

PERSPECTIVES ON N.G.O. CONNECTION WITH THE U.N

P. John Sullivan

The association that our Order as such, as a world-wide entity, enjoys with the United Nations through recognition by its Department of Public Information establishes us as an N.G.O. (Non-Governmental Organization) of international status.

This association offers access to contacts, flow of information, and chances to make our presence known within the world body that is the U. N. It also asks of us distribution to our membership of knowledge about the goals and projects of the U. N. organization on international, regional, national, and local levels.

Actualization of the relationships established by our recognition as a global N.G.O. does not lead directly to grants of monetary assistance, but it does provide links to bodies in or related with the U. N. that can bring some benefits to the Order.

Through extension and maintenance of contacts with them we can make our activities known more effectively, and we can learn of opportunities beneficial to Discalced Carmelite initiatives.

What can transpire through the efforts of our Order-wide representation does not either replace or take away from local or regional N.G.O.s that OCDs have created in various locations around the world. Nor does the connection we have with the U.N. gain access for separate OCD groups to local or national N.G.O. status—they must arrange for that through the appropriate channels in their own areas. The good offices of our First Representative (Fr. John Sullivan) either by periodic visits to U.N. headquarters in New York or to allied headquarters/representations to the U.N. can be called into play as supportive assistance.

Furthermore, we as an N.G.O. can enter into coalition-like relationships, especially with Catholic faith-based agencies such as Caritas Internationalis, by interaction with them which could very well redound to our own future mutual benefit.

Now that representation has been assured for the past 21 months by a locally placed religious (that is, a member of the eastern American province), it is time to envision some steps that ought usefully to be taken to deepen the association the Order has had as an N.G.O. accredited with the U.N.'s Department of Public Information (D.P.I.) since 2001.

First, the representative ought, with the assistance of the nun at the Carmel of Port Tobacco who helped devise it, develop further the web page for the N.G.O. that provides as many Discalced Carmelites as have access to the internet news items of interest from the U.N. to the Order's members and bodies.

Second, information about activities already accomplished by us in our interplay with the U.N. ought to be listed for the record so as to raise awareness of the outreach the Order already has as an N.G.O.

Third, the First Representative should solicit from provincial and circumscription superiors (beginning, especially, by listening to those present at this session of the Extraordinary Definitory in Chile) ideas, suggestions, descriptions of activities underway and, possibly, avenues of assistance that they think he can clarify for them.

Fourth, work toward having the Second Representative (P. Dámaso Zuazua) function as a contact person at the Curia in Rome and act as a permanent channel of information to the First Representative so he can focus his interventions by factual data.

Fifth, without forming a standing office in New York, the General administration should provide an annual budgetary allotment so the First Representative can do travel, communications, and organizational work between his place of residence (at the Washington Monastery) and New York, or Rome, or any other places important for his activities.

Sixth, the First Representative should continue contacts of solidarity with other Catholic N.G.O.s and agencies like the ones already made with Caritas Internationalis, Franciscans International, VIVAT (Society of the Divine Word), the associated group of religious institutes at the U.N. or "R.U.N.", and the Vatican's Permanent Mission to the U.N.

Seventh, over time the members of the General Administration, and/or Discalced Carmelite specialists in fields that the U.N. has interest in, ought to try to attend N.G.O. meetings like the annual Conference at U.N. General Headquarters just before the General Assembly opens in September, or regional meetings that cover any of the four interest areas we chose when we applied for N.G.O. status, namely, Human Rights, Migration, Indigenous Peoples, and Religion.

Eighth, further N.G.O. contacts at the U.N. might plant the seeds of a future Justice and Peace "desk" in the Curia in Rome to animate awareness and activities for the Order in that field.

This report is the fruit, in part, of a day's visit by Father General and Father John Sullivan to U.N. headquarters and to the N.G.O. office of Caritas Internationalis in New York on 10 June 2005. The time spent there deepened our ongoing discernment of the entire Order's role, as Order, in the pursuit of an N.G.O. status beneficial and fruitful both to ourselves and to the humanitarian goals of the U.N. Through efforts at solidarity, interdependence, and cooperation we go on hoping for gradual growth in the relationships already formed as we face the future with its challenges. In a way, the report has drawn on an image borrowed from the latest meeting for Consecrated Life held in Rome this past winter: the Samaritan Woman and the Good Samaritan. Jesus called her to "worship in spirit and in truth" and thus our Holy Mother St. Teresa saw in her a symbol of prayerful commitment. The Good Samaritan was the model chosen by Jesus to challenge us to compassionate living for those in dire need. Both prayerful commitment and compassionate service are important to us as Discalced Carmelites, and these functions of our vocation can be promoted by careful investment in the commitment we have taken by asking for N.G.O. status at the U.N. May the Lord bless the work.