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The Official Inauguration of the Teresian-John of the Cross Centre (Cites), Avila

At the end of the first meeting of the Presidents of the European and Holy Land Carmelite Associations and Federations, on February 14, the International Centre of St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross was inaugurated in Avila. The Centre for further studies on Saint Teresa and Saint John of the Cross, which started in 1987 as a renewal course in spiritual theology for the members of the Order, is now based in a new centre, having evolved into the first international centre of its kind for the academic study of mysticism in the modern world. It is known as the 'University of Mysticism.' It is a great cultural challenge for the Teresian Carmel, aware as the Order is of its exceptional religious patrimony in the mystical domain. It is envisaged that 2,000 participants will come to the Centre each year, for various academic courses, organized congresses and sessions, as well as groups with their own programme. The academic programme plans to grant the title of 'Master in Mysticism.'

The Bishop of Avila, Fr. General and various Provincials from Spain presided at the inaugural event. The building is an impressive architectural construction, the work of the prize-winning architect Andres Pera. The first stone was laid in 2004. The centre is built on 9,520 meters of land, with two patios and two inner gardens, accomodating 100 people, with a chapel, meeting room, two prayer-rooms, a meditation room, eight classrooms, a library, a social centre, a consultation room, two dining-rooms,... They opted to paint the building green so that it wouldn't look like 'a hotel, a college...'

The land was given by the Avila town-council. We have had to spend a great deal of money. However, our Order is happy to offer its services in the pursuit of culture and mysticism as they are part of our charism. We can say that Cites, our new Centre in Avila, is a historical achievement and one that is full of potential.

Conference of OCD Superiors in English-Speaking Africa

On February 17 - 18, 2009 the first meeting of OCD superiors from anglophone Africa took place. The Conferene was first planned at the beginning of July 2006 on the occasion of the Formation congress, held in Nairobi, Kenya from July 5 - 7. After the statutes had been drawn up, they were approved by the General Definitory May 5, 2008, *ad experimentum*, for three years. The tasks of the Conference, which are in line with our Constitutions, are detailed in the statutes. Among the more urgent matters are those concerning the formation of the formators, the specific doctrinal formation of our students at the end of intial formation and the attention to the ISRF (Institute for Spiritual and Religious Formation) in Nairobi, which was amalgamated with the 'Tangaza College', with which the Order has signed a renewable agreement on December 14, 2006 to sponsor it for three years.

At the first meeting the Conference was given the responsibility to govern for the triennium. The President is Fr. Francis ODIGWE, the Regional Vicar of Nigeria, Vice-President Fr. Isaac

MPOKWE, Provincial Delegate of Malawi, Secretary and Treasurer Fr. Phillip THOMAS, Superior of our community in Nairobi (Kenya). Two General Definitors representing Father General participated at the meeting, as did eight members of the Conference, representing three Provinces (Anglo-Irish, Washington and California-Arizona) and the Superiors of the five involved regions: Malawi, Tanzania, Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. A Delegate from Rwanda and Burundi also took part as an observer, because of the interest of this region for Anglophone Africa.

Burundi and Rwanda share a geographical and cultural affinity. Moreover, on a social, economic and political level there are clear signs of an rapprochement between these two countries with the Anglophone East African countries. In 2007 the former became members of the *East-African Community*, an inter-governmental regional organization created in 1999 by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Since 2008 Rwanda has decided to adopt English as the official language for administration and teaching at all levels. We hope this new structure will work and will bear fruit and we hope it will help us in our efforts to implant Carmel in Africa.

Religious Assistant for a French Federation

With the rescript from CIVCSVA of January 28, Fr. Jean Philippe Houdrait was reconfirmed as religious assistant to the Avignon-Lyon Federation of Carmelites nuns, France. Usually the Federations and Associations are helped by a religious assistant.

We recall that the first Federations of Discalced Carmelite nuns, following the Apostolic Constitution, 'Sponsa Christi' and the instruction 'Inter praeclara' (1950), were born in France in 1955. There were four of them at the time. Today there are three, due to the recent amalgamation of the Paris and Lisieux Federations.

The Revival of a Religious Congregation in China

From the life of the Belgian Lazzarist, Fr. Vincent Lebbe, a well known missionary in China (cf. the biography by Jacques Leclercq) we know of the foundation of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in the Anguo diocese, a district in the Hebei province of China. The Bishop, Sun, signed a decree on April 4, 1928. On October 3, 1929 the first 16 postulants were clothed. In the old mission-reviews and in 'Les Annales de Ste Thérèse de Lisieux' you can read accounts of the Congregation's development in China and on the work of the Sisters during the sino-japanese war (1937-1945).

While the founder was still alive (+ 1940) the Sisters of St. Therese of the Child Jesus were involved in the birth and growth of two Chinese religious Congregations: the Sisters of Our Lady of China and the Sisters of The Immaculate Conception. In 1952 the Sisters were disbanded by the government. Many were forced into marriage, others went into hiding. When in 1982 China allowed more religious freedom, three surviving Sisters proposed to relaunch the Congregation. In 1986 they began to recruit new vocations. They asked for and obtained government authorization. They then sent material about their way of life to different dioceses in the country. From February 1987 new postulants began to arrive. On October 15, 1990 there was a group of six Sisters in simple vows. On October 1, 1996 a group of nine Sisters took perpetual vows. It was a rebirth, after 44 years of destruction. They celebrated their General Chapter and held elections.

In 2006 the State returned to the Church a third of the land it had confiscated, as well as a clinic that had belonged to the Sisters in Anguo. Today the native Chinese Congregation can count 48 members, of whom 32 are Sisters in perpetual vows, 10 Sisters in simple vows, 2 novices and 2 postulants. During the earthquake in Sichuan three Sisters gave their services to help the victims. The Sisters undertake social and pastoral work in different dioceses in mainland China. As each year goes by so the Congregation keeps growing.

A Memorial to the 16 Beatified Carmelite Nuns of Compiègne

The Compiègne community moved in 1992 from the city centre to the nearby town of Jonquieres. A memorial-museum of our Carmelite Martyrs was then established in the new building. After the martyrdom (July 17, 1794) the community was fortunate to be able to make up three collections of the martyr's relics, an indication of the veneration that sprung up after the martyrdom. 1) A collection from Madame de la Vallée. When the soldiers came to her house on June 22 to arrest the group of Carmelite nuns who were staying there, the nuns left with the generous owner all that they had: damaged statues, rosaries, crucifixes, etc. 2) In Paris, when they climbed the scaffold, the Carmelite nuns were wearing their religious habit, having left the secular clothes they had been wearing in a drying room. The day after the execution those clothes were handed over to the English Benedictines who had been in prison with the Carmelites. Freed in 1785, the Benedictines took these relics with them to their new monastery in Stanbrook. 3) Mary of the Incarnation, absent at the time of the martyrdom, was able to enter the convent when they lifted the banning order in 1795. She was thus able to take away with her books, paintings, manuscripts, reliquaries,... that had belonged to the community. Other objects and momentos were handed back by the families when the Carmel was reestablished in 1867 in Compiègne.

This is the origin of the exhibition of relics-momentos that can now be seen in the memorial-museum. In the entrance there are some explanatory panels that locate the city of Compiègne as it was in 1794. There are no photos or portraits of the 16 martyrs, instead there are their signatures or crosses for those who did not know how to write. The objects collected by Mary of the Incarnation show the life of the convent. The momentos from Madame de la Vallée represent the period at the time of the community's dispersal, on September 14, 1792 to June 22, 1794. The third collection evokes the prison in the Visitation convent or Salesas in Compiègne: containing a statue of the infant Jesus, pieces of their secular clothing donated by the Benedictines. There are also two glass-covered tables containing original manuscripts about the martyrs, written by Mary of the Incarnation, the first historian of her own community. There are also some paintings that belonged to the Carmel or were painted by the nuns.

The tour ends by a visit to the crypt-prayer room, dedicated to the Queen of Martyrs. It has been designed to look like a prison-cell. Everything in the exhibition recalls the life and the martyrdom of our 16 Sisters during the French Revolution, and their historical and literary legacy to the Order.

The association '*Les Amis des Bienheureuses Carmelites de Compiègne*' publish regularly a newsletter of their activities and initiatives in order to disseminate the memory of our Carmelite Martyrs.