



Final Message of the Carmelite Order's General Chapter 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Carmel,

1. With gratitude to God and to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, we, the delegates of the Carmelite General Chapter, gathered in Malang, Indonesia, from 9-26 September 2025, reflected on the theme: "You must have some sort of work to do" (Rule 20) - Our Contemplative Fraternity Discerns Its Mission. We address this final message to the entire Carmelite Family.

Thanksgiving and Context

2. We are deeply grateful to the Indonesian Province and the Secretariat of the General Chapter for their outstanding hospitality, organisation and vitality, creating the best possible conditions and environment for the celebration of this General Chapter. We also express our thanks to Pope Leo XIV, who, in a letter addressed to the Chapter, reminded us that our roots in silent prayer and mutual care cultivate a stillness that allows us to discern *the signs of the times*, especially from the perspective of the poor (Const. 118). He emphasized that our shared life of prayer is the foundation of all our service, and entrusted this Chapter to Our Lady of Mount Carmel.
3. Our days together were marked by fraternity, honesty, and prayerful discernment. With gratitude and reverence, we also remembered the four sisters of our Order who tragically passed into eternal life in a car accident in Tanzania. In the light of the Jubilee Year, we became more aware of belonging to a wider, pilgrim Church. Our reflections were enriched by reports from the Prior General, the General Council, commissions, and the four geographic areas of the Order, as well as by contributions from experts who helped us read the *signs of the times*.¹

¹ Amongst others, we heard from: Fr. Miguel Márquez Calle OCD (Superior General), Sr. Merry Teresa Sri Rejeki, H. Carm., Sr. Sesilia, P. Karm., Sr. Alvaresta, P. Karm., Sr. Lusía Wahyuningrum, O. Carm., Sr. Maria Brigitta Gitaningsih, O. Carm, Ruel Santos, T.O. Carm. from the Philippines, as well as a representative of the youth from Timor Leste, Ms. Merlinda Amaral.

4. One such voice was Sr. Patricia Murray IBVM. Drawing on the Church's Synodal Pathway of Communion, Participation, and Mission, she reminded us that our response must move from words to action. We are to resist indifference and embody mercy and transformation. She challenged us to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and to "*widen the tent of our hearts,*" carrying our charism to the margins with courage, empathy, and hope. The quality of our presence is above all that matters, so people see the presence of God in us.
5. Mission, we learned, arises from the communion of God's own life, extending into creation and history, and is firmly rooted in God's universal salvific will (1 Tim 2:4). The Church does not so much have a mission as the mission has a Church. The Holy Spirit calls us today to reestablish our "contemplative being before the Lord." This Elian identity, grounded in service, prayer, and fraternity, is the wellspring of prophetic action in response to the cries of our age: the plight of migrants and refugees, the devastation of war, the wounds of poverty and exclusion in a greed-driven economy, religious fundamentalism and racism, the threats of climate change and environmental degradation.
6. In this light, Rule 20 "You must have some sort of work to do" spoke to us afresh. Our "work" is not only labor but the daily weaving together of prayer, fraternity, and service, so that every action becomes contemplative mission.

Our Experience Together

7. These days in Malang were not merely discussions but moments of fraternal discernment, enriched by the beauty of Indonesia's cultural and spiritual life. Our "work" is not simply to be busy, but to allow mission to flow from Christ's mercy into the realities of our world. Time and again we were reminded that true leadership in Carmel is defined by authority that arises from the witness of a fraternity rooted in prayer, humility, and service. Mission is not a strategy but a response to God's mercy, which transforms us into a community of love. We also sought the clarity that only the Holy Spirit can provide to recognise the beams that obscure our vision.
8. In this Chapter we experienced fraternity itself as contemplative work: listening deeply to one another, engaging in honest dialogue, and sharing responsibility for our common mission. The diversity of cultures gathered here was not a challenge but a gift, a sign of the international character of Carmel today.
9. This Chapter reminded us that discernment is not a single event but a way of life: remaining attentive to the Spirit so that our mission is always renewed and responsive to the needs of the Church and the world.

Facing Reality with Hope

10. Our brother Bishop Wilmar Santin, O. Carm., from the Territorial Prelature of Itaituba, Brazil, reminded us that mission belongs to the very heart of our Carmelite identity: rooted in contemplation, expressed in fraternity, and sent forth to the peripheries. He recalled the courage and creativity of Carmelites in the Amazon and beyond, urging us to move from a mentality of maintenance to a spirit of missionary discipleship, forming communities that are outward-looking and willing to step into new spaces of poverty, migration, and ecological crisis.
11. Our brother Bishop Henricus Pidyarto Gunawan, O. Carm., from the Diocese of Malang, Indonesia, reflected with us on the Carmelite charism as a gift for the Church and the world. He reminded us that our works must have real quality, answer concrete needs, and be credible in us who offer them; authentically Carmelite, beneficial to God's people, and witnessed in our daily lives. He called us to balance work and prayer, avoiding both laziness and overwork, lest our vocation become shallow or exhausted. Silence, he reminded us, is essential for communion with God, while fraternity demands teamwork and shared responsibility rather than isolation or individualism. Inspired by Elijah and Jesus, we are called to defend the poor and marginalized, ensuring that our apostolic works are always an authentic expression of our charism.
12. Being in Indonesia we were surrounded by the presence of members of the Islamic religion. We were reminded that in our constitutions we state that the prophet Elijah is for us a bridge to the other monotheistic religions. Mrs. Alissa Wahid, a Muslim scholar and activist, the daughter of the former president of Indonesia, along with our brother Hariawan Adji, O. Carm., gave us some extraordinary insights into what is possible through interreligious dialogue and mobilization, that bring people together.
13. Enlightened by the witness of young Carmelites, we were encouraged to see that they are drawn to communities where authenticity, fraternity, Marian devotion, and a rhythm of prayer naturally lead to generous service. Their hope and passion inspire us to remain faithful to the heart of our vocation.
14. At the same time, we cannot ignore the realities of our time. In Europe, we are called to face declining vocations and the weight of structures with honesty and courage, letting go where needed, while embracing the new energy of youth gatherings, lay collaboration, and international networks. In the Americas, we are called to nurture flourishing vocations in Latin America. In North America, we face the challenges of fewer vocations and aging with creativity and solidarity. At the same time, we recognize many signs of vitality in common novitiates, shared formation, and renewed commitment. In Africa, we are called to strengthen vibrant young communities by investing in solid formation and leadership, and seeking greater financial sustainability, so they may grow in autonomy and responsibility.

In Asia-Australia-Oceania, we are called to root abundant vocations, especially in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Timor-Leste, in a deep contemplative fraternity, so that this vitality may remain a true gift and not drift into mere activism.

15. Across all areas, safeguarding, intercultural living, and credible witness remain urgent challenges. To strengthen our common response, the General Chapter committed to deepen intercultural fraternity and ensure an authentic witness in every context. We also decided to enforce safeguarding with mandatory structures throughout the Order, ensuring consistent protection and accountability at every level.

Emerging Priorities

16. Guided by the Rule's exhortation to "have some sort of work to do," the Chapter has identified several priorities for our Order and the wider Carmelite Family. Formation, both initial and ongoing, must nurture human and spiritual maturity and ensure that our charism is lived fully in today's world. We recognize young people as "the now of God," and commit to walking with them, creating authentic spaces where vocations can grow. Our discernment and mission belong to the whole Carmelite Family. Together, friars, nuns, sisters, members of the Third Order, and lay Carmelites, we are called to share responsibility for the charism entrusted to us. The witness and vitality of the laity, especially the Third Order, are indispensable for carrying the Carmelite spirit into families, parishes, and society. Each contributes according to their vocation, sharing resources and supporting one another, so that no community walks alone. This solidarity should extend across provinces and continents in formation, personnel, and finances.
17. In discerning as a community our apostolic commitments, we will maintain those works that authentically express our charism, adapt them to local contexts and the signs of the times, and when necessary, let go of those that no longer serve the Gospel in a Carmelite way. At the same time, we recognize the importance of communicating our charism with clarity and responsibility, using both digital and traditional media wisely. Our contemplative response to *the cry of the poor* and *the cry of the earth* remains central to our mission, urging us to stand for justice, peace, and care for creation. Finally, we are committed to renewing our communities as living witnesses of fraternity, fostering leadership that is visionary and service-oriented, and strengthening our liturgical life as the heart of our witness to God's presence in the world.

Going Forward

18. In Malang, we experienced fraternity, diversity, and hope. We acknowledged our limitations, yet we also encountered the abundance of God's grace. What we seek

is not pious optimism but real hope: a hope rooted in Christ, sustained by prayer, and lived in daily fidelity to fraternity and mission.

19. As Carmelites, we know that desert prayer is not escape but the wellspring of life, transforming us into living water for the world. Our vocation is to abide in God's love so that our communities radiate joy, gratitude, and mercy. Looking to the future, we carry forward the insights gained here: that mission flows from prayer, that fraternity itself is mission, and that our charism is not our possession but God's gift to the Church and the world.
20. To accompany the members of the order throughout the next six years, we elected a new leadership: Prior General, Desiderio García Martínez, O. Carm. (ACV); Vice Prior General, Franciscus Xavarius Hariawan Adji, O. Carm. (INDO); Procurator General, Michael Farrugia, O. Carm. (MEL); Bursar General, Christian Körner, O. Carm. (GER); General Councilor for Africa, Eric Chrisostome N'Do, O. Carm. (BET); General Councilor for the Americas, Rolf Nepomuk (Nepi) Willemsen, O. Carm. (PCM); General Councilor for Asia-Australia-Oceania, Robert Thomas Puthussery, O. Carm. (ISTA); and General Councilor for Europe, Richard Byrne, O. Carm. (HIB).
21. We entrust our renewed commitment to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, our Mother and Sister, under whose mantle we find protection and peace, and are confident in the double portion of the spirit of the Prophet Elijah given to us. May they guide us to discern our "work" as Carmelites today: to witness God's mercy, to serve in fraternity, and to walk humbly with God's people.
22. As we look ahead, we do so with trust that the Spirit of God who has guided us in Malang will continue to guide us. The journey of the next six years is not without challenge, but it is filled with opportunity: to be contemplative communities on mission, a living sign of hope for the Church and for the world.

Malang, Indonesia

26 September 2025