

## Carmelite NGO 2 – Carmelite Institute Presentation 7/19/21

### The Work of the Carmelite NGO

Greetings and blessings to everyone. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you a brief history and work of the Carmelite NGO. “In the work of promoting justice, building peace, and ensuring that human dignity and human rights are respected throughout the world, you (the United Nations) have the full and complete support of the Catholic Church.” John Paul II, 1995.

Discussion on creating a Carmelite NGO (non-governmental organization) began in September 1999 in Bamberg, Germany at a meeting of Carmelite Provincials. There they presented the idea of establishing a Carmelite NGO affiliated with the United Nations. The idea was then presented at a meeting of the major superiors of Congregations that was held in February 2000 in Focene, Italy. A proposal was made to obtain accreditation with the United Nations as an NGO for the entire Carmelite Family – Friars, Brothers, Nuns, Congregations of Sisters and Third Order Lay.

The question was asked – what are the benefits of affiliating with the United Nations?

1 - The United Nations offers a structure to put our faith into action.

2 – The United Nations is the only global forum open to all peoples to work for concrete standards for a more just, humane, and peaceful world.

3 – The United Nations is the only world body where structural injustices can be addressed, exposed and at least in part alleviated.

Fr. Miceal O’Neill and Sr. Jane Remson began investigating what are the steps needed to affiliate with the United Nations.

What are some things to consider in forming a Carmelite NGO?

Today more than any other time in recorded history, if we are to serve, we need to understand the economic and political realities of our time. Key words for our time are economic development. Economic development to be just must be based on human rights.

There are 3 elements in human rights based economic development that must be considered.

1 – poverty reduction.

2 – social integration, that is people centered – the economy exists for the people, not people for the economy.

3 – and jobs that pay a living wage.

Human rights are the foundation upon which the Carmelite NGO is built.

2001 in the name of the Carmelite Family, the Carmelite NGO received affiliation with the Department of Public Information (now called the Department of Global Communications).

2009 the Carmelite NGO received Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.

2012 became affiliated with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

2018 became accredited with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

What are the functions of these affiliations and why are they beneficial?

Whatever affiliation the Carmelite NGO has must assist the men and women of the Carmelite Family to actively participate in creating a more peaceful, just and loving world in advocating and caring for the spiritual and human needs of the family and the environment.

These affiliations provide the Carmelite NGO a structured way for the Carmelite Family to be effective in today's world in addressing the needs of our times.

What do these affiliations allow us to do?

**Department of Global Communications:** By an International Protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) the Carmelite NGO can:

Participate in the Annual DPI/NGO Conference.

Participate in weekly briefings on UN-related issues.

Participate in the quarterly communication workshops.

Access to the NGO Resource Center.

Receive monthly shipments of UN information materials to partner NGOs.

**Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC):** There are currently 4,045 NGOs with Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC worldwide. Being an NGO with Special Consultative Status, we can:

Participate in the formal deliberations of the United Nations.  
Have access not only to ECOSOC, but also to many subsidiary bodies; such as, the Commission for Social Development, the Commission of the Status of Women, the Population and Development Commission, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Forum of the UN on Forests and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, to the various UN human rights mechanisms, ad-hoc processes on small arms, as well as special events organized by the President of the General Assembly.

**United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** UNFCCC is an international environmental treaty. As an officially affiliated member representing the issue of sustainable development, the Carmelite NGO can attend sessions and exchange opinions with other participants, including delegates at the Conference of the Parties, COP.

**United Nations Environment Program (UNEP):** The UNEP is the main global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development with the UN system and serves as an authorized defender of the global environment.

As an organization accredited by UNEP, the Carmelite NGO can participate in regional and global conferences, meetings, and contribute to regional consultations, the Global Forum of Major Groups and Stakeholders, intergovernmental meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee and the Assembly of UNEP.

The Carmelite NGO has its focus in four areas; Education for all children (girls and boys), Freedom of Belief that allows Carmelites to share the Elijan tradition with Judaism and Islam, Human Rights; especially the right to food and the right to personal security; especially human trafficking, and Sustainable development; especially climate change. The selections that were chosen are those where the Carmelite NGO can best achieve its goal of actively participating in creating a more peaceful, just, and loving world for all of

creation. The Carmelite NGO actively works for the common good of all no matter where they live.

Carmelites are most often found in churches, schools, retreat centers, and monasteries. But Carmelites also belong in the marketplace. Carmelites belong anywhere where people will benefit from Carmelite spirituality and ministries. The United Nations happens to be the most comprehensive of these marketplaces in our world today.

The Carmelite NGO has played an important role within the Carmelite Family and is a natural outgrowth of our contemplative spirituality. Carmel has been synonymous with prayer since its beginnings back in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when the first group gathered on Mt. Carmel. They chose to establish their home in a place of strife in order to spread peace by their quiet lives dedicated to God through prayer and contemplation. As they spread throughout the world over the centuries, Carmelites branched out into various apostolic ministries, touching the lives of people in practical ways wherever they went. Running through all their ministerial commitments was the commitment to a life of prayer that permeated everything they did. Carmelites are no different today.

The preamble of the United Nations Charter states, “We the peoples of the United Nations are determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women, and of nations large and small.”

The Carmelite NGO offers a way for the Carmelite Family to expose the United Nations to both the voices of the people and the values of Carmelite way of life.

Let me share with you a few examples of the Carmelite NGO working with the Carmelite Family.

The four pillars of involvement are: Education, Freedom of Belief, Human Rights and Sustainable Development.

**EDUCATION:** When Pope Francis released his encyclical *Laudato Si, On Care For Our Common Home*, in 2015, the Carmelite NGOs first reaction was to demonstrate a way to bring *Laudato Si* to students. The Carmelite NGO created a curriculum for secondary education using the teachings in *Laudato Si* as a way to teach Catholic Social Justice Principles



and show how these principles impact people in all aspects of daily life. The lesson plans in the curriculum enable teachers to incorporate *Laudato Si* into the entire high school curriculum. Today the curriculum is used in countries around the world. The most recent country is Nigeria. *A Parish Study Guide for Laudato Si* for adults was also created.

The Carmelite NGO continues its partnership with the Catholic Climate Covenant by teaching one of the sections on *Laudato Si* for teachers at Creighton University.

**FREEDOM OF BELIEF:** In Indonesia the Carmelite NGO promotes Christian and Muslim acceptance of one another and friendship through its programs of Study Houses and Centers of Learning. These programs provide a place for poor Christian and Muslim children to gather for a meal, enrichment and support. The Carmelite NGO works to create peace and understanding among people of all faiths; especially that of the indigenous peoples, on the island nation of Indonesia.

**HUMAN RIGHTS:** The United Nations estimates over 300 million people are victims of human trafficking around the world, generating over \$80 billion annually. The Carmelite

NGO works with the Carmelite Family against human trafficking, especially in Indonesia and Zimbabwe.

In 2013, Pope Francis stated, “We must not allow these women, men and children to be treated as objects, to be deceived, raped, often sold and resold for various purposes, and in the end either killed or left devastated in mind and body, only to be finally thrown away or abandoned. It is shameful.”

Carmelites in Zimbabwe are working to prevent Africans from being victimized and to rescue victims from this modern day slavery. Its program, Agape Leona, helps survivors spread the word to other young people throughout the region, warning them about human trafficking and enhancing their self-esteem so they are less vulnerable. Agape Leona helps survivors learn business practices and skills to help them start their own businesses; such as, dressmaking, baking, raising chickens, selling eggs to name a few. The survivors also learn computer skills to help them obtain a job. Recently the International Labor Organization (ILO) reported an increase in child labor especially among boys ages 5-17 yrs.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** In his encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis said, “Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us...it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn.” LS 160

The Carmelite NGO works with UNFCCC and will participate in COP26 (Conference of the Parties) held in Glasgow, Scotland this November. There the Carmelite NGO along with the Vatican will show two videos produced by the Carmelite NGO, Sea Level Rise in Louisiana and Sea Level Rise in Indonesia.

The Carmelite NGO works with the Dicastery of the Vatican and the Global Catholic Climate Movement (later to be renamed The *Laudato Si* Movement).

Climate change is perhaps the most important issue facing the world today. We see the effects in the frequency and intensity of storms, droughts, tornados, and the changes in sea levels. We also see the effects in crop failure and an increase in hunger and higher prices for food.

- Let me share the effects of sea level rise in Louisiana –
- Show video –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7oUr7e61i8>

Sea level rise, the global economic structure, cultures and religious worship are some of the effects of climate change.

“We call on all people and nations to recognize the serious and potentially irreversible impacts of global warming caused by the anthropogenic emission of greenhouse gases and other pollutants, and by changes in forests, wetlands, grasslands, and other land uses.” Stated by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 2011.

When we asked, what is the Carmelite NGO doing in the world?

The answers given were: The Carmelite NGO is

Creating understanding among all faith communities.

Promoting peace in regions of conflict.

Providing new opportunities for children and adults in poverty.

Ensuring justice and human rights.

Sharing Pope Francis’ teachings on caring for God’s creation.

Promoting earth-care education for youth on all continents.

Care and love for suffering people.

Working for sustainable development in rich and poor countries.

Fighting human trafficking and supporting and re-training survivors.

Ensuring fresh air, clean water of all people.

Caring for the elderly.

The Carmelite NGO is a living, breathing ministry of the Carmelite Family that strives to bring about a more peaceful, just and loving world. The Carmelite NGO strives to accomplish this by being present **IN** the world, but not **OF** the world.

May Our Lady of Mt. Carmel continue accompanying us as we journey with our sisters and brothers through our ministry at the United Nations.

Thank you and God bless you.

For more information on the work of the Carmelite NGO, go to our website at: [carmelitengo.org](http://carmelitengo.org)