

DEFINITORY LETTER

8th June 2014

Very dear brothers and sisters in Carmel:

PEACE.

On 2nd June, before beginning our Definitory, we had a meeting with the O.Carm General Council. During the meeting we finalized various items we had been planning together, and about which we have already informed you.

On the 21st of September, we are celebrating the 400th anniversary of the death in Brussels of Fr Jerome Gracian. Closer to the date, the Generals of both Orders, Frs Saverio and Fernando Millan, will issue a letter for the occasion, which is currently being finalized. To mark the event on the actual anniversary, there will be a Eucharist celebration and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque in the church of the Discalced Carmelite friars in Brussels. There are also plans to visit the Discalced Carmelite nuns in the city, where the remains of the Venerable Anne of Jesus are interred.

The anniversary will be further marked in Madrid by a series of conferences, including a bibliographical presentation, on Fr Gracian in the O.Carm monastery in Ayala de Madrid Street, on 12th and 13th of November. Fr Fernando Millan will preside at a closing Eucharist in the church of St Joseph. (Historically, this church and monastery belonged to the Discalced Carmelite friars before being sold in 1836).

This year also marks the 800th anniversary of the death of Saint Albert, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The occasion will be marked in Rome by days of prayer and study on 10th and 11th October, followed by a celebration of the Eucharist on the 12th, at which the current Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem will preside. After the Mass, those taking part will go to St. Peter's Square and join the Holy Father in reciting the Angelus.

It is the wish of both the OCD and O.Carm General Councils, that on this same day (Oct. 12), a collection be taken up in the monasteries of the friars and nuns of both Orders; the purpose of this is to collect funds for the restoration of the archaeological ruins in the Wadi Es Siah, as well as improving as best we can our property in the valley. Prior to this date, the collection will be officially announced and material will be sent out to help in advertising it.

Before concluding with a fraternal meal, we were advised of the next Latin American meeting of the O.Carm and OCD family in 2015; the topic of this gathering will be, "Saint Teresa: woman, mystic and prophet".

We began our Definitory meeting in the evening. A good deal of time was devoted to studying our situation in the Holy Land. First of all, we wish to let you know that Fr Enrique Castro Yurrita, from the Province of Mexico, is the newly appointed Delegate and Vicar of Fr General in Mount Carmel.

We next paid particular attention to a matter that everyone knows about, the “Stella Maris” project. After various meetings with the Congregation for Oriental Churches, we received a letter inviting us to rethink this whole project. It will be impossible to redevelop it as we had planned up to now; we need to consider a more modest and appropriate alternative, and one that will not pose potential financial difficulties for the Order. We will give more detailed information of the present situation and prospects for the future at the Extraordinary Definitory in Korea.

We also analyzed the situation in Egypt: despite the political and social difficulties, our brothers there continue to forge ahead with excellent work. Vocational prospects are good and the doors remain open for a foundation in the south of the country, where there are a good number of Christian.

The Definitory wishes to thank Fr Jan Malicki and his Council for the work carried out during recent years in the General Delegation of the Congo. Fr Roger Tshimanga is to be appointed as the new Delegate there.

Remaining in Africa, Fr George Tambala informed us of this recent visit to Zambia. There, our missionary friars from the Manjummel Province are continuing to take steps to establish the Order in these lands. The construction of a new monastery with an attached school and hospital is foreseen. There is also a desire, initially expressed and strongly supported by the Bishop, to build a spirituality centre for spreading the Teresian-Carmelite charism, and particularly the teachings of Saint Therese, to whom there is great devotion in the diocese.

In order to prepare for the Extraordinary Definitory, we sent a letter asking collaboration from the Provinces. In it we asked our friars – with sisters also included – to share their ideas relative to the agenda of the 2015 General Chapter, and so enable us to better set an agenda with topics of interest for everyone. Unfortunately we received very few replies. We understand that many circumscriptions have had their Chapters at this time and have found it difficult to fit in this issue. However, we wish to emphasize our desire to be open to all types of reflection and favour a more collegial and democratic Government; but without your voice and your cooperation it is very difficult to do so.

We are very grateful for the collaboration of the brothers and sisters who sent their replies, and which we studied during this meeting. We pass on to you that there was a general consensus about deepening reflection in the Order on community, along the lines discussed in the previous Extraordinary Definitory. Other more specific, individual issues, that were suggested to us, we are working on for presentation in Korea and the General Chapter, if applicable.

During these days we were joined by the Provincials of the five Spanish Provinces that voted in favour of forming themselves into one new province, viz., Andalusia, Aragon-Valencia, Burgos, Castile and Catalonia Balears. Besides meeting between themselves, they also had a meeting with Fr General and the Definitory in charge of this geographical area, Fr Emilio Jose Martinez, before meeting with the whole Definitory.

These meetings made it clear that the process of creating a new Province is already irreversible in view of the results of the votes in the Chapters and the previous basic consultations that have taken place. As a result, the discussions centred on determining the how and when of unification. Given that the majority of the Provincials favoured holding the Chapter as soon as possible, the Definitory approved the issuing of the Decree creating the new Province (see Constitutions 145; Norms 151) and convoking the extraordinary Chapter for it (see Norms 153); details will be communicated to all concerned as soon as possible.

Our desire is that the Holy Spirit of Pentecost be your companion, enlighten you, and bless all your lives, for which we thank God. Your brothers in the Carmel of Teresa, Mary and Joseph.

Praise be to God and the Virgin Mary

Fr Saverio Cannistrà, Superior General

Fr Emilio J. Martínez

Fr Albert Wach

Fr Augustine Mulloor

Fr Robert Paul

Fr Marcos Juchem

Fr George Tambala

Fr John Grennan