

Communicaciones n° 120

01-04-2009

Contents

- Representation of the Discalced Carmelites at the General Chapter
- The Discalced Carmelite mission of Avignon-Aquitaine to Senegal
- The centenary of Hué Carmel, Vietnam
- Syro-Malabar Cloistered Carmel
- Teresianum : 50th Week of Spirituality

Discalced Carmelites Nuns representation at the General Chapter

On February 26 Fr. General wrote a letter of invitation to the Federations/Associations of Carmelite nuns to elect delegates to the General Chapter. The nuns are expected to attend the Chapter and address the assembly in the chapter room on April 30. They will be made welcome in the convent of our Carmelite nuns in Fatima.

According to the letter from Fr. General the 5 Spanish Federations/Associations will elect 1 Delegate, the same applies to the 3 French Federations, the 2 Belgian, the Holy Land Association; Great Britain, Ireland & the Netherlands. From the African francophone Associations and from Madagascar-Indian Ocean will come a native-african President. A representative will participate from the 8 Associations of Hispanic America (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela). Another will represent the Associations of Eastern Asia and Oceania (Australia, Korea, Japan, Thailand and Vietnam). One Delegate will come for the 3 Associations of India, Philippines; from the 4 Associations from Brazil; another from the 3 Associations of the United States-Canada. The Association from Portugal, being the host-country of the Chapter and being in the place where the Chapter will be held, has been also been given 1 representative.

The challenges and hopes that Carmel encounters are different in the different regions. This is an occasion for our Carmelite sisters to present these challenges and hopes, and to discuss plans and expectations in collaboration with their brothers in the Order.

The Mission of the Avignon-Aquitaine Discalced Carmelites to Senegal

In 2002 the brothers of the Avignon-Aquitaine Province wanted to establish a mission in Senegal. Mgr. Benjamin Ndiaye, who had just been ordained bishop of Kaolack, was at the same time looking for a contemplative community for his diocese. Kaolack is an important town, about 300 kms south of Dakar. Mgr. Ndiaye proposed the foundation of a Discalced Carmelite priory in view of his project 'Keur Mariama' (House of Mary), for the diocese. The project aims to respond to the needs of the diocese by establishing a spiritual centre on a 30 acre piece of land near the town of Kaolack. In the same area will be a religious congregation with a contemplative dimension, the Discalced Carmelite Brothers, a seminary for first year students wanted by the bishops of Senegal and a diocesan pilgrimage centre. The bishops plan to add a community of religious women who will run a dispensary.

The project has taken flesh, it has become a reality, even if there is more to be done. The seminary will open its doors in September 2009. The diocesan pilgrimage centre which started off on a vague terrain in 2004, has now established its sanctuary dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Patroness of the diocese. This will become a suitable venue for the annual diocesan pilgrimage, as well as for parochial pilgrimages and others. The Discalced Carmelite brothers are in temporary accomodation, 15 kms away, in Kaolack. The construction of the priory should begin in the spring of 2009. This will allow the brothers to secure a contemplative presence and at the same time welcome retreatants, as well as to help with formation of the young seminarians. Vocations have already begun to materialize and at the moment we have one postulant, a novice and a brother in simple vows. The brothers take care of the many services according to the needs of the diocese and Church in Senegal: preaching,

retreats and days of recollection, conferences, spiritual formation, spiritual direction of the students and collaboration with the parishes.

Already the initiatives have started for the site at Keur Mariama: they have built a new plant that distributes water to the local villages, farms and irrigation systems. They have also begun to build a school. The brothers now earnestly hope to be able to build a priory and to put down roots in the place.

Centenary of Hué Carmel, Vietnam

Saigon was founded in 1861 and Hanoi in 1895. 'Found Carmels in Annam, the Lord will be very honoured.' Such was the advice given by St. Therese to Mgr. Lefebvre, who had been imprisoned for his faith in Hué. After this heavenly announcement Mgr. Lefebvre wanted a Carmel in Hué. Following preliminary negotiations, Mgr. Allys, Bishop of Phacuse, Apostolic Vicar of northern Conchinchine went to Hanoi to gather together the founding carmelite sisters: Mother Aimée of Mary, from Mans carmel (France), Mother St John of the Cross, from Blois carmel, Sr Marie of the Blessed Sacrament, from Saigon, Sr Aimée of Mary, from Hanoi and Sr Mary, the extern. They arrived in Hué on October 2, 1909, on the feast of the Holy Angels. They processed solemnly to the cathedral of Phu Cam, and later were escorted by boat to the Holy Infant convent, Kim Long, where the future Carmel would be. For three months, while waiting for their carmel to be built, they were given hospitality by the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres. Once the convent was ready the sisters moved in. The provisional cloister, made of disjointed planks, allowed the local children to satisfy their curiosity... and they said to each other, « They are dressed like St. Anthony. »

The convent and the chapel were dedicated to our Mother, St. Teresa. In 1923 Hué Carmel was in part responsible for the foundation in Iloilo (the Philippines). In 1925 it also founded the missionary Carmel in Cholet (France), since closed. Again on December 5, 1929 Hué Carmel founded the Carmel of the Holy Face in Thanh Hoa (today Nha Trang).

In April 1975 Vietnam suffered a bloody revolution. In order to avoid the bombs and the massacres all the priories and convents in Hué left for the south of the country. The Hué community also left for Saigon. They were on land belonging to the Binh Trieu parish. When the situation in the country improved slightly, all the religious congregations returned to Hué. However, on the order of the Archbishop, Mgr. Nguyen Kim Dien, our Carmel remained in Binh Trieu.

On June 19, 1992 Sr. M. Therese Consolata was elected prioress. On July 16, 1993, under the protection of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel and St. Joseph, they began to rebuild the Carmel [in Binh Trieu] : the cloister, chapel, rooms, the enclosure...all was ready to encourage carmelite community and contemplative life. The sisters were happy to be in such an atmosphere of peace and calm, and to live in a place that was conducive for prayer and the development of the contemplative life.

On April 17, 1996, Mother Prioress M. Therese Consolata and 6 professed sisters left for Hué to re-establish the Carmel in that city, aware of all the difficulties that had to be overcome. Thanks be to God in the Hué Carmel today all has returned to normal. On October 15, 1996, on the feast of our Mother, St. Teresa, the first mass was celebrated by Mgr. Theophane Nguyen Nhu The to re-inaugurate the convent, together with 14 superiors from different congregations, the regional superiors, together with all the religious superiors.

At the beginning Binh Trieu and Hué formed one single Carmel. The prioress used to leave for Hué every two months to help her sisters. However, in 1998 Hué Carmel was established definitively. On April 10, 1998 it finally received the rescript for the canonical foundation of the convent in Binh Trieu, dated March 14, 1998, having as titular Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Today Hué Carmel comprises of 40 sisters. On March 19 there was a joyful celebration and mass of thanksgiving for the centenary of the first implantation of this Carmel in Vietnam.

Syro-Malabar Cloistered Carmel

The Syro-Malabar Cloistered Carmel, founded on the 16th July, 2008 in the Arch-Diocese of Ernakulam-Angalamy, Kerala, has now moved to the new building at Malayattoor in the same Arch-Diocese, which was blessed by his Beatitude Varkey Cardinal Vithayathil, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Church on Saturday, the 21st February, 2009. His Excellency

Mar Thomas Chakiath, the Auxiliary Bishop of Ernakulam, also was present for the blessing. A large number of priests, religious and laity took part in the celebration, evincing an exceptional spirit of support and overjoyed at the fact of a Cloistered Carmel in their vicinity. In his inaugural address Cardinal Varkey remembered with gratitude the yeomen service rendered by the Discalced Carmelites in the history of the Syro-Malabar Church.

Bishop Thomas Chakiath in his felicitation expressed his happiness that the prayerful support the cloistered nuns would eventually render to the pilgrims who come to Malayattoor. Rev. Fr. Patrick Mootheril explained to the people the life style and service of the Cloistered Carmelite Nuns in general. Very Rev. Fr. Sebastian Koodapattu, the Provincial of the Malabar Province, proposed a vote of thanks where he highlighted the pace with which all the documental works were completed, the shortest span of time taken to put up a building at the incomparable location at Malayattoor - a place believed to be hallowed by the presence of St. Thomas the apostle - and all the more, getting the suitable members for the first Syro-Malabar Carmel. All this he saw as evidence of Divine Providence working through the person of Very Rev. Fr. General and his Beatitude the Cardinal.

This new Carmel is grateful to Very Rev. Fr. Xavier Jaya Raj, the Definitor entrusted with some key responsibilities for its establishment, and to many of the priests in the Archdiocese of Ernakulam, and all the Provincials of the Indian Provinces as well as to the former provincials of the Malabar Province, involved in the realization of this foundation. Let us pray and hope that this first Carmel in the Syro-Malabar Church becomes a spiritual powerhouse of prayer for the entire Order and the Church. May many more candidates join them and may it flourish and spread to meet the needs of the Church and the Order.

50th Week of Spirituality THE TERESIANUM

From March 1 – 5 the 50th Week of Spirituality took place at the 'Teresianum' our Pontifical Theological Faculty. Like every year, at the beginning of Lent, since 1960, the Week of Spirituality is a propitious occasion in our Faculty to begin a fruitful time of listening to the word of God and to reflect theologically and spiritually.

This year the Week marks an important goal in the academic and pastoral life of our Faculty, a sign of its constant efforts to develop spiritual theology in which experience, communion and mission merge harmoniously.

In thanking the Lord, who with the light of His Spirit has blessed this journey making bear fruit for 50 years, we remember all our Discalced Carmelite confreres, many of whom have already died, who with their intellectual giftedness, their enthusiasm and dedication have made this uninterrupted and prolific story possible.

The theme for this year was, 'WITNESSES TO GOD'. It was concerned with looking at some of the fundamental aspects of Christian experience and, at the same time, it wanted to respond to some of the great challenges of our modern culture. During the Week different themes were touched upon: faith and witness today; elected by God for mission; Israel, testimony in exile; Jesus and witness; the witness of the disciples of Jesus; Paul, apostle and witness to Christ; the theological dimension of Christian witness; the witness of prayer, the witness of the mystics; and witness as solidarity with the poorest of the poor.

Participating in the Week of Spirituality as conference givers were various lecturers from the Teresianum: Fr. Luis Jorge Gonzalez (Prov. Mexico); Fr. Aniano Alvarez-Suarez (Prov. Burgos); Fr. Bruno Morioni (P. Tuscany); Fr. Silvio Jose Baez (Prov. Central America); Fr. Virgilio Paschetto (Prov. Venice); Fr. Giovanni Hellewa (Deleg. Israel); Fr. Dennis Chardonnens (Prov. Avignon-Aquitane); Fr. Carlo Laudazi (Prov. Rome); Fr. Luigi Borriello (Prov. Naples); and Mgr. John Sleiman, ocd (Catholic Archbishop of Bagdad).

The acts of the Week of Spirituality are published in the series 'Fiamma Viva', whose publication is in the hands of the Teresianum Faculty.