

SEPTEMBER 11, 2021

TEXT OF FATHER GENERAL'S ADDRESS DURING THE AUDIENCE WITH THE HOLY FATHER

Dear Holy Father Pope Francis:

It's a great joy for us to be able to greet you this Saturday morning. Here you have the entire General Chapter of the Discalced Carmelites, sons of St. Teresa of Jesus, of St. John of the Cross, and so many Carmelite saints who are faithful sons and daughters of the Church, as we decidedly want to be as well.

We represent some 4,000 of our brothers from all over the world, and we also bring here our Discalced Carmelite nuns, the Secular Carmelites, and all the great big family of the Teresian Carmel. We come to ask for a blessing and a confirmation of our way, to enliven our dedication, and to be Carmel on the way forward. We would like to be the Carmelites that the Church and the world ask us to be.

The Carmelite saints knew how to live intensely in the present moment. They fell in love with God and let him be the protagonist of their lives: with fearless faith, courageous humility, fraternal joy, and daring trust. Teresa said: "the world is in flames" (*Way* 1:5) and she wanted to bring to bear what little she could: "the little that was in my power." (*ibid.*)

The essence of Carmel is "silent love" (John of the Cross, Letter 8), selfless dedication, and creative trust. You stated it, Holy Father, by quoting Edith Stein: "The greatest figures of prophecy and sanctity step forth out of the darkest night..." (*Gaudete et Exultate* 8) History's decisive persons don't appear in history books or newspapers. For this reason, we want to cultivate a contemplation that doesn't distance us from real life, but rather immerses us more deeply in it and brings us closer to the wounds of today's men and women so that we can heal them with the tenderness we have learned from our friendship with Jesus, which is prayer.

Carmel's finest chapters have been written in the most difficult moments: *the Interior Castle* of St. Teresa; the *Spiritual Canticle* of St. John of the Cross in the prison of Toledo, the Offering to Merciful Love of St. Therese (to whom we know you are so devoted), the dedication of Edith Stein in the concentration camp, the passionate love of Teresa of the Andes and María Felicia of the Blessed Sacrament: Chiquitunga ...

Holy Father, with my brothers and sisters I want to risk my life, not waiting for tomorrow, without fear of being wounded, like knights without pay, as Teresa said (*Life* 15, 11), helping Jesus to carry the cross, helping the Pope to carry the cross, by our obedience and service, without backing down, eager to know and love Jesus more and more to make him known and loved, as Therese of Lisieux used to say.

Mary is at the heart of a Carmelite's life. The scapular is the presence of Mary. We want to live stripped of ourselves and clothed in Mary. Under her white mantle, we put the life of the Pope, dear Holy Father. Next to her, Joseph, who is also very dear to us Carmelites. I take this opportunity to thank you very much, on behalf of my sisters and brothers, for the letter you wrote about St. Joseph, '*Patris Corde.*' In the school of Teresa, we ask him to teach us to be fathers, to know how to be sons and brothers. We feel protected by Mary and Joseph, and that is our confidence.

And now, Holy Father, I allow myself, with Teresian audacity, to ask you an important question: What do you want from us? What does our dear Pope Francis desire from the Discalced Carmelites today?

On behalf of all my brothers and sisters, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Holy Father, at every moment you will not be without our prayers and affection. Thank you for receiving us.

Fr. Miguel Márquez de María