

**EXTRAORDINARY DEFINITORY**  
**4th – 12th OCTOBER 2005**  
**SANTIAGO, CHILE**

**REPORT BY FR. NICHOLAS GARCIA, DEFINITOR FOR LATIN AMERICA**

OUR PRESENCE TODAY IN LATIN AMERICA

This report is based on my pastoral visits to 11 circumscriptions that make up 17 of the 20 Latin American countries where we are present (Fr. General visited the Mexican Province; as yet, I have not visited Columbia or Ecuador).

**1. CICLA**

My first duty as Definitory was to attend the General Assembly of the CICLA (Teresian-Carmelite Interregional Conference) for Latin America. At this Assembly we fully planned the first three years of the sexennium and partly planned the last three. I would like to stress that each time we meet more members of the Carmelite family become involved. The planned activities are the following:

**At the Latin American level:**

- a. 2 General Assemblies of major religious superiors **–triennial –**
- b. 2 Congresses of spirituality **–triennial-** (the first was for friars only but recently it has been opened up to the Carmelite family)
- c. 2 Meetings of Religious Sisters **–triennial-**
- d. 2 Courses on formation for formators **–triennial-**
- e. 2 Meetings of parish priests **–triennial-**
- f. 2 Congresses O.Carm-OCD **–triennial-**
- g.

**At a regional level, in each regional CICLA (North, Bolivian and South):**

- h. Annual meeting of the major religious superiors
- i. 2 meetings (living and studying together) in each CICLA region, for formators **–triennial-**
- j. 2 meetings in each CICLA region for friars and nuns **–triennial-**

**2. Contrasts and differences**

Latin America has been called the “Continent of hope”. I believe it is. I see it also as a Continent of contrasts and diversity, on every level, in the church as well as in Carmel. To try and say something that applies equally to all our circumscriptions is more than difficult, I believe it is impossible, nevertheless I intend to present some aspects of our presence in 20 Latin American countries.

**3. Vocations and formation**

It is clear that there is no shortage of vocations and the level of perseverance has improved, though not always in the same ratio. Although much is said about the instability of young people I can say that, in Latin America, the differences that are to be found in different areas are in direct proportion to the steps taken to improve formation, such as: a better welcome and accompaniment, the implementation of a local “Ratio” with criteria for acceptance and discernment, an improved non-academic formation, in other words, Teresian-Carmelite. Another

factor regarding formation programmes is that a few years ago in many circumscriptions - though not all - there was a shift in the formation process, that principally involved introducing philosophy before the novitiate (there are differences in the length of time and in numbers). The rationale being to use this time, while the young people are studying and experiencing our way of life, to give them a chance to overcome their shortcomings in their human, Christian and vocational development.

#### **4. Teresian-Carmelite Life**

In general the communities are small (2 or 3 friars) and with much work to do (personal and community). The following are the main situations of our communities find themselves involved in: the Parish apostolate; various groups and movements; a new situation within families where both parents work and the children study. All this involves working in the evenings and at night... this situation frequently creates difficulties for living a regular community life and, in the long run, produces tensions, problems, difficulties, tiredness..., eventually leading to the omission of some community acts.

However, that said, there is a clear tendency to revive community life and the team-ministry. The animation of the Provincial and the Order's dynamic have influenced this, in an important way; moreover the new generation greatly appreciate the value of community life and our charism and spirituality. The number of communities that plan and put into action a "community project" is increasing all the time.

#### **5. Pastoral activity**

Pastoral work, from an ecclesial viewpoint, is a very positive aspect, recognized by the faithful and bishops. Devotion to our Lady of Mt. Carmel, the scapular and our saints is popular throughout Latin America. The traditional Carmelite pastoral activity has been enriched by initiatives in our parish apostolate, in social pastoral activity and more recently with pastoral spirituality (centres and institutions of spirituality, retreat houses, houses of prayer, courses on prayer, prayer groups, the diffusion of books and written material, the carmelization of our parishes,...)

#### **6. Discalced Carmelite Nuns**

Every three years there is a meeting between the friars and nuns on a regional CICLA level. Relations between the two are very good and there is mutual collaboration. Some of our vocations come from the mediation of our sisters. Two convents of the 1990 Constitutions (Rio Grande and Pelotas) in South Brazil have recently passed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> way; i.e., they now accept the authority of the General while keeping the 1990 Constitutions.

#### **7. Secular Order**

The Secular Order in Latin America is a clear example of the contrast and diversity of our presence: there are 2 countries where there is no presence and 15 that have between 1 and 10 groups, two that have between 10 and 20 and one with 103 (according to the data in the 2003 Conspectus). There is a noticeable and growing interest by the laity who come to our houses - and the Carmelite Family - in the Secular Order. There are a good number of groups in formation. Without doubt the recent Congresses of the OCDS and their new Constitutions have had an influence.

#### **8. Relations with the O.Carms**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1993 the General Governments constituted a O.Carm-OCD Joint Commission for Latin America. In May 2005 the two General Definitories approved the Statutes for a new Joint Commission called ALACAR (Carmelite Association of Latin America). One of the first fruits of ALACAR is the organization of a Congress on the Rule of St Albert of Jerusalem to be held in

Mexico from the 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> October 2006; this in preparation for the jubilee in 2007 of the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rule. The Commission has prepared material which it has already sent to the Major Religious Superiors of CICLA in preparation for the Congress.

### **9. Aims of the CICLA Region**

Besides the desire to restructure our presences, other aims of our region were taken up at the 2003 General Assembly:

- Maintain and improve communication and collaboration between all the circumscriptions (we studied and took decisions in the General Assemblies and at regional meetings).
- Maintain and improve communication, collaboration, formation, integration,...of the various groups that go to make up our presence: formators, formation candidates, religious brothers, pastors and specialists in spirituality, parish priests, friars and nuns, OCDS, youth ministers.
- Continue relations and collaboration with the O.Carms.