



GENERAL DEFINITORY OF THE DISCALCED CARMELITES
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SEXENNIIUM 2015-2021 – LETTER N° 14

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Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Teresian Carmel:

We send our warm and fraternal greetings at the conclusion of the General Definitory's quarterly meeting which took place in Rome from September 3rd to 13th. The seven definitors were present, Father General presiding.

The life of the Order (friars, nuns, and seculars) continues to move forward in the various regions of the world, characterized by the desire to respond day by day with renewed fidelity to the Lord who has called us to form part of the family of the Teresian Carmel. We joyfully remember recent events such as the Beatification of our sister, Maria Felicia of Jesus of the Blessed Sacrament ("Chiquitunga"), celebrated on June 23rd in Asuncion, Paraguay. At the same time, we pray with Christian hope for our brothers and sisters that have died during these past weeks; among them, we want to remember especially Father Tomas Alvarez, who contributed with his profound and serene wisdom to a better knowledge of the life and work of Teresa of Jesus.

We also bear in mind the severe flooding that occurred a few weeks ago in India, especially in the state of Kerala, where some of our convents were affected, and to a greater extent the region's population. In dialogue with our provinces of that region, we have decided to send some financial assistance to carry out the more urgent repairs and social assistance they are already offering with great generosity.

The main subject matter of our meeting those days was the rereading of the Constitutions which the General Chapter in Ávila set as a priority for the 2015-2021 sexennium. The Definitory met with members of the international committee, who presented the results of the first stage of that project together with some reflections on the development of the process and the responses received. The Definitory thanked the committee for the great job done to date in preparing study guides for the communities as well as collecting and reviewing the responses from the circumscriptions.

Using the material collected and in rich dialogue with the committee, the Definitory prepared the program and fundamental guidelines for the work of the next Extraordinary Definitory which will take place in Goa, India, from February 3rd to 11th, 2019. The meeting announcements have been sent to participants, and over the next few weeks, the *Instrumentum laboris* of the meeting will be prepared. We recall that the primary task the General Chapter set for the Extraordinary Definitory was a decision regarding the text of the Constitutions, for which three possibilities were proposed: to rewrite them; to revise them; and / or redact a charismatic-type statement. We request that circumscriptions that have not yet sent the

summary of the answers to study guide 12 (Evaluation and Proposals), do so before November 30th.

In the meantime, we encourage all friars to continue forward with determination toward a true renewal of our life which is the fundamental objective sought after in the work on the Constitutions. The itinerary followed up to now has allowed many friars to return to a direct contact with the Constitutions and, through personal reflection and dialogue within the community, grow in awareness of the fundamental elements of the Teresian charism and the way in which we are carrying them out in practice.

Another important topic in our dialogues was to follow-up on the different circumscriptions based on information from the definitors in charge of each region. During the past weeks members of the Definitory continued their work, sometimes interspersed with a few days of summer holiday. For example, Father General visited Hungary, Brazil, and Holland; participated in the retreat of European students in Fatima; and celebrated the Teresian jubilee year in Alba de Tormes and Ávila. Father Agustí participated in a formation retreat of Discalced Carmelite nuns in Paris and visited some communities of friars and nuns in Catalonia. Father Łukasz accompanied students in formation for the second novitiate in Salamanca. Father Mariano was in the Philippines during the months of July and August visiting several communities of friars and nuns, occasionally offering reflections on the *Cor orans* instructions. In the community of Jaro, Iloilo City, he made the triennial pastoral visitation at the request of the local bishop.

Father Johannes Gorantla reported on his pastoral visitation to the Province of Malabar, which took place from July 1st to August 28th. It is the oldest province of India and recently has undergone considerable growth in numbers. Currently, it has a total of 181 solemnly professed, of which more than half are less than 50 years old. Additionally, there are 56 with simple professions and 8 novices. There are 29 houses, including the regional vicariate of North Malabar and the Provincial Delegation of Ranchi. It is a large province with a good number of activities. One of the remarkable aspects of this province is its dedication to the specific apostolate of the Order and to the dissemination of our spiritual patrimony, especially through the six centers of spirituality. The province has the Church's largest printing press in India, a large publishing center where one of the editions of the *Osservatore Romano* is printed and several spiritual writings and documents of the Holy See are translated and published.

Based on the analysis of the situation of the province, the Definitory made some recommendations and decisions to prioritize the charismatic identity as Discalced Carmelites in its life and activities. The Definitory ardently recommended that greater attention be given to discernment of the numerous vocations and the quality of initial formation. As for the finances, we observed that there is an urgent need to strengthen the financial autonomy of the houses by encouraging a more decentralized financial administration. Following the recent determinations of the General Definitory regarding members living outside their own territory, the Province is asked to continue its efforts to curtail individual presences. Another important issue about which a decision has to be made is the Regional Vicariate about which arose some doubts. During the upcoming months, Father Johannes will maintain direct contact with the province to help the provincial government in executing the decisions that were made.

Father Daniel Ehigie made a pastoral visitation to the General Delegation of the Congo from August 2nd to 31st. It has 55 religious (40 work in the Delegation, seven serve other circumscriptions, two are pursuing higher education, and six are in diverse situations) and 36 candidates in initial formation. The median age is 46 years. They have seven communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa) and in the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville). The pastoral and social work of the Delegation is noteworthy. There is particular dedication to the apostolates of spirituality, the parish, and schools. In general, the people and local churches are very appreciative of the work. A good part of the energy is invested in formation, taking into account the considerable number of vocations. The visitor recommended that due attention continue to be given in this area; for example, favoring the formation of its own formators and avoiding that they accept other commitments that are incompatible with the work of formation. On the other hand, he highlighted the great number of projects and initiatives underway in the delegation, albeit inviting them not to add to the work and new constructions without adequate discernment. Some houses in the Delegation need improvements and maintenance, which calls for carrying out sound financial management.

The Definitory decided to take the necessary steps to constitute the Delegation of the Congo as a Commissariat. Over the next few months, the corresponding Statutes and decree of erection will be prepared.

For his part, Father Daniel Chowning reported on his stay in Iraq from June 17th to 24th. It was a continuation of his recent pastoral visitation to the Province of Paris. He was able to see first-hand the current, complex realities of the Carmelite presence in the region, which dates back to the year 1623. At this time, there is only one religious, Father Ghadir, as well as Bishop Jean Sleiman (archbishop of the Latin-rite Catholics), some Discalced Carmelite Seculars, and a group of ten consecrated women that make up the private association Our Lady of Mount Carmel. With their efficient help, Father Ghadir divides his work between the monastery in Baghdad and the spirituality center in Duhok (Kurdistan). They provide a valuable spiritual and social service to the Christians remaining in the region despite the harsh persecutions of these times. Fr. Ghadir is also vicar general of the archbishop and oversees the reconstruction of St. Joseph Catholic School. It is an important task to strengthen our presence in Iraq with at least one or two more religious who can consolidate and increase the meritorious work being carried out.

The Definitory heard Father Alzinir Debastiani's account of his visit to the Cities of God, which was requested by the Father General. It is a beautiful, social undertaking born in the Province of Colombia, particularly thanks to the efforts of Father José Arcesio Escobar, that has recently undergone notable growth. At this time, many people and various entities – among which are some religious congregations – collaborate with the project. On the other hand, some of the people involved have expressed the desire to organize themselves into new forms of consecrated life. Without a doubt, we must thank the Lord for this admirable reality that is offering valuable material, human, and religious help to so many people and at the same time ensure that it has the guidance and necessary instruments to provide for a satisfactory future. Along these lines, we will look for a way to establish the most fitting relationship of the Cities of God with the province and the Order, in its organizational and juridical aspects as well as its charismatic aspects.

As is the current practice of the Definitory, we are asking the circumscriptions to send a report about the implementation of the Definitory's instructions one year after their pastoral visitation. The objective is to follow up more directly and help the provincial governments improve the life and apostolic action of the religious. We thank the Province of Colombia and General Delegation to Argentine for the reports we received from them and about which we commented in our meeting. The respective definitors continue maintaining contact with other provinces that have already received their pastoral visitation (Andhra Pradesh, Oklahoma, Portugal, Sicily, Central Italy...).

Together with Father Jérôme Paluku, Secretary General for Missionary Cooperation, the Definitory has kept up an ongoing dialogue with Mrs. Veronique Vogel, head of Kirche in Not (Aid to the Church in Need) for southern Asia. That institution offers economic assistance to Church entities for religious and pastoral projects. Among the current beneficiaries are some of our most needy provinces and monasteries. We expressed our gratitude for the availability and earnestness of the help they offer and reflected with her upon some criteria to keep in mind in order continue our mutual collaboration.

As is the custom, our Bursar General, Father Paolo De Carli, presented the Generalate's current statements of accounts. The economic situation remains stable. We thank the various circumscriptions of the Order for all the contributions we have received, as well as the generosity of several monasteries of nuns. Together with Father Jean-Joseph Bergara, Procurator General, we also analyzed the current situation of the processes under way at the Holy See regarding some friars of the Order.

On a different note, we appointed Father Albert Wach as superior of the Teresianum community (permanent community) for a new triennium; Father Gianni Evangelisti as its bursar; and Father Gustavo Prats as superior of the Seminarium Missionum (community for specialization), as well as the respective first counsellors of those communities and the International College.

Among other issues we face as we look to the future, we remember that 2020 is the year of the first centenary of the death of Saint Teresa of Los Andes, a good occasion to recognize her witness of Carmelite life. The committee formed by the counsel of the Commissariat of Chile and the counsel of the Federation of Discalced Carmelite Nuns has already met to begin preparations for the celebration of the Centenary.

We greet the Discalced Carmelite nuns in a special way as they continue the process of adopting the new guidelines of the Church for contemplative life, also with the help of the Father General. On July 16th, he sent them a long letter presenting the implementing instruction *Cor orans*, and on October 1st, he will present another letter in which he strives to respond to some queries and doubts that have been posed regarding the application of that document.

We finished our meeting at a time in which the Church is at the threshold of the Bishops' Synod on "Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment." We pray that Carmel throughout the world will also know how to be close to the youth to accompany them in their search for God and help them respond to his call.

Fraternally,

Fr. Saverio Cannistrà, General
Fr. Agustí Borrell
Fr. Łukasz Kansy
Fr. Johannes Gorantla
Fr. Daniel Chowning
Fr. Francisco Javier Mena
Fr. Mariano Agruda III
Fr. Daniel Ehigie