Fr. William Harry, O.Carm.

From a very quiet beginning in December 2001, with its approval by the United Nations as a non-governmental organization affiliated to the UN Department of Public Information, The Carmelite NGO has grown into a worldwide organization which impacts the lives of people around the globe.

The Carmelite NGO focuses on four major issues: education, freedom of belief, human rights, and sustainable development. Within the sustainable development area fall the issues of financing for development and climate change. Within the human rights area comes human trafficking. At the 2012 annual meeting of the Carmelite NGO’s coordinating team in Rome, it was decided to focus on the issue of human trafficking.

**Status Within the UN**

Initially, the Carmelite NGO was affiliated to the UN’s Department of Public Information as is the standard practice for NGOs just entering the UN system. The purpose of a DPI NGO is to actively assist and encourage national information services, educational institutions and other governmental and non-governmental organizations of all kinds interested in spreading information about the United Nations. However, the Carmelite NGO decided early on that we would analyze all the issues through a “Carmelite filter” and speak out on issues as Carmelites, and not just as reporters for the UN.

After the initial required waiting period, the Carmelite NGO began its application to become a member of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which would allow us to support the work of the United Nations and to promote knowledge of its principles and activities in accordance with our own aims and purposes. This allows us a place at the table where issues are being discussed.

Broadly speaking, NGOs cooperate with the UN in four ways: 1) participation in conferences, summits or other events; 2) establishment of working relations with particular departments, programs, or specialized agencies of the UN system based on mutual interest and potential joint activity; 3) obtaining of consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); 4) dissemination of information through publications, radio, television, or public activities.