



CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI
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Rome, December 18, 2022

Dear brothers and sisters of the Secular Carmelite Order, delegates and assistants to the OCDS communities,

I greet you all with great joy in this season of Advent in which we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord. As you know, since October 2021, we are living a time of reflection, in which the Church invites us to walk together in the spirit of synodality. This period will close with the XVI Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023.

In his apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis presents a Church which "goes forth" (n. 24), a missionary and evangelizing Church. And we ask ourselves: How can we be this kind of Church from our Carmelite reality? How can we be missionaries and evangelizers in our world today?

Our personal and community reflection helps us "to scrutinize in depth the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel" (*Gaudium Spes* 4). What does God tell us in what happens in the world and in our own lives? How can we be witnesses of God's love and make Him present in a world that is hungry for a deep spiritual experience? How can we walk together in communion with the whole Church and with the world? The answers to these questions can only be given by putting into practice the necessary elements of synodality such as prayer, reading Holy Scripture, listening to one another, dialogue and community discernment.

The origin of the Order of Carmel is in itself synodal. It is interesting to note that its foundation is not from one person, but from a community. Saint Albert of Jerusalem addresses Brother B. and the other brothers who lived on Mount Carmel saying, "It is to me, however, that you have come for a rule of life in keeping with your avowed purpose, a rule you may hold fast to henceforward" (*Rule* 3). Our avowed purpose, i.e., the union with God, the life of fraternity and of love and service to the Church, unites us and invites us to walk together with Jesus and with our brothers and sisters. Saint

Teresa of Avila says, "Let us walk together, Lord" (CV 26,6). Jesus is always present and walks before us, He is the center of our communities (C = *OCDS Const.* 10; 24a).

As friars, nuns and secular Carmelites, we share the same charism each one living it according to his or her "state of life" (C 1), but not in an isolated way but in communion and collaboration with each other. As we walk together with Jesus and the brothers and sisters, we find great companions on the road, such as the Virgin Mary (C 4), Saint Joseph (C 31), the prophet Elijah (C 5), Saint Teresa of Jesus (C 7), Saint John of the Cross (C 8), and others. Let us be taught by them who have had a profound spiritual experience and have walked together in communion with God and with others. Let us continue to contribute to this synodal reflection as the Holy Spirit guides us and let us try to be "light" (Mt. 5:14) for one another.

As we journey together, our Order of the Discalced Carmelites invites us to prepare to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Saint Therese of Lisieux (2023), and the centenaries of her beatification (2023) and canonization (2025). For this reason, formation material has been prepared that will be gradually published on the Order's website: carmelitaniscalzi.com. The first reading guides are already available. Let us participate and let Therese of Lisieux help us in our personal and community reflection.

I also invite you to read the letter that our Father General, Miguel Márquez Calle, OCD, has sent to the entire Order on the occasion of the Solemnity of Saint John of the Cross. You can also find it on the website of the Order already mentioned.

In this first year as general delegate for the Secular Order, I have had the opportunity to share many special moments with many of you. It is a great joy for me to realize that, in all the places where we have been together, I have found committed, joyful and dynamic Secular Carmelites, who love their vocation of love and service in the Church. I have heard many say, "Being a Secular Carmelite has changed my life." And I can tell you that because you are Secular Carmelites, you also change life in your immediate environment and in the world, since those who live in union and in communion with God make Him present wherever they are.

Section III of the OCDS constitutions is entitled "Witnesses to the experience of God." A witness is someone who has personally experienced something, who knows it from experience. Let us continue walking together experiencing God's love and mercy so that we can truly be God's witnesses in the world. I leave you two questions for our reflection. We are invited to "walk together" with all the members of the Church and with the whole world. So, How do we walk together in the Secular Order of the Discalced Carmelites? and, What does the Secular Carmelites have to say to the Church and to the world today?

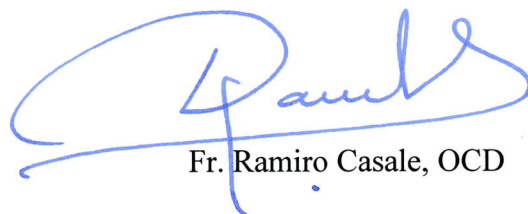
I want to thank all the delegates and spiritual assistants who accompany the communities of the Secular Order. The purpose of their spiritual assistance, as defined by the *Guide for Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites by the Discalced Carmelite Friars*, is to “foster communion with the Church and with the Discalced Carmelite Order through witness and sharing of Carmelite spirituality, to cooperate in initial and on-going formation of Secular Discalced Carmelites and to express the relationship that exists between the religious and the seculars” (art. 3.3). I want you to know that all of us in the Order are very grateful for your dedication and help. We thank God for each one of you and deeply appreciate your presence in our lives.

Likewise, I thank the Discalced Carmelite Nuns who collaborate with the communities of Secular Order and who allow them to meet in their monasteries. I have realized that there is a true relationship of fraternity and collaboration, where love for each other and the presence of Jesus are manifested. Thank you for your generosity that we appreciate with all our hearts.

Let's also keep walking together towards Christmas. Let us not be afraid, the Lord is near: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). Jesus is alive in us and in the world and He will never abandon us.

I hope that this season of Advent helps you all to grow in your friendship with Jesus and that the peace and love of God fill your hearts this Christmas and give you the strength to follow and love Him all the days of your life.

United always in prayer, fraternally,


Fr. Ramiro Casale, OCD

General Delegate for the Secular Order

of the Discalced Carmelites.

