

General Archive of the Carmelite Order

The General Archives of the Carmelite Order (AGOC) was established in 1593 by Prior General Giovanni Stefano Chizzola. From the very beginning it was not configured as an archive of material coming from the numerous Carmelite houses scattered throughout the Order (provincial and local), but rather as an archive of the General Curia alone (for this reason it was called “General Archives”). It exclusively reflects the activity of the Prior General and his council, and its various branches (procurator general, general postulator, councilors, general chapters etc.), and has remained so to this day. On some rare occasions it has acquired material from other institutions linked to the Order.

Chizzola had the documents issued by him and his Curia secured in the Roman house of Santa Maria in Traspontina, because this building had served, since 1550, as the seat of the General Curia itself. Before that date, the priors general resided in the province from which they came and the archive was itinerant, without a permanent location.

Between the 18th and 19th centuries, part of the documentation produced by the general procurator, the Order’s delegate to the Holy See, was also incorporated into the “AGOC.” During the Middle Ages, this office of the Curia was itinerant, while in the 17th-18th centuries it had settled, alternately and for long or short periods, in the Roman houses of Traspontina, San Martino ai Monti and San Giuliano. Finally, during the 18th century, it was permanently transferred to the headquarters of the General Curia of the Order, along with its particular archive, which was incorporated as a section of the General Archive.

Recently, the “AGOC” has also acquired historical documents concerning saints, blessed, and venerables of the Order and their processes of canonization: in fact, until 2017, this documentation was preserved in the office of the Postulator General of the Order, that deals with the causes of beatification and canonization. Thus, with the deposit and transfer of the aforementioned papers, a section was formed reflecting the activities of the postulator general and named after that office.

The material dating before 1593 includes 12th century parchments, as well as a small group of documents from the 13th century mostly from the archives of the Procurator General, resident in the *Romanæ Curia*. A large part of the material resulting from the activity of the prior general and his councilors, before 1593, has been lost.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the “AGOC” was divided into two large sections: *Commune Ordinis* and *Provinciae*. Each series within these divisions was marked by a letter of the alphabet, and within each series, units were designated by Arabic numbers. Some groups of documents, concerning particular issues, were bound together in volumes. In the second half of the 18th century the archive was given a new order, with its own signature. The sections were: *Commune Ordinis*, *Provinciae*, *Procurator Generalis* e *Postulator Generalis*. Within each section, documents were bound together largely according to provenance.

A few years after the suppression of the Congregation of Mantua in 1783, “AGOC” accepted its archives, which were located in San Crisogono in Rome. As a result, a new document series was begun, called «Mantuana». Over time, other archives, originally autonomous, documenting entities linked to the General Curia of the Order, were also aggregated to the General Archive itself. In addition to the collection of the Mantuan Congregation, the archives incorporated the records of the house of Santa Maria in Traspontina and, in the 20th century, those of the International College of Saint Albert.

In the centuries of the modern age, there was no shortage of disastrous events that caused damage to “AGOC”, which had already suffered serious losses as a result of the flooding of the Tiber River at the end of the 16th century. The greatest damage and losses were caused by flooding due to rain in 1754 and by a fire that occurred around 1780. These were followed, with additional losses when the French removed part of the material belonging to the *Commune Ordinis* and *Provinciae* sections, and almost the entire collection of the Congregation of Mantua during the Napoleonic period.

Furthermore, during the events of the Roman Republic in 1849, “AGOC” suffered new damage, even if it is not possible to establish the extent of those losses. After the unification of Italy in 1870, with the application of the laws for the suppression of religious corporations in Rome and the territories of former Papal State, part of the material was taken over by the State Archive of

Rome and is still there today. It is the fate suffered of almost the entire collection produced by the Traspontina house, especially in its oldest section, and by numerous archival units extracted from the *Commune Ordinis*, particularly parchments.

Since the 20th century, the General Archive of the Carmelite Order has been located, along with the Carmelite Library and the *Institutum Carmelitanum*, at the International Center of Saint Albert (formerly the International College) in Rome. In 1901, Prior General Galli had the documentation transferred from Traspontina to the recently constructed college.

The present historical reconstruction reproduces, with some revisions, the unpublished notes of Father Emanuele Boaga, O. Carm., former general archivist of the Order: from AGOC, Personal Archive "Emanuele Boaga, O. Carm.", Notes: General Archive of the Carmelites (historical section).