



GENERAL DEFINITORY OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES

Corso d'Italia, 38

00198 Rome – Italy

## SEXENNIUM 2021-2027 – LETTER NO. 17

Rome, 14 September 2025

Dear brothers and sisters of the Teresian Carmel,

The General Definitory has once again met in ordinary session from 1 to 12 September, to continue its dialogue on the life of the Order and to make the most appropriate decisions for the good of the Teresian Carmelite family. In addition, on this occasion we had a second part of our meeting, with three intense days outside Rome to deepen our discernment on the state of the Order and on the criteria that should guide our immediate future.

We began our meetings by recalling some recent events, among which the Episcopal ordination of Fr. Makhoul Farha, of the Semi-Province of Lebanon, as Archbishop of Baalbek of the Greek-Melkites, which took place on 24 August. We accompany him with our prayers and best wishes in this new ministry of service to the Church. In addition, we also received a fraternal visit from Fr. Saverio Cannistrà, former Superior General of the Order and current Metropolitan Archbishop of Pisa (Italy).

### **Priorities of the Sexennium**

Among the priority objectives indicated by the General Chapter for the current sexennium, we have once again emphasised the importance of initial formation. The drafting of the new text of the *Ratio institutionis* continues. The deadline for the submission of contributions from the various circumscriptions to the draft of the new text has been reached. The commission is analysing all the responses that have been received in order to further improve the document. It is possible that it will be approved in the coming year and presented to the Extraordinary Definitory next year.

As for the academic life of the Order, we were delighted to receive the approval by the Faculty of the Teresianum of the request for incorporation of the Institute of Mystical Theology of CITES in Avila, a long-desired and hard-won goal. The corresponding dossier will now be presented to the Dicastery for Culture and Education, which must officially accept this new academic configuration, thanks to which CITES would be able to award higher academic degrees with ecclesiastical validity.

We have also received information about the seminar on the intellectual and academic life of the Order, which took place at CITES at the end of June. The group is consolidating and carrying out very positive work in dialogue and reflection on an area so important for the present and future of Carmel, namely culture. On this occasion, concrete progress was made in preparing the contents of the international congress on St John of the Cross scheduled for June 2026.

As for youth ministry, we discussed the Jubilee for young people, which was celebrated in Rome from 28 July to 3 August. On Wednesday 30 July, there was an intense and enjoyable meeting of young Carmelites from different parts of the world, attended by Fr. General, with various celebrations and festive activities, which allowed for a very enriching time of fellowship among the participants. The meeting also served to renew the desire to strengthen youth ministry throughout the Order:

one of the first immediate steps will be to create an international commission that brings together different friars working in this field to revitalise and encourage Carmelite youth ministry worldwide.

We are now in the final months of the three years we have dedicated to the anniversaries of the birth, beatification and canonisation of Therese of the Child Jesus. In December, our focus will shift to John of the Cross, marking the third centenary of his canonisation and the first centenary of his doctorate, which will be commemorated next year in 2026. The opening of the sanjuanist year will take place in Segovia on 13 December 2025, and the closing in Úbeda on 26 December 2026. The files for the community reading of sanjuanist texts are being prepared, which will offer a look at creation, with the help of excerpts from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

Regarding Marian dimension of our life, we discussed the echoes of the letter sent by Fr. General to the Order on 16 July, the solemnity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, along with the results of the Marian survey. We thank the Fatima community (Portugal) for launching and managing the "Mary and Carmel" blog ([www.maristellacarmel.com](http://www.maristellacarmel.com)), which compiles materials, news and activities related to the Marian life of the Order and is now fully available in several languages. Moving forward, one aspect for improvement is coordination among the Mariologists of the Order, as well as those responsible for Marian shrines.

### **Pastoral visits**

As usual, the Definitory examined the reports of the pastoral visits made by the Definitors over the past few weeks. Fr. General, having resumed his normal schedule, participated in some of them.

#### *Argentina*

The pastoral visit to Argentina took place from 29 June to 26 July 2025 and was led by Fr. Martín Martínez Larios. Fr. General participated in the concluding meetings.

Our presence in this country dates back to 1899, with the arrival of the first missionaries from Castile on Argentine soil. Currently, the circumscription has 18 solemnly professed friars and 4 in formation, spread across 5 communities: San Miguel de Tucumán (delegate's headquarters); Buenos Aires (formation house and parish); Alta Gracia-Córdoba (shrine, retreat house, and parish); Mar del Plata (parish and school); and Rosario (parish). Multiculturalism —with friars from Poland, Brazil, Paraguay, and Spain— is a "sign of the times" and a treasure that strengthens the local Carmelite identity.

Fraternal life is valued positively, characterised by trust, mutual respect and a climate of dialogue that has healed wounds from the past. Apostolic life flourishes in six parishes, two retreat houses, a sanctuary in Alta Gracia —a place of great pilgrimage— two schools and a fledgling but powerful presence on social media. The centralised and supportive economy remains healthy thanks to rental income and transparent management. It is also worth highlighting the healthy relationship with the Discalced Carmelites nuns —20 monasteries, as well as 10 others under the 1990 Constitutions— and the Secular Order communities (OCDS), which have more than 200 members.

Among the challenges to be addressed is the heavy pastoral workload, particularly with the added responsibility of serving the communities of Tandil and Rosario, previously served by other circumscriptions. This has resulted in an excessive workload that can undermine community and contemplative life, overburdening the friars. There is a risk of "prioritising structures over lifestyle" to future generations. Therefore, a community reorganization Project is urgently needed to prioritize a balance between pastoral work, fraternal life and prayer. Initial formation requires greater investment in formators and the separation of the stages of formation (postulancy and theology). Ongoing formation must also be strengthened, with programmes of study in Carmelite spirituality and Sacred Scripture.

The Definitory requests continued progress toward creating the Province of the Southern Cone, restructuring presences according to the number of friars and pastoral priorities, expanding the team of formators, revitalising community mental prayer, utilizing underutilised properties, and ensuring financial transparency through the digitisation of management.

The historic meeting of the four Federations of the Discalced Carmelites nuns, two from the 1990 Constitutions and two from the 1991 Constitutions, held in Buenos Aires with Fr. General and Fr. Martín, was very valuable and celebrated by all.

### *Canada (Karnataka-Goa)*

Definitors Christophe-Marie Baudouin and Pius James D'Souza made a pastoral visit to the Provincial Delegation of the Province of Karnataka-Goa in Canada (English-speaking area) from 4 to 24 July 2025. Fr General participated in some of the meetings. The delegation, placed under the patronage of St Teresa of the Andes, has 27 friars (with an average age of under 50), all of whom are from India except for one Canadian friar who is originally from Sri Lanka. They work in eight communities spread across the provinces of Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. Their work focuses on serving 13 parishes, two hospital chaplaincies, and two of their own spirituality centres: the *Mount Carmel Spirituality Centre* in Edmonton and the *Little Flower Monastery* in Deroche. There are four Discalced Carmelites nuns communities in the area, all under episcopal jurisdiction. The vitality of the Secular Order is also noteworthy, with 29 communities and 363 active members.

The Definitors highlighted two main strengths: the dynamism of the friars, who are well integrated into the local Church and appreciated by the bishops, and the balance between parish work and the spirituality centres, which allow our charism to be shared.

The recommendations for each community are along the same lines: to strengthen community prayer life, safeguarding times for personal prayer; to hold monthly community meetings; and, above all, to imbue the parishes with Carmelite spirit. Several communities are invited to write more detailed and in-depth chronicles, going beyond a mere list of activities. Where necessary, it is recommended that suitable chapels be created for community prayer. The definitors also admonished the friars to the faithful living of the vow of poverty in the context of Canadian consumer society.

However, the lack of novices casts a shadow over this promising future. Currently, there are no friars in formation and all members come from the Indian province. For this reason, the visitation has made the promotion of vocations a top priority, requesting the appointment of a delegate for each region and for this to be taken into account in any new foundation. The Secular Order must be another major priority. It is requested that the appointed delegates have the necessary freedom to carry out their work effectively.

The future lies in greater autonomy and more resources to this territory. The General Definitory requests that the region become a Regional Vicariate at the Provincial Chapter of Karnataka-Goa in 2026. The transition will be supervised by Fr. Christophe-Marie, who will keep the pastoral visit open until the new vicariate holds its constituent congress.

### *Madagascar*

Frs Jean-Baptiste Pagabeleguem and Philbert Namphande carried out the general pastoral visit to the Commissariat of Madagascar in two stages, during the months of May and July 2025. This commissariat, canonically erected in 1999, comprises twelve communities spread across Madagascar, the Seychelles, Mauritius and La Réunion, integrating 140 professed members (90 solemn and 50 temporary), 13 novices and 9 postulants. There are 8 communities of Discalced Carmelites nuns in the territory of the Commissariat. The Secular Carmelite Order (OCDS) is experiencing vigorous growth, with approximately 220 members.

The commissariat enjoys a remarkable wealth of vocations and a very active and appreciated presence in the local Church, through parishes, schools, a higher education institute, health centres and five spiritual centres. In general, the communities we encountered are prayerful, fraternal and

apostolic that joyfully live the three pillars of the Carmelite charism. The formators are well trained and the stages of formation are well defined.

However, some challenges were highlighted: there is a need to deepen interpersonal relationships beyond superficial cordiality, fostering sincere and charitable fraternal correction. It is necessary to critically integrate the Malagasy cultural concept of *fiahavanana* (fraternity) into the authenticity of Carmelite life. While the life of prayer is solid, some communities need to be vigilant to ensure its regularity and not neglect it for apostolic activism. There is a risk of dispersion and activism due to the multiplicity of works (parishes, schools, health centres and farms).

The commissariat has considerable assets (land, buildings, productive structures) inherited from the missionaries. Many communities have the potential to achieve internal financial autonomy and even support the central house of the commissariat. There is the urgent need to implement transparent management and accountability systems at all levels.

The definitors issued a series of specific recommendations and concrete decisions aimed at strengthening the life of the commissariat:

- Strengthen the teaching of French (and English) to facilitate communication and openness.
- Divide large groups of philosophy and theology students for more personalised accompaniment.
- Cultivate community recreation and excursions. Organise community readings and reflections on the three pillars of the charism (nos. 21-60 of the *Declaration on the Charism*).
- Create a transparent and supportive financial management system, where communities contribute to the central commissariat fund. The bursar should visit the communities to implement this. Carry out an updated inventory of all assets. Have a Mass book in each community.
- It was decided to transfer some religious to other communities for better service and balance. Superiors are urged to exercise leadership that fosters dialogue and unity.
- Organise training on abuse of power, conscience and authority, and protocols for action. Implement a programme of accompaniment for solemnly professed young religious and priests with less than five years of ministry.

The pastoral visit concluded with a positive overall impression of the vitality, apostolic commitment and joy that characterise the Commissariat of Madagascar. The challenges identified are set in a context of great dynamism and potential for growth.

The Commissariat renewed its request to become a Province. The Definitory noted that significant progress has been made in consolidating the circumscription and asks that work continue in this direction, with the expectation that the constitution of the province can be officially approved at the next General Chapter.

### *Australia*

The Regional Vicariate of Australia (of the Anglo-Irish Province) covers the entire Australian continent, a multicultural country with a population of approximately 27 million people, of whom 60% are Christian and 20% are Catholic, with a significant proportion of the population born abroad.

The Definitory Christianus Surinono made the general pastoral visit to the region from 25 July to 25 August 2025. At the end of the visit, Fr. General held an assembly with all the Carmelite friars in Australia (both members of the Vicariate and the three communities from different provinces in India: Manjummel, Karnataka-Goa and Malabar); this was the first time in almost 15 years that Indian friars had been present in Australia. He also had a meeting with some representatives of the Secular Carmelites, which has eight communities with about 200 members, as well as the Federation of Discalced Carmelite nuns.

The presence of friars in Australia began in 1948 in Brisbane. Currently, there are 14 friars in the vicariate, with an average age of 67. The three active communities are located in Morley (Perth), Varroville (central and formation house), and St. Ives (Sydney), although the latter will close after Easter 2026 due to a lack of personnel. In addition, there are three communities in the country that

are dependent on circumscriptions in India. There are 11 communities of the Discalced Carmelites nuns in the territory of the circumscription.

The report highlights the importance of communication, dialogue, and mutual trust in community life. Despite some challenges, the friars are faithful to prayer and fraternity. It is recommended that a common vision and strategy for the future be established, including collaboration with other provinces, vocational promotion and ongoing formation of the friars. The importance of good administration and effective governance within the Vicariate was also emphasised. The future lies in greater integration in the East Asia-Oceania region.

Having analysed the current situation and future prospects, the General Definitory considers that it would be positive for the current vicariate to become a commissariat, so that it can be monitored more directly by the Definitory, with the intention of revitalising and reorganising the Order's presence in Australia.

### ***Reports following Visits***

#### *Southern Brazil*

The Province of Southern Brazil has presented a report on the progress made since the last general pastoral visit, highlighting both significant advances and challenges to be addressed. In the area of formation, the province has strongly encouraged higher education among its friars. The province has embarked on a synodal journey, engaging in dialogue with neighbouring circumscriptions in the Southern Cone to reconfigure their presences in a joint and responsible manner. Vocational life shows encouraging signs: the formation house in Curitiba has eight young people in formation; in addition, the province has joined the common theology programme of CICLA South in Buenos Aires, sending a friar in formation and a friar formator. The dissemination of Carmelite spirituality has found an ally in digital tools, which have made it possible to reach a wider audience. Ties with the Discalced Carmelites nuns and the OCDS remain strong, with spiritual accompaniment and active collaboration, even though we recognise the difficulty of being present in all Secular Order communities.

#### *Singapore*

The current Delegation of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand has presented its report on the implementation of the decisions of the last General visitation. The document shows a generally positive follow-up to the determinations, with uneven progress depending on the community. Recurring themes are the need for more formators, adapting formation to diverse cultural contexts, regularising the legal and financial situation of assets, and strengthening fraternal life. The report reflects notable differences between the three countries in the circumscription, which calls for fostering relationship and unity among the religious of the different communities.

#### *CICLA North*

The major superiors of the Conference of Interregional Carmelite-Teresian for Latin America (CICLA North) met on 28 June and 4 July in Honduras and El Salvador, with the aim of evaluating and strengthening collaboration projects between the circumscriptions of Mexico, Venezuela, the Caribbean and Central America. The meeting was marked by a spirit of reconciliation and sincere dialogue. Issues related to the Interregional Theologate were openly addressed, and the commitment to a synodal model that avoids conflict dynamics in the dialogue between circumscriptions was reaffirmed. One of the central agreements was to reinforce the stable presence of formators and students from all circumscriptions in the interregional Novitiate and Theologate.

## **The life of the circumscriptions**

### *Approaching the Triennial Chapters*

We are coming to the end of the triennium. Over the next few months, provincial chapters and chapter congresses will take place in all circumscriptions, some of them even before the end of this year. The chapters are a privileged opportunity to review the situation of each circumscription in the light of our charism, open to the voice of God and with a fraternal and synodal spirit. During the Chapters, the most appropriate decisions for adequate renewal are made, and the friar who will be responsible for guiding the life of the circumscription and the communities during the next triennium in a spirit of service are elected.

Fr. General will send a letter to the whole Order with some reflections and guidelines to be taken into account for the preparation and celebration of the Chapters. An important theme to be addressed will be the implementation of the map of presences, following the work carried out at the Extraordinary Definitory in Lisieux and the subsequent guidelines of the General Definitory. In this sense, the current situation of the Order invites us to continue taking steps to intensify real collaboration between circumscriptions, especially those that are closest to each other.

The Chapters will also be an opportunity to reflect on the issue of abuse, on which the Church and society ask us to be clear and decisive. Circumscriptions that do not yet have one should draw up and approve a protocol on this issue.

We remind you that according to the current regulations of the Order, Provincial Superiors elected by chapters must receive confirmation from the Superior General before taking up their office. As for the Superiors of Commissariats and similar circumscriptions, the provisions of their particular statutes must be followed, which normally provide for a proposal by the circumscription and appointment by Fr. General.

Once the Chapters are over, the new Superiors will meet for the Extraordinary Definitory (Mexico City, 30 August to 9 September), in preparation for the next General Chapter (Nemi, Italy, 2-23 May 2027).

As usual, we addressed various concrete issues concerning certain circumscriptions. Each of them is directly informed of the Definitory's reflections and decisions. In some cases, the Pastoral Visit remains open to facilitate more direct and effective follow-up.

In accordance with the configuration of the Order, we devoted particular attention to the circumscriptions that depend more directly on the Definitory, such as the Commissariats. The former delegations are gradually adapting to the spirit and letter of our laws, with the drafting of particular statutes, as provided for in the *Norms of Application* (NA 157). Specifically, we are reviewing the draft statutes of the new commissariats of Ecuador and Singapore-Thailand-Malaysia.

We have also continued to review and approve the collaboration agreements whereby a religious from one province is transferred to the service of another province.

With regard to the administration and economy of the provinces, we have analysed some requests for assistance in specific cases. We have also evaluated some projects that have been submitted for approval by the Definitory (investments, construction, new houses). We urge all circumscriptions to work to achieve and maintain the necessary financial autonomy and to be able to contribute to the needs of the Order, always in the spirit of poverty that corresponds to our way of life.

## **The General Curia**

Fr. Jérôme Paluku, Secretary for Missionary Cooperation, gave an update on some of the most notable missionary and social projects with which the General Government is collaborating in different parts of the world. In some cases, very direct monitoring is necessary to ensure that established

procedures are followed, without which resources cannot be obtained from the agencies that offer financial assistance.

We recall that the General Secretariat for Missionary Cooperation has a mission of raising awareness of the mission and communicating initiatives to the centre of the Order; assisting, advising, accompanying and supporting missionaries in their Carmelite, pastoral and socio-economic projects; coordinating financial and logistical aid for specific missionary projects; being a channel of missionary solidarity within the wider Carmelite family; to liaise between the missions and aid agencies; and efficiently overseeing the administration of resources granted for projects in our missions.

The Procurator General, Fr. Juan David Noguera, presented the steps he is taking with the various Vatican agencies. In particular, he presented and commented on the latest information concerning certain ongoing proceedings within the Roman dicasteries concerning religious of the Order (exclaustrations, dispensations from vows, etc.). Many of the pending cases have already received a response (we have gone from about 300 to about 100 currently). We would like to thank the leaders of circumscriptions for their collaboration, which is indispensable for regularising the various personal situations.

Fr. Marco Chiesa, Postulator General, provided updated information on several causes for beatification and canonisation that are currently underway. Among them is that of the venerable Eliswa of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Eliswa Vakayil), born on 15 October 1831 in Ochanthuruth, India, and died on 18 July 1913 in Varappuzha, India, who will be beatified on 8 November in the Archdiocese of Verapoly (Kerala, India). She is the founder of the Congregation of the Third Order of Discalced Carmelites (now Teresian Carmelite Sisters).

As for the liturgy, we were delighted with the official approval of *the Proprium Missarum OCD* in its original Latin (approved on 16 July by the Dicastery, promulgated by Fr. General on 16 August and which will come into effect on 30 November). The process of translation into various languages has begun immediately. Meanwhile, progress continues on the preparation of the *Proper of the Liturgy of the Hours* (Breviary), as well as the *Ritual of Secular Carmel*, in order to obtain the approval of the Dicastery. In addition, steps are being taken to make the Order's own liturgy available on mobile devices.

The General Treasurer, Fr. Paolo De Carli, presented the usual quarterly report on the financial situation of the General House and the institutions directly dependent on it. Our financial situation is moderately stable, although our investments are affected by the turbulence associated with the changes in the new tariffs imposed by the United States government on various countries around the world. We reviewed and discussed the assistance offered by the general house to some circumscriptions for various needs. We also reviewed the situation of the provinces' contributions to the Order's economy. Finally, Fr. Paolo reported on his economic motivated visit to CITES last July.

### **The Discalced Carmelites Nuns**

Fr. Rafał Wilkowski, secretary for the nuns, and the vice-secretary, Fr. Juan Pablo Patiño, reported to the Definitory on various issues related to the Discalced Carmelites nuns throughout the world. Among the new developments presented are those communities that are in the process of merging, suppression or discerning their future.

We received with joy and hope the announcement made public in mid-September regarding the Carmelite convent in Lisieux: following the canonical affiliation of the community to the Federation of Discalced Carmelites nuns of France-North in July 2024, the ad hoc commission, in collaboration with the Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux and the Dicastery (DIVCSVA), drew up a project for

re-foundation based on three fundamental questions: How can we fully live a Carmelite religious life today, in the spirit of Carmel, following its great spiritual figures? How can we breathe new life into the historic building so that it continues to be a lived-in place, a bearer of meaning and mission? How can we respond to the pastoral expectations of pilgrims, who are increasingly numerous, in an attitude of welcome and evangelisation? The project has two main axes: a small community affiliated with the federation and a moderate opening to pastoral ministry in collaboration with the sanctuary to open Therese's infirmary cell to pilgrims on a journey marked by spiritual sobriety, beauty and prayer.

The revision of the Constitutions of the Discalced Carmelites Nuns (1991) is continuing. The international commission, made up of nine nuns and two friars, has been working in recent months through virtual meetings and is preparing a new face-to-face meeting at the end of October in Rome. On this occasion, it is planned to finalise the draft outline of the Constitutions and the detailed explanation of the proposal, which will be sent to all federations and associations to allow for broad participation in the constitutional process. In addition to Sr. Lidia Wrona, a Carmelite missionary, who acts as moderator, the commission is assisted by Fr. Agustí Borrell, as companion and advisor, at the request of the sisters.

### **The Secular Carmel**

Fr. Ramiro Casale, delegate for the Secular Order, reported on his visits in recent weeks to the OCDS communities in the Philippines. The Definitory approved the statutes of the Secular Carmel of Venezuela.

Preparations for the World Meeting of the Secular Carmelites in Ávila in July 2026 are continuing, thanks to the hard work of the organising committee, coordinated by Fr. Ramiro.

As for the *sanatio in radice* process for cases in which the final promises of some members of the Secular Order were not made in a regular manner, the dossier has been completed and will be presented to the Dicastery in the coming days.

### **The “Fiamma Viva” Foundation**

The first meeting of the “Fiamma Viva” Foundation, established by the General Definitory for the enhancement and restoration of properties of historical, artistic and cultural value, took place recently. It's responsible for the organisation and management of cultural, artistic or recreational initiatives of social interest, such as the creation and management of libraries and museums, as well as tourist activities of social, cultural or religious interest. Currently, specific plans are being made for the restoration of the Roman churches of Santa Maria della Scala and Santa Maria della Vittoria. In addition, it can finance research programmes for scholars, as well as promote and support scientific, cultural and religious activities through conferences, study meetings, scholarships and publications.

After the ordinary meeting of the Definitory, we are preparing to spend three days together in Ariccia, near Rome, to discuss the state of the Order and how to guide an appropriate renewal in fidelity to the charism. It is a matter of looking beyond the concrete and urgent problems that occupy us daily, in order to have a broad view of the situation of the Order, with the desire to discern the present and future of our religious family. We want to reflect on the specific mission of the Teresian Carmel and how to live it in the present moment of history. Above all, we ask ourselves how to nourish our spiritual experience so that we can be mystagogues in the Church and society today.

May St. Teresa of Jesus, Our Mother and Teacher, enlighten us all, friars, nuns and Secular members, in our desire to walk together, always with our eyes and hearts fixed on the Lord who has called us. May Therese of the Child Jesus, in this centenary year of her canonisation, teach us to live in trust and hope.

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