



DICASTERO  
PER GLI ISTITUTI DI VITA CONSACRATA  
E LE SOCIETÀ DI VITA APOSTOLICA

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Prot. n. 2566/2020

## DECREE

With the decree issued by the Diocesan Bishop, of the *Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity* (Arlington, Texas, USA), on June 1, 2020, Mother Teresa Agnes, O.C.D., was dismissed from the abovementioned Institute for reasons of delicts committed by her against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue (canons 695, 1395 § 3) and for stubborn disobedience (canon 696).

On July 3, 2023, Mother Teresa Agnes sent this Dicastery her full recourse against the aforementioned decree of dismissal.

This *Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, upon the completion of an examination of the facts, circumstances, and proceedings in this matter, finds in favor of the Recurrent, Mother Teresa Agnes, given invalidating errors both *in procedendo et in discernendo* in the execution of the case for dismissal lodged against her. Therefore, this Curial Institution finds as follows:

Firstly, the allegations charged to the Recurrent regarding her admitted misconduct against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue (canons 695 and 1395 §3) does not prove that these acts were perpetrated by the exertion of force or violence, or by her abusing her ecclesiastical authority as prioress.

The argument advanced by the bishop claims that Mother Teresa Agnes abused her authority because, as Prioress, she had the unique privilege of having access to electronic means of communication, which allowed her to establish contact with her accomplice. But this argument does not prove that the misuse of her exclusive access to a cell phone and the Internet access constituted an act of abuse of authority perpetrated to coerce another person to perform a sexual act. Additionally, Mother Teresa Agnes possessed no real or even imagined authority over her alleged accomplice, a grown man (and ordained cleric), which could have made him subject to Mother Teresa Agnes' authority as Prioress.

Secondly, the additional grounds for the dismissal of the recurrent refer to her grave disobedience to the legitimate precepts of a superior (c. 696 § 1). It is established that in the execution of the process for dismissal, Mother Teresa Agnes was not afforded the full fifteen days allotted to respond fully to the canonical warnings. Since the aforementioned procedural element is to be considered necessary *ad validitatem* by the universal law of the Church, this grave deficiency invalidates the recurrent's dismissal on the grounds of canon 697 § 1.

**WHEREFORE**, having evaluated the acts in possession of this Dicastery, and having ascertained that both the Recurrent and the Bishop of Fort Worth have been accorded the faculty to express their observations, and having also heard the opinion of the *Congresso* of the Dicastery on March 12, 2024, this same *Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life*, for the reasons stated, with the present Decree **ACCEPTS**, in accordance with canon 1739, the appeal in question, and, thereby, **NULLIFIES** the decree of dismissal of Mother Teresa Agnes from the *Discalced Carmelite Nuns of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity*, issued by the Diocesan Bishop on June 1, 2023.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Vatican, April 30, 2024.



João Braz Card. de Aviz  
Prefect

Sr. Simona Brambilla, M.C.  
Sister Simona Brambilla, M.C.  
Secretary