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ÍNDICE:

- "Love speaks all languages and cultures"
- Armed robbers attack Carmelite Student House in Bukabu (Congo)
- Editorial House 'Espiritualidad' publishes two volumes of special articles by Fr. Jesús Castellano on Eastern and Western Spirituality
- Fr. Finian: "With admirable equilibrium, he led the Order towards the path of renewal indicated by Second Vatican Council"
- Mourning in the General House

Visit of Fr. Marcos Jurchem, General Definitior, to Cairo

"Love speaks all languages and cultures"

Cairo (Egypt), 30 June 2010 (Communications). - The Basilica of St. Teresita here in Cairo was built in 1930. It is very imposing in modern Byzantine style with Arabic-Egyptian ornamentation. The monastery is also very big and was constructed in 1939. It served as a stop-over for missionaries on their way further east.

There is only one underground station, called Saint Therese, situated very near our monastery. This is truly an astonishing mystery and goes to show that love speaks all languages and cultures.

There is a constant stream of visitors to the Basilica. In proportion to the number of Christians in the population this is remarkable, but many of these visitors are Muslims. Among Muslims, ladies are expected to be hidden; they hold no prominent place in the Arabic-Muslim culture. There are no examples or figures of important women. Insofar as I could see, a lot of women visit the Basilica and, while their husbands accompany them, it is the women who approach the statue of St. Therese in the crypt. They touch the protection glass, kiss it and say their prayers. In many parts of the Basilica we find small thanksgiving cards to Teresita, in 26 different languages, witness to the universality of the Saint.

Since so many honour the statue of St. Therese, I said to Brother Patrick that it would be interesting to display a written request of the Saint: "I appreciate your visit, but my greater friend, Jesus, present in the Eucharist, also awaits your visit. Thank you."

Here in Egypt the Carmelites run two small hospitals, one in Cairo, another in Alexandria. Huge crowds attend, with 10,000 consultations and between 500 and 600 operations a month, in Cairo alone. It is a miracle how they can cope with so many patients. There are a total of 90 staff and 70 doctors. Support and maintenance come from what the people can afford to pay. There is no government aid whatsoever. Medical and surgical equipment are gifts from European countries, like France, Germany, Italy, Spain... At the moment there is urgent need of new X-ray apparatus at a cost of 500,000 dollars! Sts. Joseph and Therese must continue to work their miracles.

At this time of the year the heat is overpowering and the hot desert wind burns your skin. People, especially ladies, believe that clothes afford protection from the heat so they wear quite a lot of garments. They have only an inch-opening in their face covering and can hardly see where they are going. The city of Cairo has a population of 22 million. Traffic crowds the streets and avenues and the small lateral streets have a lot of rubbish, as in many cities. I have seen many cats around, but no dogs. It only rains about once a year – just as well because there would be an inundation of insects. We visited one slum where most of the inhabitants are Orthodox or Coptic Christians, living in great poverty. While we admire some of the great monuments of Egypt, the Pyramids, churches and mosques, we might say that we have here a living monument to poverty – people. We can visit many Christian churches, hewn from the rocks. In some buildings, again as in other great cities, we have animals being kept among human inhabitants – goats, sheep, chickens and ducks.. You have mosques everywhere, with their minarets and amplified calls to prayer. In times past, without the amplifiers, they would have been far more appealing and sonorous.

We visited one of the street markets this morning. They have some beautiful, high quality, works of art. I bought some alabaster perfume, reminding me of the Gospel passage of Our Lord and Mary. There are all sorts of exotic perfumes for sale, - lotus flower, papyrus etc.

We visited the Pyramids of Gize, near Cairo, 5000 years old, enveloped in the mystery of man's belief in life after death. Nowadays, men are only interested in the present, fearful even to consider a future existence.

We also paid a visit to Mount Sinai or Horeb, about 450 Kilometres from Cairo, an 8-hour journey. At the foot of Sinai we have St. Catherine's Orthodox monastery at 2,500 feet from sea-level. We climbed the Mount at 2 in the morning, some 4,500 feet, as Sinai itself is 7,000 feet above sea-level. It took us 4 hours in a biting wind. We had to hire blankets to keep ourselves warm and wait for sunrise at 6.30. We recited our Morning Prayer, had a cup of tea and made our descent. We were part of a group of 250 people. We could have hired camels for the climb, but being young, preferred to go on foot. It did take its toll on tired limbs, however, and it makes you wonder how the natives adapt to living in the desert with its rocks and sand. The whole Sinai Peninsula is desert. The Suez Canal is spectacular and you get the impression that the ships in it are sailing along over the desert sands! The River Nile is the salvation of Egypt and its rich banks are cultivated without the help of any modern machinery.

On 29 June, St. Peter and Paul, the noviciate year began in the Shubra Community of Cairo. There are 10 members in the community, with a Postulant, one Novice and one simply Professed. There is a small Centre of Spirituality attached to the monastery and it is being upgraded at the moment.

A number of Religious injured

Armed robbers attack Carmelite Student House in Bukavu

Bukavu (R.D. Congo), 21 June 2010 (Communicationes). – An attack by armed men was launched against the Theological Seminary of St. John of the Cross in Bukavu in the early hours of Sunday 20 June. Given its ferocity we are fortunate not to have to report fatalities.

At about 1 o'clock in the morning a group of armed men in uniform invaded the seminary grounds. They tied up the two watchmen and forced the door leading to the friars' rooms.

Some of the gang forced the brothers into one room, while another forced the door of one of the Fathers and demanded to know where the Superior resided. They stole the mobile phone, computer and all the money they found in this room. They then moved to another room and stole a phone and computer, while continuing to demand where the Superior and Bursar had their rooms.

In the meantime the Superior had jumped from a window into the garden. The gang succeeded in discovering his apartment and stole everything possible, including furniture and money. The two Fathers who had refused to disclose information were given death threats but were eventually spared serious injury. The Bursar had also managed to jump from a window and called a police acquaintance but help did not arrive for another hour

The Superior and community are deeply shocked. We have learned that three of our students were injured, none seriously. Two had slight injuries, while a third with a serious wound, had to be treated in hospital.

Only 9 months previously, in October 2009, the same Fr. Superior escaped from another armed attack and only the prompt intervention of the community watchman averted serious consequences on that occasion.

‘Espiritualidad’ Publications

Editorial House ‘Espiritualidad’ publishes 2 volumes of special articles by Fr. Jesús Castellano on Eastern and Western Spirituality

Madrid, 15 June 2010 (Communicationes). On the 4th anniversary of his death, ‘Espiritualidad’ has issued a 2-volume collection of the more significant articles of Fr. Jesús, published in its pages over the past 30 years.

Under the titles “Western Spirituality. Christian Mysticism” and “Eastern Spirituality. Orthodox Mysticism”, with obvious reference to the thinking of Pope John Paul II, these volumes offer an interesting rapprochement between Carmelite Spirituality and openings for dialogue between Eastern Christian Spirituality and Teresian Carmel.

The volume “Western Spirituality” is dedicated to Carmelite Mysticism. It has two studies on the “Mansions” of St. Teresa and two others on the Spirituality of St. John of the Cross. An article on the ecclesial significance of the Doctorate of St. Therese was not published originally by ‘Espiritualidad’ but is included here due to its obvious connection with the general theme.

On the other hand, the volume entitled “Eastern Spirituality” presents a collection of the more outstanding articles by Fr. Jesús on the Christian East, already published in ‘Espiritualidad’. It includes a study on the Fathers of the Church and another on “Teresian Carmel and Orthodox Spirituality”.

“Vocation and love for the Church”

Fr. Castellano was born in Villar del Arzobispo (Valencia, Spain) in 1941 and was a member of the Carmelite Order from 1957 until his sudden death in 2006. He completed his theological studies in the Teresianum and was a Professor there from the early seventies. For many years he was a Consulter for the following Congregations:- Doctrine of the Faith; the Causes of Saints; the Propagation of Faith; the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life; Catholic Education; Seminaries and Institutes of Higher Studies. He was also a member of

the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Holy Father, the Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Commission for Eucharistic Congresses.

Added to all these demanding engagements, Fr. Jesús carried on a full programme of research and teaching, lecturing on Theology and Spirituality. He made valuable contributions on such varied themes as the Eucharist, Sacraments, Liturgy Mariology, Spiritual Theology, Prayer, Consecrated Life, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Therese of Lisieux and general Carmelite Spirituality.

He died in Rome on 15 June 2006.

Letters of condolence at death of Fr. Finian

“With admirable equilibrium, he led the Order towards the path of renewal indicated by the Second Vatican Council”

Ireland, 9 June 2010 (Communicationes). At midday, 9 June, the Funeral Mass of Fr. Finian Monahan, who had died on 5 June, was celebrated in the Carmelite Abbey, Loughrea, Ireland.

A congregation of over 200, including representatives of Carmelite Nuns, assisted at the funeral celebrations. Fr. Jim Noonan, Provincial of the Anglo-Irish Province, presided. There were over 30 concelebrants at the Mass, mostly from our Carmelite houses of Ireland and England. Three Bishops also took part:- Mons. Kirby of the local Clonfert Diocese, Mons. Kelly of Arconry, a relation and close friend of Fr. Finian’s, and our own Carmelite Bishop, Philip Boyce.

At the beginning of the Mass, Fr. John Grennan, Definitor General, read a message of condolence from Fr. General. In his letter Fr. General expressed his appreciation and gratitude for Fr. Finian’s life, spent so generously in the service of the Order. He said that the years Fr. Finian was General “were particularly turbulent and difficult in the early seventies”. Despite this, with admirable equilibrium, he had led the Order towards the path of renewal indicated by the Second Vatican Council”. Fr. Saverio also referred to Fr. Finian’s “deep understanding of the Teresian charisma, combined with his ability to interpret this in the light of a renewed and enriched consciousness of the Church. From heaven he will continue to watch over his family that it may continue on its journey of fidelity and renewal with energy and confidence”.

Bishop Philip Boyce delivered the homily referring to Fr. Finian’s love for the Eucharist and the promise of eternal life for those who received it. He thought it providential that our deceased General had been called from this life on the eve of Corpus Christi.

At the conclusion of the Eucharist Fr. Finian’s coffin was carried to the nearby Carmelite cemetery. The poignant notes of a lonely bagpipe sounded as he was laid to rest alongside his brother, Fr. Phelim OCD, who had died five years earlier. The assembled Carmelites then sang the Salve Regina.

Renewal of the Constitutions

One of the greatest achievements of Fr. Finian as General, and one for which he will undoubtedly be remembered in the history of the Order, was the laborious renewal of the legislation for both our Friars and Nuns that followed Vatican II and the Special General Chapter of 1968.

In his letter of sympathy to Fr. General on June 7, Fr. Camillo Maccise made special reference to “the tact, intelligence and prudence” demonstrated throughout this undertaking. “As Superior General he began the process of renewal of the Constitutions of the whole Carmelite family”. Fr. Camillo continues: “I had known him from my student days in the International College and always admired his extraordinary capacity and flexibility in the interpretation of laws, even before Vatican II, plus his sound common sense and his humane appreciation of the complexities of varying circumstances. He also had a great sense of humour”, recalls Fr. Maccise.

Fr. Felipe Sainz de Baranda, who was Vicar General while Fr. Finian was General, also addressed a letter of sympathy to the General House. With reference to the renewal of the Constitutions Fr. Felipe writes of:- “Fr. Finian’s service to the Order, his personal work during the period of consultation and dialogue with communities and throughout the eventual drafting of the definitive text. The resulting text stressed the essentials, favoured freedom and co-responsibility and affirmed the Teresian charisma. In his preparation of the Declarations he clearly demonstrated his theological and juridical expertise with his vision for the future of religious life, and particularly, the life of Discalced Carmelite Nuns.” Fr. Philip concludes:- “I do not know what I admire most: his generosity or his nobility and freedom of spirit.....I still see him smiling and calm, balanced and down to earth, extremely prudent and gentle”.

Fr. Luis Aróstegui expressed similar sentiments in his letter of sympathy to the Provincial of the Anglo-Irish Province. Fr. Luis speaks of “the intelligence, the equilibrium, the common sense and deep spirituality” of Fr. Finian and defines him as “a man with a deep love of the Church and our Order”. “He was a providential figure in the difficult years after the Council, especially for the renewal of the Constitutions”, concludes Fr. Aróstegui.

Death of Fr. Antony Pinheiro, Assistant to the Postulator General

Mourning in the General House

Rome (Italy), 8 June 2010 (Communicationes). The unexpected death of Fr. Antony has stunned the community of the General House.

Frs. Augustine Mulloor, Isidore d’Silva, Emilio and Jean Joseph discovered the lifeless body of Fr. Antony lying in his bed. It seems that he suffered a heart attack and multiple organ failures while asleep. He had not attended the Community Mass in the morning but this did not give any immediate cause for concern. As he failed to appear later in the day the four Fathers went to look for him in his room and made the sad discovery.

Only last September Fr. Antony had been nominated by the General Definitory as Assistant Procurator General for the Causes of Saints. He had joined the community at the General House in late December 2009. Born on 15 January 1949 in Palliport, North Parur (Kerala, India). he entered our Carmelite Manjummel Province of St. Pius X in 1966 and made his Profession on 11 February 1969. He was ordained a priest 20 December 1975.

Fr. Antony got his Doctorate in Canon and Civil Law at the Lateran University in Rome and had also a Masters in Sociology. He took up a post as Professor of Canon Law in the Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Alwaye, India, in 1989. He also lectured in Canon Law at our Majummel Province’s Institute of Theology in Jyotir Bhavan, Kalamassery. He was a Judge in the ecclesiastical tribunals of the dioceses of Cochin and Kottapuram and of the Archdiocese of Verapoly and served as Judicial Vicar of Kottapuram Diocese from 2000 to 2009.

As mentioned earlier, he was nominated as Assistant to the Postulator General, Fr. Ildefonso Moriones, in September 2009.