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To: All members of the Carmelite Family

Prot. 09/2025

## **MESSAGE TO THE CARMELITE ORDER ON THE WORLD DAY OF CONSECRATED LIFE**

This message which is intended to mark the world day of religious in the jubilee year 2025 is addressed principally to my brothers the Carmelite friars. What I want to share may have meaning also for the other members of the Carmelite family, particularly the cloistered nuns. I would like in these pages to address three themes: consecrated life, fraternal affirmation and correction, and the significance of the jubilee year for us, Carmelite religious.

### **I**

#### **Religious Life**

The life we live as consecrated religious is a response to a vocation to follow Jesus. In the same way that Jesus called Simon and Andrew, James and John and the other disciples he calls us. Every vocation echoes that original calling, "they left everything and they followed him".

The life that we have accepted is one that has developed over the centuries and is expressed now in the life of religious men and women who belong to orders, congregations and societies, of contemplative life and of apostolic life, all with the one purpose of dedicating human lives to the following of Jesus Christ. The particular way of following Jesus Christ that is outlined for us Carmelites is stated in our Rule: We are to "live in allegiance to Jesus Christ and serve him faithfully from a pure heart and a good conscience", (Rule 2), We are to do this in a community that chooses the one who is to be prior, to whom the each brother will promise "obedience, and strive to fulfil his promise in the reality of deeds, along with chastity and the renunciation of ownership". (Rule 4)

Jesus is for us the full revelation of the Father, "those who see me see the Father", and Jesus is for us the model, of one who is poor, with the poor, chaste in relating to other people, and obedient in the discernment and following of God's will, found most of all in the discernment of the community that prays together.

In calling for the renewal of religious life, the fathers of the Second Vatican Council in the Decree on Religious Life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, illustrated the direction that renewal should take by bringing our thoughts back to Jesus Christ, in these words:

"Despite such a great variety of gifts, all those called by God to the practice of the evangelical counsels and who, faithfully responding to the call, undertake to observe the same, bind themselves to the Lord in a special way, following Christ, who chaste and poor (cf. Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58) redeemed and sanctified men through obedience even to the death of the Cross" (cf. Phil. 2:8).

The passage continues, "Driven by love with which the Holy Spirit floods their hearts (cf. Rom. 5:5) they live more and more for Christ and for His body which is the Church (cf. Col. 1:24). The more fervently, then, they are joined to Christ by this total life-long gift of themselves, the richer the life of the Church becomes and the more lively and successful its apostolate". (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 1)

I had to quote this passage in full in order to lay down the foundation for anything I might say or think about religious life. As Carmelites we see our way of life first and foremost as a way of living in allegiance to Jesus Christ. The particular Carmelite way is identified by its contemplative nature, in prayer, fraternity and service, following the examples of Mary and Elijah.

We believe that as Carmelites we are called to follow Christ as brothers living in community. It is a fact that many of us came to the Order wanting to be priests, but, we said, priests living in community. That meant that with time and formation we grew in our desire to be brothers as well as being priest. Many others came to our Order with the specific desire to be brothers living in community. They encountered an environment largely formed around priesthood, even though their vocation had the potential to reflect more clearly the vocation of the founders on Mount Carmel and the tradition that has remained in our Order over the centuries, despite being classified as a clerical order from 1247 onwards, namely, to see ourselves as brothers living in community under the title of Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel.

In line with the Rule of St. Albert, our Order began as an Order of hermits, called brothers, by the author of the Rule, living as hermits in cells assigned by the prior, on Mount Carmel, meditating day and night on the law of the Lord, leaving their cells in order to be with the brothers, for prayer, nourishment and discernment, and leaving the brothers to return to their cells in order to be attentive to God by meditating on his law.

At some point along the way, probably at the General Chapter of 1247, the Carmelite Order put aside its lay status and took on the identity of a clerical order. From that day to this, the clerical identity of the order has been a determining factor in all that our Order has done. We have seen ourselves serving the Church principally in priestly ministry. Our identity as brothers slipped into the background and those who were called to the life of brothers found themselves living in the community as servants of the community in the all kinds of ways, including the most menial of tasks while the ordained priests did the work of evangelization and ministry. Perhaps today that image is changing.

Today, with the rescript issued by Pope Francis in May 2022, we can see an invitation to us as Carmelites to look the nature of our lives as brothers. It is now possible for those who

are solemnly professed members of our order, whether they are ordained priests or not, to be chosen by the brothers to be priors in the local community, in the province and in the whole Order.

When it comes to making decisions in our Order, it is striking how many of our decisions and how much our style of living is determined by the predominance of priests among our members. I look at the themes and orientations of many Chapters, General Congregations and Councils of Provinces over the past number of decades. Apart from a small number of formation events dedicated to parish ministry and ministry in our shrines, nothing else in our statements or in our formation events refers to priestly ministry. The themes that were chosen by the 1977 General Chapter to be the working themes for the following six years are a very good indication. They were Prayer, Fraternity, Formation, Internationality and JPIC. None of these themes refer specifically to priesthood, but rather to our life as followers of Christ, doing everything in the word of God.

Despite this very clear picture, we as brothers have been slow to implement the conclusions of all those meetings and all that formation, probably because of our clerical way of thinking. The fact that so many of us are priests, and our thoughts everyday are caught up in our priesthood that we have failed to give time to the measures and actions that would help us to grow as brothers, following Christ, living and discerning in community, who then put themselves at the service of the Church and play their part in leading people to an ever deeper knowledge of the love of God, which is another way of saying salvation.

What might it mean therefore for us to look again at the journey that we have made throughout all these years of renewal, put aside the concerns we have as priests and see ourselves first and foremost as brothers living in community, in the company of Mary, Mother and Sister, with a commitment to follow Christ, poor chaste and obedient, by meditating constantly on his word and sharing that wisdom among ourselves and among those with whom we work in caring for people and in building up the body which is the Church.

We did well to continue to meet in Chapters, to study our sources, to write our Constitutions, which speak far more about us being brothers than about being priests. Somehow we have to remove the scales from our eyes and see that it is in meeting the challenges of religious life that we will fulfill our vocation and in the process become much better priests for the benefit of the Church and those members of the Church who look to us for the wisdom and beauty that our tradition holds. Among the many gifts that God has given to his Church, the gift of Carmel has to play its part in order to complete the mosaic.

Today we have also to look at the question of mendicant life. The mendicant Orders came into being in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. By the fact of not being bound to the stability of a monastery, the mendicants saw themselves as being on the move, principally as preachers, and community builders, whose livelihood depended on the kindness of the people. Mendicants ideally accept to live and survive on the basis of what they are given by the people to sustain them. Now that we are talking about how to sustain our life financially, we find ourselves talking about investments in property and in shares, about professional training for professions that will earn an income. All of this might sound strange to the ears of the one who feels called to be a mendicant and to so live among the people that all his needs are provided. I have visited communities in our Order that seldom have to buy food. It all comes directly from the people. Perhaps that's the way it should be for all of us.

## II

### **Fraternal affirmation, fraternal correction**

In order to live as brothers in community there are a number of skills that we already have or that we have to acquire, if we do not have them in the beginning. Our life in community is an expression of justice, where we understand justice to mean right relationship. In our life we have to seek to have the right relationship between ourselves and God, a relationship in which we grow to maturity and God's glory is manifest in us. We have to strive to have right relationships between us as brothers called to live in community, so that these relationships help us to grow together and not be diminished in any way. We have also to have a correct relationship with ourselves and with the world in which we live. In right or correct relationships the participants in those relationships grow to maturity.

My main interest in this reflection is the way we relate to one another as brothers living in community. Chastity is never the absence of a relationship, but rather the recognition that we have to relate in some way to all our brothers and that relationship has to be a relationship of love in which we help one another to grow through the life that we profess together.

An essential element in living together is our ability to recognize the good in each of our brothers. While we recognize that good, and the many talents that each brother has, we can see that it is good to be able to express our appreciation for our brothers and find ways to put the talents of each one to work for the building up of our communion. We have every reason to be positive about our brothers, even though we may not know or like each one of them in the same way. Affirmation is the ability to recognize and bring out the good that is in the brothers with whom we live. It is a positive ability that shows deep appreciation for what is good and what is done well. It is connected with a kind of prayer that says, I give thanks to God that you are here. I will do all in my power to make your happiness complete and if God so wills we will live for a long time in brotherly communion.

Alongside fraternal affirmation we have to look also at the need for fraternal correction in recognition of the reality that all of us fail in some way in trying to meet the ideal that our calling represents. Our failings should not become the determining factor in our lives, but rather be the provocation that will make us strive more to be authentic and truthful in our lives and to live the kind of life that we have professed from the beginning.

The 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of our Rule is of vital importance. In so far as there are many dimensions to our lives, this chapter commands us to take all of those aspects into consideration and to examine the life we are living in community, in terms of its health and the order that is, or perhaps is not, in the community. If in this examination, which we do together, we find any excesses, these are to be corrected in love.

In the Hebrew Testament, God promised a land flowing with milk and honey to those who would follow his law. Through the prophets, God also corrected his people in order to bring them back to the covenant. The Books of Wisdom will tell us that a life without correction cannot be a life that is full. The Book of Proverbs puts it more succinctly, Anyone who loves correction loves knowledge. Anyone who hates to be corrected is stupid (Pr 12,1). The Prophet Isaiah makes the need for correction very clear when he says, "Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high! Is this the manner of fasting I wish,

of keeping a day of penance: That a man bow his head like a reed, and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD. This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own." (Is 58,5-7)

In the Gospels, Jesus offers life in abundance to all who believe in him. In our good moments, we all know what that abundance of life can mean, on those occasions when we feel overwhelmed by just how good it is to be who we are and to do the things we are doing, in the place and with the people we are doing them. At other times, we sense the poverty of our lives, we are aware of weaknesses that we wish we did not have, we have made mistakes and do not know how to repair them. We carry on and hope that things will get better. The Gospel however invites us to something better. In the gospel we find the stories of, the prodigal son, Zacchaeus the tax collector, the Samaritan woman talking to Jesus as she drew water from the well, and the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth her cousin at the time when both of them were pregnant with their first child.

In each of these stories there is a discovery. The prodigal son discovers the poverty and desperation of his situation and returns home. Zacchaeus, discovers the person of Christ as someone who can raise him above the life he was living as a tax collector. The Samaritan woman in her conversation with Jesus discovers the truth about her own life and the truth about Jesus, the prophet, and proclaims to the people in the village that she has met someone who told her everything about herself, and the discovery was very good. In the story of the visitation, we see Mary and Elizabeth helping one another to a realisation of the gift they have received from God, each with child, each recognising the gift of God in herself and in the other. Fraternal correction is the pathway to a better, fuller life in recognising what God has given to us and letting that shape the way we live.

In the letters, of Paul, James and John, all with the idea of building up community, we find the encouragement to pray for one another, to speak directly to one another and to correct one another in love. The letter to the Galatians puts it this way: Brothers, even if a person is caught in some transgression, you who are spiritual should correct that one in a gentle spirit, looking to yourself, so that you also may not be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal 6,1-2)

Finally we have the words of Francis, Fraternal correction is an expression of the love and communion that has to be found in every Christian community. It is a service that we have to offer to one another. We have to be able to talk directly to our brother and never allow ourselves to engage in gossip about his shortcomings. (Angelus, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2014).

### **What kind of things need correction in our lives?**

We all need the help of others in order to understand what God is doing in our lives. Sometimes correction is needed in order to purify my understanding of God and what God is doing in my life. Very often we use God to justify our own chosen way of doing things. I may need correction in my image of myself. It is a fundamental principle that each of us has to know him or herself in order to build proper relationships. I may need help in helping me to see myself as others see me. I may need help and correction to help me to participate more fully in the life of the community. I may need help in getting me to care for the health

of the community. My way of expressing myself, my attention to personal hygiene, my absences from the community, my tendency to impose my own will, and my difficulty in sharing and being open and transparent about my life, all provide occasions for me to grow in the measure that I am able to correct what is wrong for my own sake and for the sake of the community.

There can be no fraternal correction without fraternal affirmation. Nobody responds well to constant criticism. There will always be more to be affirmed and to be corrected. Nevertheless we recognise that correction is a universal necessity. To refuse correction is a lack of wisdom. It is not the other who will correct me. I must correct myself. The other can help me to do that. All correction must be done in love, with a desire to build up and not pull down. It is not easy to correct or to be corrected. Therefore it has to be seen as a responsibility that each one has towards himself and towards the community to which he belongs. The gospel warns us not to move too quickly to correct another person: Remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter in your brother's eye. (Lk 6,42)

### **Possible methods of correction**

If we have understood and accepted the need for correction and affirmation, we then ask the question, how best to exercise correction? Here are some possible answers.

1) Following the letter of James, we see how a community gathers to pray for healing and reconciliation. A community that does this regularly is a healthy community. Our recognition of weakness and error implies the desire to overcome whatever diminishes us. That desire turns into prayer, recognising the need to be guided and strengthened by divine grace, in building the unity that makes community a positive reality. (James 5, 16-20)

2) In the Gospel of Matthew, we are offered a three-way approach to fraternal correction, based on the desire that no one should be lost. Here is the passage:

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 18, 15-18)

I try to imagine what this three phase process might look like in a normal community: I have difficulty with one of my brothers, it is a personal difficulty, with no effect on the life of the community. I seek the right moment to be able to have a conversation with him. In that conversation we see the difficulty on both sides and agree to change our behaviour and to accept our differences. I have a difficulty with my brother, that I believe affects not only me but also the life of the community. I begin by having a conversation with that brother. He accepts what I am saying, thanks me for intervening and change occurs. He rejects what I have to say, wonders what gives me the right to try to correct him, quotes me the scripture that speaks about the plank in my own eye. I don't get very far and the difficulty continues. I check this out with other brothers who share the difficulty. Together we agree to approach the brother hoping that when he sees it is not only me but others too

who see the difficulty, he might accept and things might change. This does not happen so that then the question arises, does this person's behaviour and do his attitudes suggest that he does not belong in the community. At that point, the continuation of that brother in that community comes very much into question.

3) We do not lose sight entirely of the tradition method called the Chapter of Faults. If we want to use this method, then it must be clear how it is to be used. Stories from the past suggest that in time it lost its value because it became merely a formality with little substance. However the idea that we find in our tradition of a moment in community when the members acknowledge their failings in public and listen to the correction offered by others has to be a possibility for us today.

In the understanding that such a meeting will then lead to sacramental confession, and enrich a confession that otherwise might be a formality is a further indication of the value of the Chapter of faults. To balance this, it is possible that the community might also be helped by a "Chapter of graces" in which the community as a community acknowledges the positive aspects of the community and of each member.

4) The community meeting, as envisaged by chapter 15 of the Rule of St. Albert invites the community to discuss the health of the community and the elements of order or disorder that are in the community. It recognises the possibility that in the community there may be excesses and recommends that these excesses be dealt with in charity. We need to pay attention the each of the words in the text: come together as a community, on Sundays or other days, to discuss the health of the community, and the presence or absence of order in the community. Along with that the community has to be aware of possible excesses in its life, too much work, too little work, too much recreation, too little recreation, too much liturgy, too little liturgy, too much silence, too little silence. Once the excess have been identified, the have to be corrected in love for the community and for each of its members. In this the work of salvation continues.

5) We also have to give value to the idea that the prior of a community or another person might offer a spiritual conference which helps the members to examine their consciences and their behaviour. This exercise can help the community greatly when the prior is able to present the ideals of religious life in a way that is encouraging and attractive and thus encourages the brothers to be as authentic as possible in the way the live their lives and in the way the community is being built.

All of these approaches are part of the culture that we have in the Church and in our religious communities. They demand that each member of community take responsibility for his own way of living and the wellbeing of the community. Ultimately this responds to the prayer of Jesus that all may be one, as he and the father are one. It responds to the belief that our unity is in Christ Jesus. He is the vine and we are the branches. And it responds to the desire of Jesus to seek out the one who might have strayed so that no one might be lost.

### III

## The Jubilee for Religious

### Put things right in the Jubilee year

Pope Francis in the letter *Spes non confundit* announcing the 2025 Jubilee Year reminds us of the meaning of this year in these words, "This is an ancient appeal, one drawn from the word of God, whose wisdom remains ever timely. It calls for acts of clemency and liberation that enable new beginnings: "You shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants" (Lev 25:10).

In addition the Dicastery for Consecrated Life added its own reflection by proposing the theme, "Pilgrims of Hope on the Path to Peace", inviting religious around the world to create their own Jubilee celebrations while at the same time organizing their pilgrimages to Rome.

What might the theme, Pilgrims of Hope, on the way to Peace, mean to us? Following the letter addressed to conferences of religious superiors, we look at the three pathways suggested in that letter, the cry of the poor, the care for our common home, and solidarity as pathways to peace.

#### The cry of the poor

To hear the cry of the poor is a contemplative exercise. It is encounter with God, because the cry we are talking about is not any kind of cry but the cry that the Spirit has given to people (Rm 8), the cry that comes from the deepest layers of their lives, where the soul, the spirit and the reality of the world meet. In those depths the human heart, in total sincerity, cries out to be united with God and to be free of all that takes their dignity away. Today the cry of displaced people echoes around the world in all those people who have had to leave their homes in order to gain safety and a better standard of living. It is but one example. Another is the cry in the human heart that reacts to the kind of culture in today's society that makes the human person nothing more than a consumer of goods, and is not interested in what people have to offer out of the giftedness that God has given them.

As Carmelites, we have come to know the dignity of the human person as one who is alive because of the gift of God. God has put so much of God's self into the human person that the dignity of that human person is now the dignity of one who is in conversation with God, and is capable of loving others with a love that comes from God. Contemplation unites us with God in hearing the cry of the poor and in answering that cry with all the energy and giftedness that we have received. God does not move without first hearing the cry. (Ex 3,8) Much of the work that is done in the world in the name of helping the poor is done without first hearing their cry. Without hearing the cry we will offer our own solutions, and these solutions will tend to be the ones that suit us, rather than being what will best serve the people we want to help. This Jubilee is a call for us to hear that cry in our immediate surroundings and in the world at large. and to be strong in our response to that cry once we hear it.

The Jubilee is a time for putting things right. Paths that have become crooked can be made straight again. Relationships that have been broken can be restored again. Dignity that has been denied and trampled upon can be respected again. What do we see as we look at



what is happening in the world? We may be struck by what is happening in families and the significant breakup of family life, the many people, many of them young, whose lives are destroyed by chemical dependence, the number of suicides today, including those of young people, the pollution of air and water and the effects of climate change, the persistence of the problem of homelessness even in societies that are wealthy, the corruption of politics and the failure to meet the needs of people for education and healthcare, and the violence that is committed against women and children in its many forms. The answer, as Pope Francis will tell us, is to see one another as brothers and sisters. Ultimately, that is the cry, to see ourselves as children of the one Father and sisters and brothers to one another.

### **Care for our common home**

To care for creation and its beauty does not depend entirely on convictions of faith. The human person by being open and truthful, by having an eye for beauty and a sense of justice has all that is necessary to be able to recognize the damage that is being done to our common home and the enormous inequality in the use of the worlds resources that is fueled by the vested interests of people who have no care for anything other than their own intimate circle and the empires they have built.

Faith adds deeper motivation to the care we have for our common home. In the vision of faith, we see ourselves as the beneficiaries not as the makers, we see ourselves as the custodians and not as the managers. We see warmth in our relationship with one another, with creation and with the God of Creation, rather than the cold calculation of profits. Unless our hearts bleed, unless we give expression to our own cry and take up the cry of others and of creation itself, we fail to respond to a dimension of our lives that is given to us by God, our ability to recognize in God the author of all and the one who both gives the cry and answers that cry. It is the cry of the poor and it is the cry of creation, longing for each one's dignity to be respected and cultivated in a love for all that the Creator has given us in our brothers and sisters and in our common home.

Carmelites possess this deeper motivation through their vocation of be contemplative believers, seeing deeply what comes from God, what are the signs of God's love in our lives and in our world, and committing themselves to work against the idolatry that destroys the environment and destroys human interrelationships in the same way that the actions of Ahab and Jezebel destroyed the soul and the land of their people in the days of Elijah. The words of Sirach speak to us very clearly today, "like a fire there appeared the prophet whose words were as a flaming furnace. Their staff of bread he shattered, in his zeal he reduced them to straits; By God's word he shut up the heavens and three times brought down fire. How awesome are you, ELIJAH! Whose glory is equal to yours?"

Today I hear in many places that there is a need to rekindle our interest in justice and peace and the integrity of creation and to move with the Church and its many organisations and with secular organisations in this Jubilee year to make sure that that prophetic gift of Elijah in Carmel be part of a very energetic commitment to preserving our common home and working to remove the inequalities in the world around us, in order to give everyone the respect their dignity demands. We can do this by being careful about our own way of living, by our works of charity and compassion and by our preaching, that very privileged moment when we can open peoples' eyes and hearts to the truth of what is going on and the demands of justice and solidarity.

## **Solidarity**

In the time of Pope John Paul II, the Church began to speak about solidarity as the new word for love. We might find inspiration also in the idea that St. John of the Cross gives us in saying that love overcomes all distance. Solidarity overcomes distance. We believe in a God who does not remain at a distance but seeks every way, including the incarnation of the Word, to remove the distance that might separate us. Likewise as brothers and sisters we strive to overcome distance and separation in our lives. By being close, we know one another better, see more clearly what is needed, and have the opportunity to live in empathy with those whom life and God has given to us as our companions on the journey. On the opposite of solidarity there is exclusion and rejection. There are many people in the world today to whom the world would like to say, "Go away!. We would be better off without you". Our vocation to solidarity means that we are willing to embrace and cherish every child of God, particularly the least valued and help them to see their value in the eyes of God. By standing close to others in solidarity we know their suffering hear their cry and share their condition until by walking together we are able to help one another find our dignity. It is so easy to think that my life might be better without the inconvenience of other people who are outside my circle of loved-ones. The Jubilee reminds us of the bond of love that we have with every child of God, helping us to recall that phrase that we now have in our constitutions to see with the eyes of God and to love with the heart of God. (Const 81)

We will keep in mind the two important dates for consecrated religious in the course of the jubilee year, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, the World Day of Consecrated Life, and the days from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of October designated as the Jubilee for Consecrated life. While these two dates are important in themselves, we know that it is through a sustained commitment throughout this year and beyond that we will go some distance in achieving the goals that have been proposed for this year. Rome wasn't built in a day. We will not change anything unless we engage in constructive conversation, evaluation and planning with one another.

We see in the call to synodality in the Church a very happy coincidence between the thrust of the jubilee year and our own way of being brothers in community. Through our acceptance and learning of the art of solidarity, as a gift and a demand for the Church today, we will engage in the kind of conversation that will open up a new vision of reality and elicit the commitment of all who take part in the conversation that identifies the truth of what is going on, in the Church, in people lives and in the world in which we live. Once that truth is recognized, the response of people who believe in the Gospel, are committed to following Jesus Christ and who now live in consecrated communities, will be very clear and unswerving, once we accept the call to participate in this work, by engaging in the conversation that will lead us in the direction of salvation in accordance with our vocation to be consecrated people living in allegiance to Jesus Christ. That conversation is widespread. It takes place at table, at community meetings, in ongoing formation courses and at chapters. The challenge is to participate, contribute and learn.

## **Conclusion**

I offer you these thoughts, not as the answer to all our challenges but as part of a reflection that is going on in our Order, under the three headings, consecrated life today, fraternal affirmation and fraternal correction and the celebration of the 2025 Jubilee Year.

When we look at these three gifts to us and to the Church, our first desire is to give thanks and then to dedicate our lives to the challenges that they contain. Carpe diem. Let us not let this moment pass without helping one another to understand this moment and to respond to its challenges, relying on the gift of God and our ability to help one another know the gift and ask for it more and more.

To all of you, my brothers, a word of thanks for the joy of sharing with you our life as brothers of the order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel. I find great inspiration in visiting the communities of our Order where again and again I find brothers who love their vocation, and who seek the best ways to live in accordance with that vocation. Blessed are they who hear the word of God and put it into practice.

In this Jubilee Year we take up again the recommendation of our Rule, to put on the armour of God and do everything in the Word of the Lord. In this we will find salvation for ourselves and for all with whom we live and work for the building up of God's kingdom.



Rome, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mícheál O'Neill".

Mícheál O'Neill, O.Carm  
Prior General

