

WORLD OCDS ENCOUNTER

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The first day of the World OCDS Encounter in Ávila was marked by an atmosphere of joy, fraternity, and communion among participants from more than 80 nationalities.

Civil and religious authorities welcomed the assembly, highlighting the importance of the Teresian charism for the Church and the world. Fr. Miguel Márquez, Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites, officially opened the Encounter, reminding everyone that the Order is one family composed of friars, nuns, and seculars.

During the Opening Eucharist, Fr. Miguel invited participants to renew their passion for Christ and allow themselves to be transformed by His love. He

highlighted the phrase: “Proclaim with me the greatness of the Lord, contemplate Him and you will be radiant. How good is the Lord!” (Ps 33), indicating these were the defining words for this encounter.



In his keynote address on the identity of the Secular Carmelite, he emphasized that our identity is not static, nor is it a set of established rules. It is an ‘identity in formation,’ a living and dynamic flame that needs constant updating in the face of the signs of the times. The Teresian Carmel is a single Order

with three branches—nuns, friars, and seculars—equal in dignity and complementary in mission. Looking ahead, the Father General raised several practical

challenges for our communities: *communication* (i.e. learning to listen to one another); *discernment and humility* (we cannot consider ourselves the owners of the truth); *teamwork and Teresian friendship* (we are called to rebuild bonds and assume shared responsibilities where everyone feels valued); *governance as service* (any office must be lived from selflessness and listening, with the freedom to step down when the time comes); *always remaining disciples* (learning throughout our lives how to be docile to the action of the Holy Spirit).

In the afternoon, Linda Levi (Italy) reflected on the sense of belonging and co-responsibility as essential pillars of community life. The following are some of the key points in her presentation: belonging to the OCDS means recognizing that our vocation is a gift received from God and entrusted to our freedom; it is a way that requires fidelity to prayer, to the Promises, and to the Community; it is the ability to preserve the enthusiasm of our ‘first love’. The Community becomes a “theological place,” a space where Christ is present and forms us through fraternity, obedience, dialogue, and concrete charity. Belonging and co-responsibility are, therefore, two in-

separable pillars of OCDS identity. The community is born from the mutual responsibility of each brother and sister toward one another.

After the coffee break, Angela Vel (USA) presented initial and ongoing formation. The goal of formation is to integrate the human, Christian, and Carmelite dimensions of our vocation, helping each member become a mature disciple and a faithful witness of Christ. At the heart of this journey stands the Carmelite charism of prayer: a living relationship with God that leads to contemplation, interior silence, and attentive listening to His Word. For the OCDS, the challenge is clear: to cultivate communities where formation is intentional, faithful, and ongoing, so that every Secular Carmelite may become a living expression of the Teresian charism in the family, the workplace, society, and the Church. The day concluded with a profound Eucharistic Adoration led by Fr. Luis Jorge González. He helped the assembly enter into a moment of intimacy with God, guiding everyone into Saint Teresa’s dynamic of “Mira que te mira” (Look at Him looking at you), allowing ourselves to be loved and enriched by God.

The second day of the World Meeting of the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites was marked by an atmosphere of growing fraternity, joy, and communion among participants from every continent. The day began with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, followed by two inspiring conferences.

The first conference was given by Fr. Alzinir Debastiani, OCD (Brazil), entitled “Pastoral Care for the OCDS.” Fr. Alzinir is well known to all Secular Carmelites, as he served as General Delegate for the Secular Order from 2012 to 2021. He began by expressing his gratitude to his predecessors for their pastoral ministry and accompaniment of the Secular Discalced Carmelites. The purpose of pastoral assistance is to strengthen communion with the Church, with the Order, and among the communities, fostering sound formation, a clear vocational identity, and a genuine sense of belonging. For the OCDS, today’s challenge is to journey together in a synodal way, strengthening collaboration among friars, nuns, and lay members, overcoming isolation, and cultivating ongoing formation that ensures fidelity to the charism.

Afterward, we watched a presentation prepared by our Discalced Carmelite Nuns of Puebla, Mexico, who showed us photographs of the many OCDS communities, wished us a fruitful Meeting, and reminded us that they are praying for us. Manuel Vásquez, OCDS (Ecuador) highlighted the importance of building authentic Teresian communities centered on Christ, prayer, fraternity, and mission. The vocation of the Secular Car-

melite is not lived in isolation. God calls each one of us personally, but He forms us and sends us forth in community. Therefore, the community is not merely a structure or a meeting place; it is the space where our vocation is discerned, matures, and becomes mission. An authentic Teresian community places Christ at its center, lives by prayer, practices forgiveness, cultivates communion, and remains open to mission.

We have not yet spoken about our fraternal lunches—they have truly been a wonderful gift! They provide a more relaxed atmosphere, giving us the opportunity to converse with brothers and sisters from every corner of the world (often with the help of translation apps) and to share not only a meal, but also our experience of Carmelite life.

The afternoon featured the OCDS Cultural Interaction, with traditional songs and dances from Poland, India, Brazil, the Philippines, and Mexico, interwoven with moments of contemplative dance that transformed celebration into prayer. It was a wonderfully joyful moment, filled with laughter and genuine fraternal spirit.

The day concluded with a profound Holy Hour and Eucharistic Adoration, led by Sr. Alexandra Triana, OCD. After the joyful excitement of the cultural performances, it seemed almost unbelievable how naturally everyone entered into profound silence and Eucharistic adoration. It became a time of deep silence, allowing God to speak and enabling us to respond to Him from the depths of our hearts.

The third day of the Meeting has arrived, and it is also the last day we are all together at the Congress Centre, because tomorrow we will divide into different groups to visit several places connected with Saint Teresa!

At this point, we have lost any hesitation in expressing—often without the need for words—our sense of closeness. A simple glance or a small gesture of kindness is enough to recognize the Love that unites us and has called us together. It is impossible to describe the extraordinary joy and peace with which this Meeting is being lived!

At the end of the Eucharist, we watched the presentation prepared by the sisters of the Carmel of the Transfiguration, located in Le Havre, Normandy (France). Through photographs of their monastery and of various communities of Secular Carmelites in France, they shared a glimpse of their life.

The first conference, entitled “Prayer, Fraternity and Communion,” was given by Zinaha Voahanginiana, OCDS, from Madagascar. Zinaha spoke to us about praying in the Teresian way amid the ordinary duties of daily life while living in the world. She reminded us that everyday life is not separate from the spiritual life; on the contrary, it is itself an opportunity for encountering God. Although we often complain about the many distractions that surround us in today’s world—including artificial intelligence—the immense goodness of God allows us to

live our busy lives while caring for us with such loving attention that we often fail even to notice it. She also spoke about the great need to cultivate silence in order to deepen our friendship with the One whom we know loves us. She reminded us that perseverance in Carmel is perseverance in silence and in prayer, something that is often difficult to put into practice. She offered several practical suggestions to help us walk this path more faithfully. One of the strongest points of her conference was the importance of fraternal relationships among all the members of the Carmelite Family—not only among the members of local OCDS communities, but also in the communion shared between Secular Carmelites, the friars, and our Carmelite sisters.

Around one o’clock in the afternoon, Meg Ramos, OCDS (Philippines), offered us an outstanding conference entitled: “Creative Fidelity: The Mission of the OCDS in the Church, the Order, and the World”. Today, the vocation of the Secular Carmelite calls us to a ‘creative fidelity’ that preserves the Teresian charism while embodying it within the real challenges of our own time. Our identity is rooted in prayer, not as simply one more activity on our schedule, but as the foundation that transforms our entire existence: ‘that their whole life may be a prayer, a search for union with God.’ To be a member of the OCDS means overcoming the false division between the sacred and the ordinary, becoming contempla-

tives in the midst of family life, work, and society. Our mission is not activism but witness: bringing the presence of the living God to places where monasteries cannot reach. Within the Order, we demonstrate that the Carmelite charism is not fragile, but fully capable of being lived amid the noise, responsibilities, and pressures of modern life. Within the Church, we place the spiritual riches of Carmel—prayer, contemplation, and friendship with Christ—at the service of evangelization. In the world, we reveal through our lives that God is near, that holiness is possible, and that prayer transforms. After lunch, we listened to the conference “Walking Together Towards the Future”, given by Fr. Ramiro Casale, OCD, General Delegate for the OCDS. We are living in a historic moment in which the OCDS can look back, see the path it has travelled, and recognize how God has bestowed countless graces upon it, guiding its steps until today... It is also a time to look toward the future, knowing that we are responsible for handing on the charism to future generations. The OCDS possesses many strengths: a deeper awareness of its vocational identity, improved initial and ongoing formation, a rich life of prayer, a strong sense of community, and an active witness of faith. It is present on every continent, and there is growing collaboration throughout the entire Carmelite Family. It is the time to look upon the past with grat-

itude, to live the present with fidelity, and to build the future with confidence. The future of the OCDS will depend upon our ability to preserve the fire of our charism and to hand it on, alive, to those who come after us.

After a short coffee break, we continued with a dialogue with Fr Miguel Márquez Calle, OCD, Fr Ramiro Casale, OCD, and Fr Alzinir Debastiani, OCD. They presented the results of the global questionnaire that had been sent out a few months earlier, asking all communities worldwide to reflect together, in a spirit of synodality, on a number of questions. In turn, the three Fathers presented the main conclusions drawn from the responses sent in by OCDS communities from around the world.

We concluded this day with a moving and unforgettable period of Eucharistic Adoration, led by Emilio Luis López and Marisa Camaró, a married couple from the OCDS of Spain, and beautifully accompanied by the inspiring music of Samuel Aranda González, from Valencia, Spain.

And, as if the day had not already been filled with enough gifts, the evening concluded with a Flamenco Celebration at the CITeS Youth Centre: we enjoyed a dinner of traditional Spanish tapas, refreshments, and a performance by a Spanish dance troupe presenting a variety of traditional dances. It was an evening filled with joy, laughter, friendship, celebration and truly unforgettable.

The final day of the OCDS World Meeting was marked by pilgrimages to the principal Teresian sites and concluded with the Closing Eucharistic Celebration in the Cathedral of Ávila.

This morning, we divided into groups to enjoy a wonderful day of pilgrimage to various sites associated with Saint Teresa:

- **ÁVILA:** the Minor Basilica of La Santa (birthplace of Saint Teresa of Jesus), the Monastery of the Incarnation and the Monastery of Saint Joseph (the first Teresian foundation).
- **ALBA DE TORMES:** the tomb of Saint Teresa of Jesus.
- **SEGOVIA:** the tomb of Saint John of the Cross.
- **MEDINA DEL CAMPO AND FONTIVEROS:** the second Teresian foundation and the birthplace of Saint John of the Cross.
- **DURUELO AND SALAMANCA:** the site of the first foundation of the Discalced Carmelites and the seventh Teresian foundation.

It is impossible to relate these pilgrimages in detail. However, having some knowledge of the Secular Carmelite Order and considering everything we have already experienced together, one can imagine just how rich this day was in fraternity and emotion, especially as

we found ourselves in such iconic places that are so dear to each of us.

At 7.00 pm, we gathered in Ávila Cathedral for the closing Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharist was presided over by Bishop Jesús Rico García of Ávila and concelebrated by Bishop Jesús García Burillo, Bishop Emeritus of Ávila, Father Miguel Márquez Calle, OCD, Prior General of the Order; Father Agustí Borrell, OCD, Vicar General of the Order; Father Ramiro Casale, OCD, General Delegate for the OCDS; and all our Discalced Carmelite brothers who accompanied us throughout this World Meeting. The Catholic University of Ávila's choir provided the musical accompaniment for the celebration, performing works inspired by the poems of Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross.

We give thanks to God, to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, to Saint Joseph, and to all the saints of the Carmelite Order. We also extend our deepest gratitude to all those who made this World Meeting possible. We dare not name them one by one, for fear of leaving anyone out. But we can say with certainty that the feeling that filled us as we left the cathedral that evening was, above all, one of immense gratitude, accompanied by a deep desire to share with the whole world everything we have experienced here. THANK YOU!

OFFICIAL BOOKLET OF THE OCDS WORLD MEETING 2026



Here is the link to the booklet containing all the conferences in their original versions:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nao5LykT7-wJ1h_gXNtU-6ENTmr71Tul/view?usp=drive_link

NB: reproduction, translation and printing are the responsibility of each circumscription.

You can also find more photos of the event on the official website:

<https://ocdsavila2026.com/galeria/>