



CASA GENERALIZIA CARMELITANI SCALZI
CORSO D'ITALIA, 38 - 00198 ROMA

To Provincial Fathers, Provincial Delegates for the OCDS,
and OCDS Community Assistants

I hope you are all doing fine. First of all, I want to thank you for your valuable service to our Secular Order which continues to grow throughout the world. Through your spiritual accompaniment, you fulfil what the Church has entrusted to the Discalced Carmelite Friars with the documents *Cum Dudum* (March 23, 1594) and *Romanum Pontificem* (August 20, 1603), i.e., the pastoral care of the secular brothers and sisters belonging to our Order.

In order to better walk together with our brothers and sisters of the Secular Order, it is important to be well informed and formed about their role and ours within the Order. This will help us to have good relations with each other in an atmosphere of respect and collaboration. The Secular Order is not independent of the Order but has an autonomy that is to be respected. This autonomy refers to matters of formation, direction, and governance (cf. Doc. Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Order, Fr. Luis Aróstegui, 2006).

It is important to know the documents of the Secular Order, such as their *Constitutions* approved by the Church, the *Ratio Institutionis OCDS* on their formation, and especially the document, *Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Order*, which is a guide for all their assistants. These documents can be downloaded from the website of our Order in the section of the Secular Order. Getting acquainted with them will be of great help to us because they present the identity and mission of our secular brothers and sisters in the Order of Carmel, in the Church and in the world.

I remind all the Provincials that they have the responsibility to "guarantee spiritual assistance to the local communities by appointing assistants" (cf. Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Order, art. 10) in their territory. It would be appropriate for information and formation about the Secular Order to begin with the initial formation of our religious brothers and sisters, helping them to have a deeper knowledge of this branch of our Order.

It is often the case in OCDS communities that spiritual assistants take on the role of superior or person who leads the community. I would like, therefore, to invite all the Provincials and Assistants to the OCDS to become aware of their place and to form the secular Carmelites to assume their role with maturity. Numbers 43 and 44 of the *Declaration on the Charism* emphasize this relationship between us, which seeks to overcome all paternalism, infantilism and clericalism. That's why it's very important to form ourselves first and help us to grow in the right direction. Assistants have a fundamental role in the line of discernment and spiritual assistance, not as superiors of the community.

I invite you all to continue your pastoral service to the Secular Order with renewed spirit and generosity, spiritually accompanying these brothers and sisters of ours with whom we form

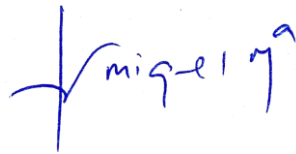
one single family. Thank you very much for your accompaniment to the Secular Carmel and for your generous dedication.

In these days of great joy and deep communion, I wish you all a new year full of happiness and grace.

Fraternally.

January 6, 2024

fr. Miguel Márquez Calle
Superior General OCD

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Miguel M." with a stylized flourish at the end.