

REPORT FROM THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL OCDS CONGRESS HELD IN ROME OCT. 8 -
15, 1996

There were 200 Delegates from 40 countries represented in Rome - Africa, Argentina, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Rep., England, France, Germany, Holland, Hong-Kong, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Lebanon, Malaysia, Malta, Maurisia, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Scotland, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland. and the United States of America.

The Congress started with an introduction by Fr. John Sullivan, O.C.D.

AIMS: Renewal through:

- Personal contact with interesting people;
- Tapping the resource of personal experience of OCDS members;
- This should lead to dialogue and exchange of ideas;
- Conversations should inspire ideas;
- Benefit by the experience of pluralism;
- Be instructed by pluralism;
- Learn through the presentations, group discussions and current trends;
- Hoped to raise the Secular Order life to a general level;
- This coming together would raise our awareness of Order diversity, size, and we would diffuse this experience to our membership at home;
- Hopefully that the inspirations gained at Congress will be a focal point and leaven for the Secular Order;
- The deliberations made at Congress give hope for the future life of the Secular Order;
- We should try to discover new paths of renewal through this experience.

All the Conferences and Workshops were held at the Teresianum - Pontifical Faculty of Theology and Pontifical Institute of Spirituality. The atmosphere was monastic, the property very beautiful with an inner courtyard enclosed by the cloister. Altogether there are 135 post-graduate students in residence there.

The friendliness between the delegates made for a happy atmosphere. The opportunity to dialogue with the global representation of OCDS Delegates, exchanging experiences, sharing difficulties, joys and aspirations was affirming and encouraging on an individual level.

Each day Vespers was sung. All the antiphons were in Latin. The readings and psalms each day were done in different languages. All got a turn.

The liturgies were magnificent, there were 54 Priests present at all liturgies. On the vigil of Holy Mother's Feast, the students of the Teresianum also joined us. It was truly a great choir of Discalced Carmelites united in singing God's praises. The feast itself on October 15th was celebrated in the Church of St. Teresa of Jesus next to our Casa Generalizia, on the Corso D'Italia.

Special added attractions:

- Video in the library on St. Therese of Lisieux;
- Visit to the catacombs (tomb of St. Pancrías);
- Exhibition of St. Therese in library.

Each morning started with Fr. John Sullivan, OCD doing a reading from Scriptures, followed by silent meditation.

Three major conferences were given: The first by our Father General, the Very Rev. Fr. Camillo Maccese, OCD, entitled "THE RENEWAL OF THE SECULAR CARMEL WITHIN THE NEW EVANGELIZATION" is printed in this periodical. The second conference was given by Dr. Maria Lupi, OCDS, entitled: "LAY PEOPLE: VOCATION, IDENTITY & COLLABORATION WITH THE ORDER."

Dr. Lupi's talk covered these topics.

1. The lay Carmelite's vocation according to the current Rule of Life, in the context of the mission of religious orders in the Church and their relations with lay people.
2. Today's situation of the Secular Order and its emerging problems - a) a crisis identity; b) inadequate lay and Carmelite formation and c) crisis in vocations.
3. The identity of lay Carmelites in context of the Rule, in line with today's theology of the laity (Vatican II and subsequent documents) and with the sources of Carmelite spirituality, also its application to the concrete lives of members and fraternities.
4. Relations with the Order that respect reciprocal autonomy, reciprocal awareness, mutual trust and shared assistance: a) what lay Carmelites expect of the religious; b) what lay Carmelites think they can offer to the religious; c) real collaboration in the main apostolic commitment of the Order - spreading the spiritual charism and teaching of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross.

Dr. Lupi felt that the wholeness of our experience at the International Congress would lead to theory and service. A new image to a new generation, also existential creativity.

She saw that a profitable exchange of experiences, problems and difficulties would lead to renewal success, and that this renewal success meant faithfulness to our vocation.

We were advised to listen to the sign of the times so as to build a better future for the Secular Order.

Questions we should ask ourselves - Who are we? What is our charism: We are Carmelite lay-people, not an imitation of the monastic life in the world. A careful re-reading of our Rule, keeping in mind the universal call to holiness was suggested.

Participation in our charism, due to our thirst for God is essential.

Our Discalced Carmelite spirituality should be incarnated into our every-day mission as lay people, our life-giving testimony of Yahweh. That faithfulness to our identity as seculars was a holy and wholesome thing. That we had to resolve our identity.

The third conference was given by the Very Rev. Guy Gauchet, OCD, Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux.

Bishop Gauchet's talk was entitled "HOLINESS IN DAILY LIFE: ST THERESE AND HER

FAMILY" It encompassed topics of; a) The daily life in a family both simple and fully oriented toward God; b) The ordinary path of Therese Martin ; and c) The orientation of Soeur Therese toward missionary holiness, by living out merciful love in ordinary life.

After the first two days of conferences, the remaining days were spent in round table discussions and workshops, divided into the four main language groups of English, French, Italian and Spanish. Those whose mother tongue was not one of the four main language groups joined the group of their second language. The written results of these workshops were brought back to Canada and given to each OCDS President so that any member wishing to read the results can purchase them for the price of the photo-copying from their President. Isolates write to the Secretariat Office, postage and handling will be extra.

Among the many gifts received by being present at this First OCDS International Congress, the greatest was the general affirmation that we all got about our work for the Order on a regional basis, through the mutual sharing. We were invigorated and hopeful for a better future through a better understanding between the OCDS globally, and also the OCDS and the Friars about our respected identities. The big job ahead will be the translation of these insights to our home communities.

May Jesus and Mary help and guide us to foster the wonderful spirit of renewal and hope that was bred at our First OCDS International Congress.

Gratitude and thanks go out whole-heartedly to our Friars who worked tirelessly on our behalf to assure comfort and smooth functioning during the Congress. The attitude was gracious, helpful, hospitable and fraternal. GOD REWARD THEM ALL.