

## **Message from the Extraordinary Definitory (3-12 October 2005, Santiago, Chile)**

***"Called to maintain the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3)***

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

The Provincials and other Superiors of the Different circumscriptions of our Order, meeting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of October as the Extraordinary Definitory along with Father General and his Definitors in Santiago, Chile, send fraternal greetings to the brothers and sisters of the Teresian Carmel.

### ***An Experience of Communion***

The Extraordinary Definitory had Saint Teresa of Jesus of the Andes as its patroness: she is a witness of hope for the people of Chile and also for our world as it seeks meaning from life.

On Sunday the 9<sup>th</sup> of October we were glad to join with numerous pilgrims at the Shrine of our sister Teresa of the Andes. Father General presided at the Eucharist. We also visited the Carmelite Nuns of the Monastery near the Shrine, sharing with them our hopes and we were grateful for the warm welcome they gave us.

Our meeting was marked by an intense experience of communion within the Order. It is precisely to this theme that the participants devote their reflection and their work.

### ***The Challenge of Growing in Communion***

With the Church, our Order is called to live out and give increasing witness to communion, in order to be a sign of participation in the human community within the Trinitarian Communion (VC, 41). This experience of communion with God and with each other is a priority goal of this sexennium (see Fr. General's Report, 4 October 2005).

This communion is rooted in the unity and plurality that embraces the historical, geographic, socio-cultural, and religious diversity of our circumscriptions and in them we live it out. This confirms the richness of the Carmelite family.

A clear Carmelite-teresian identity is the starting point for being able to enrich each other in our communion and for strengthening our mission. Communion in Christian and Religious life is a gift of the Spirit before being something that we have created, as it derives its origin from the love of God spread abroad by the Spirit (see CIVCSVA, *Fraternal Life in Community*, 8).

Christian communion flows from a relationship of friendship with God with us and of our relationship with God in Jesus Christ. Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross teach us that true experience of God may not be separated from an experience of the dignity of the human person, because "whoever does not love another whom he sees can not love God who remains unseen" (1 Jn 4:20)

### ***Subsidiarity and Co-responsibility for Communion***

For today's world our consecrated life is called to be a sign of God's concerned and freeing love for His people as it travels through history and is subject to current trials. This plays itself out, as the Church tells us, in a preferential option for the poor and by promoting justice (VC, 82).

While we based ourselves in the mystery of the complete gratuitousness of the gift of God and the free responsibility of the human person on both the individual and community levels, we conducted a reflection about two questions. The first was the spiritual leadership in our circumscriptions of the Provincial and his Councilors. The second concerned departures from our Order, especially the way friars who had recently made their solemn profession, or were just ordained priests, or even had reached twenty years of priestly ministry, then left us.

Regarding the first topic we would underscore the importance of (the principle of) subsidiarity and of co-responsibility with the circumscriptions. The Provincial, as bond of communion, is asked to function as the memory of the identity each of the friars is called to live out. Seen in this light, the service of authority will then be a service of love, operating with evangelical wisdom (see Constitutions, 143: CIC 618-619; PC, 14). Likewise we regard highly collaboration among the provinces, according to modalities that respect the actual situations found in the various regions of the Order.

Regarding the second topic, we took into consideration how much the difficulties burdening our friars evoke the problem of the structuring and transformation of the person growing with his vocation to the consecrated life. This led us to place formation foremost among our preoccupations. Formation remains present to the religious life in all its phases. It requires of us ever-renewed discernment of our living following of Christ, in accord with the demands of both personal freedom and responsibility lived out within the community.

Flowing from the reflections we made, we would exhort the Order to pursue efforts at permanent formation as a priority matter. This should derive from a sense of Gospel abnegation, and bases itself on a "vocational culture", which should be a continuous renewal of the calling that God extends to each of us through Christ throughout our life.

### ***Convictions and Orientations***

At the end of this Extraordinary Definitory we leave Chiles with the following convictions which lead us with renewed attitudes of commitment in our consecrated lives within the Teresian Carmel:

1. To nourish love for Jesus Christ from a "vocational culture", so as to follow Him through life's changing phases wherein he continues being the fundamental option of our consecrated life.
2. Give priority to prayer so as to attain a contemplative attitude that leads us to discover God in all things and to live out this life of prayer in all our ministries.
3. We ought to favor personal prayer and fraternal communication of the experience of God in our communities so as to help us all mutually to be faithful to our vocation and our mission. The loving knowledge of our Saints, especially Saint Teresa of Jesus and Saint John of the Cross, will particularly contribute to a vital deepening of our identity and to the inculturated sharing of our Teresian charism.
4. The need to continue to favor communion in the Order on all levels, with respect for unity in diversity taken to be a fruit of God's presence.
5. As an expression of communion we ought to be open to collaborate at promoting vocations, at expanding and consolidating the Order, for initial and permanent formation, in economic matters, and at confronting the challenges of each region.
6. As members of the Church we renew our missionary commitment for the building up of the Kingdom, a Kingdom based on justice and truth and commencing with a preferential option for the poor which helps us to be poor.
7. Following upon the General Chapter of Avila (2003) we want to make our communities welcoming places of brother-, sisterhood in all phases of our life. To accomplish this we need to use such useful means as favoring periodic meetings among our friars. At the same time we will "develop communion between different houses and evangelical friendship among individual

members" (see Chapter Document, "Journeying with St. Teresa of Jesus and St. John of the Cross, 59).

8. Aware of the diverse situations involved in vocational crises in consecrated life around the world, we will seek, region-by-region, the means needed for discernment and ways of helping our friars with understanding and charity.

9. To prepare on an Order-wide and on the Province level our celebration of the Centenary of Bl. Elizabeth of the Trinity, so as to rediscover and live the Trinitarian Communion which is the source and summit of our communion.

Like the Apostles, praying with Mary Mother of Jesus (Acts 1:14) we wish to express our gratitude to the Vicariate of Chile, to our sisters the Discalced Carmelite Nuns, to the Secular Order, and to the entire Carmelite family. We reaffirm our communion with all our sisters and brothers around the world.