of living our Teresian Charism.