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"Discerning the call. Evaluating vocations"

Training program in Avila for Carmelite Formators from Europe, Lebanon and Egypt

Avila, January 26, 2010 (Communicationes).- From 25th January to the following Friday the 29th, around forty formators from Italy, Portugal, France, Hungary, Poland, Croatia, Austria, Belgium, Malta, Spain, Lebanon and Egypt took part in the European Meeting for training Formators which was held at the St Teresa-St John of the Cross International Centre in Avila.

Fr Pascual Gil, President of the European Conference of Provincials and the Provincial of Aragon and Valencia, welcomed the participants on the evening of the first day. He took the opportunity during his address to place in context these European meetings for formators, which began in Wadowice (Poland) in 2006.

In his talk, he pointed out the special features of this meeting, organized by the Iberian Conference of Provincials, who had invited all those in charge of formation and vocational discernment for candidates to the Teresian Carmel throughout Europe, Lebanon and Egypt.

"Discerning the call. Evaluating vocations" was the topic of this meeting directed by the Jesuit, Luis María García. The formators reflected on important aspects such as "The vocational interview" and "Evaluating vocations" which included topics such as discerning vocations, how to guide someone with a vocation, as well as different questions concerning human maturity.

On the last day, Fr Franciso Brändle, the prior of the monastery in the house where St Teresa was born, gave a conference on "Saint Teresa the formator". Afterwards, the formators had the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the Carmelite monastery and church.

Teresian centenary

Three books for the Centenary

Rome, 24th January 2010 (Communicationes).- The prospect of the celebrations for the V Centenary of the Birth of Saint Teresa of Jesus in 2015 has released throughout the Order a wave of preparation which is being expressed in a renewed approach to the writings and spirituality of the mother and founder of the Discalced Carmelites.

“When God longs for you”

In this regard, there are many Carmelite publishing houses printing works to help this approach to the Saint from Avila. “When God longs for you” is one of these works which came into existence to help the reader relish the best of the spirituality of Saint Teresa of Jesus.

Fr Rudolf V. D’Souza, Discalced Carmelite from the Karnataka-Goa province, presents in this book the initial steps to enter into Teresian spirituality. The book would be of help in formation communities, spirituality houses and seminaries.

“Comentarios al Libro de la Vida”

“Monte Carmelo” publishing house has just issued “Comentarios al Libro de la Vida de Santa Teresa de Jesús”, written by Tomás Álvarez, Discalced Carmelite and great expert on Saint Teresa.

The author presents and comments on each one of the chapters of this Teresian work, offering the reader comprehensive help to read the “Book of her Life” and the ability to empathise with Saint Teresa who pours out her life in these pages by means of prayers and intimate confessions.

“Teresa de Jesús. Escritos para el lector de hoy”

In this work published by the “Editorial de Espiritualidad”, the historian and Discalced Carmelite, Teófanos Egido, presents a series of practical points for reading Teresa of Jesus from her environment, spirituality and mystical experience.

In its second part, “Teresa de Jesús. Escritos para el lector de hoy” hands the word over to Saint Teresa who relates to the reader her fascinating adventure which was human, spiritual, mystical, and her experiences as a foundress and writer.

“My way is sure”

Gallipoli celebrates the 1st centenary of the confirmation of the Little Way of Saint Therese

Gallipoli, January 24, 2010 (Communicationes).- The celebration of the 1st Centenary of the “Confirmation of the Little Way” of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus in the Italian town of Gallipoli brought together a good number of the faithful, as well as friends of Carmel and the saint from Lisieux, in a week packed with events.

The arrival of the urn with the relics of the Saint, on 9th January, marked the beginning of the celebrations for the “miraculous event” which happened in the monastery of the Discalced

Carmelite nuns in Gallipoli. On the 16th, the date of the apparition of saint Therese, the celebrations concluded with a ceremony at which presided the General, Fr Saverio Cannistrà.

Among the events during the celebrations were the “Little Way” exhibition set up in the Diocesan museum; days centred on the family, the youth, the aggregated laity; days for vocations, for those who are suffering, priests and religious life, as well as a series of lectures on St Therese’s Little Way of spiritual childhood. Among those present was the Provincial of the Discalced Carmelites of Naples, Fr Enzo Caiffa.

Among those giving conferences was the Belgian Discalced Carmelite, Fr Conrad de Meester, who spoke on “The Discovery of the Little Way”. Another Discalced Carmelite, François Marie Lethél, lectured on “Teresa, Doctor of the Little Way”. Fr Dámaso Zuazua presented “The Little Way and Missionaries”, while Fr Luigi Gaetani spoke about “The Confirmation of the Little Way: the miracle of Gallipoli”. Fr Louis Menville, an official of the Congregation for the Clergy, explained “The Little Way and Priests” and Fr Enzo Caiffa centred his lecture on “The Little Way and Consecrated Life.”

“My way is secure”

The enigmatical expression “my way is secure and I did not go astray following it”, said at the end of the apparition which took place in the monastery of Discalced Carmelite nuns of Gallipoli on the night of January 16, 1910, alluded to Saint Therese’s little way of spiritual childhood.

At first, the Carmelite nuns themselves were not able to understand the significance of these words coming from the mouth of a young Carmelite nun, who had died just 13 years before in a far distant monastery at Lisieux in French Normandy. Neither did they understand what was meant by the “confirmation of her little way of spiritual childhood”.

Mother Carmela, the prioress of the monastery at that time and witness to the apparition, related the miraculous event which was documented in the process of beatification of the “greatest saint of modern times”.

Story of the miracle

“On the night of January 16, I was feeling quite sick and was also preoccupied by the difficulties through which we were going. It was three o’clock in the morning, and almost at the end of my strength, I lay on the bed in order to breathe a little easier and afterwards I went to sleep. Then I had a dream and felt a hand touch me, and placing the sheet over my face, covering me with delicacy.

I thought it was one of the sisters of the community who wanted to do me this act of love and without opening my eyes I said, “Leave me alone, I am sweating.”

Then a sweet voice unknown to me said, “No, what I am doing is something good,” and covering me again said, “Look, God is served just as much by celestial dwellers as by terrestrial in helping his servants. Here are 500 liras with which you can pay the community’s debt.”

I replied that the community’s debt was only 300 liras and she said to me, “I agree. The change will be a little extra. But as you cannot keep the money in the cell, come with me.”

I thought, "How can I get up since I am drenched in sweat?" Then the celestial vision, knowing what I was thinking, added with a smile, "Bilocation will come to our aid." In an instant I found myself outside the cell in the company of a young Carmelite sister, from whose veil and habit issued a light from paradise which illuminated the way.

She led me to the turn room and had me open the wooden box in which was placed the invoice for the community's debt and there she placed 500 liras. I contemplated her with a deep feeling of admiration and then I prostrated myself to thank her, saying, "Oh, my Holy Mother!" But she helped me to get up and embracing me with tenderness replied, "I am not our Holy Mother, I am the servant of God, Sister Therese of Lisieux. Today both heaven and earth are celebrating the holy name of Jesus." Moved and not knowing what to say, I exclaimed, more with my heart than with my lips, "Oh my mother....", but I could not continue on.

Then the celestial sister, after having placed her hand on my veil, as though to adjust it, and having given me a fraternal caress, went slowly away.

"Wait," I said to her, "you do not know the way". She replied to me with a celestial smile, "No, no, my way is secure and I did not go astray in following it."

I woke up and, despite my tiredness, I got up and went down to the choir and received communion.

The sisters were looking at me and seeing something unusual wanted to call the doctor. When I went through the sacristy, the two sacristans kept asking me what was wrong. These also wanted to know why I was out of bed and wanted to call the doctor.

To avoid this I told them I had had a dream which had really shaken me and I told them about it in simplicity. These two nuns then wanted to go to open the box, but I said to them that you should not believe in dreams. Finally, giving in to their insistence, I did it. I went to the turn, opened the box and there I really found the miraculous 500 lire note."

Reflexiones sobre el Carmelo Teresiano hoy

A book that gathers together eight messages of Fr Luis Aróstegui during his generalate

Rome, 20th January 2010 (Communicationes).- Under the title, "Reflexiones sobre el Carmelo Teresiano hoy", Fr Luis Aróstegui, Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites for the 2003-2009 sexennium, has gathered together in one book eight messages which, as he says in the brief introductory note, «constitute a certain reflection on our charism and life today».

Each one of these messages, though given in «different places and circumstances of the Order, attempt to meditate on fundamental aspects of our life in the church and in the world. These have been selected precisely because of their universal character, even though, in fact, they were directed to one part of the Order. I had the Order always in mind in preparing them. There is no difficulty in discerning their universal content.»

In the introduction, Fr Luis emphasises that the reason why he decided to gather together these messages and send them to the various communities of the Teresian Carmel lay in the

fact that during his mandate at the head of the Order «there were friars and nuns who missed not having a message or letter from the General of the Order. This is a legitimate and praiseworthy desire. However, in reality, these messages were not lacking and here we have some of them which may still be of use». A confession which the former Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites accompanies with the humour and “fraternal familiarity” of a quote from St John of the Cross, “much has already been written to set out what is important; what is lacking then, if anything is lacking, is not writing or speaking, which is normally more than enough, rather it is keeping quiet and working.”

The following are the titles of the messages: I. Carmelite nuns today journeying with Christ; II. Two objectives for the Order during the sexennium; III. The rule of the brothers of Mount Carmel and the life; IV. The missionaries of Saint Teresa today: meaning, current situation, options; V. Carmel facing the questions of the men and women of our time; VI. Introduction to the General Chapter document “*Born for us*”: Spiritual renewal for the 2015 Teresian centenary; VII. Liturgy-prayer-life in the Teresian Carmel; VIII. Meaning of contemplative life in the Teresian Carmel. Conditions.

Meeting planned for youth from Spain and Portugal

Meeting for those working in pastoral ministry for youth in the Iberian Peninsula

Madrid, January 19, 2010 (Communicationes).- On 10th January, there was a meeting in the Plaza de España monastery in Madrid for “Those working in youth ministry in the Teresian Carmel” in Spain and Portugal.

The meeting, convoked by Fr Miguel Márquez, Provincial of Castile and President of the Iberian Conference of Provincials, was attended by around twenty Discalced Carmelite religious and laity from the majority of the Provinces of the Iberian peninsula. Also attending were members of the Carmelite family: Missionary Carmelites, Teresian Missionary Carmelites, Teresian Carmelites of St Joseph, Carmelites of St Joseph, Carmelite Slaves of the Holy Family, as well as members of the Institute Notre Dame de Vie.

Those taking part reflected on the need to collaborate together in youth ministry and for the organization of a joint meeting for the World Youth Day which will be in Madrid in 2011, taking into account the proposal of the Preparatory Commission for the V centenary of the birth of Saint Teresa, supported also by the European Provincials.

Very positive acceptance was also given to the idea of holding a meeting of the youth at the level of the whole peninsula, in October 2010, as well as the creation of a commission to speed up the work of the Carmelite Web for those working in Youth Ministry.