



# FROM THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES TO THE TIME OF SIGNS

*Testimonies*

*General Curia OFM*  
Rome 2002

## *Contents*

OBEDIENT TO THE SPIRIT...	3
SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE “NEW FRATERNITIES” OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM	7
THE SCHOOL OF FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY	11
ITINERANT FRATERNITY AT THE SERVICE OF THE DISPLACED (The Province of St. Paul the Apostle, Colombia)	15
THE PROVINCE OF WEST FRANCE (Saint Palais)	19
THE FIRST ITINERANT COMMUNITY (Province of Korea)	25
THE FRATERNITY OF KANG-NUNG (Korea)	27
PROJECT OF LIFE FOR AN ITINERANT FRATERNITY (Italy-Romania)	31
A PRAYER EXPERIENCE (V. Province of St. Francis Solanus in Argentina)	35
THE EXPERIENCE OF ITINERANCY IN THE FORMATION PROJECT “ONLY ONE LOAF” (Frascati-Roma, Italy)	37
SHARING FRANCISCAN LIFE WITH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (St. John the Baptist Prov., Cincinnati, Ohio, USA)	41
ST. FRANCIS INN (Philadelphia, U.S.A.)	45
THE FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY OF MOUNT IRENEUS (West Clarksville, N.Y., USA)	51
ITINERANT EVANGELISING FRATERNITY (St. Charles Borromeo Province of Lombardy, Italy)	57
FRATERNITY OF “SANTURTZI” OF BIZKAIA (Franciscan Province of Arantzazu, Spain)	61
LIVING WITH THE POOR IN SIDNEY (Holy Spirit Province, Australia/ New Zealand)	65
FRATERNITY OF VALLADOLID (Franciscan Province of Arantzazu, Spain)	71
THE FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY OF CELLE-LIGURE (Province of the Friars Minor of Genoa, Italy)	75
Contents	79

### OBEDIENT TO THE SPIRIT...

---

*The pages that follow try to respond to so many questions that are addressed to me during the numerous visits to the Entities of the Order. Many Friars, indeed, ask me: "What do they do in the other Entities to respond to the changing demands of the world in which we live? What new forms of evangelisation are being tried out?"*

*As a first attempt at answering, we offer these few examples that we have collected from the different Continents. It is certain that there are many other experiences, perhaps even more original ones, that do not appear in this booklet simply because we have not come to know about them or the time or means of gathering them was lacking. It would be nice to initiate in this way a broader interprovincial collaboration in order to stimulate the imagination and generosity of all.*

*It is not a question of a new "document" (still another!), but a fraternal communication that could serve as an inspiration to other Friars, of an encouragement for us also to continue to play our part, as Francis did in his time (Cf. 2Cel 214).*

*Seeking new ways of living in fraternity, new occasions for dialogue with the world, does not mean condemning what was done or is being done, or denying our rich tradition. It is a question of committing ourselves to renewing our adhesion to the Lord. Gospel fidelity is always the source of audacity and creativity. Therefore, the new ways of evangelisation can and should exist side by side with the traditional ways, without mutual exclusion, without condemnation or prejudice, but also helping each other in order to have a more significant presence in our society.*

*"We should like to see Jesus", some Greeks said to Philip (Jn 12,21). So many men and women today ask us the same question, wishing to understand better the message that our life contains. We have the responsibility to make our charism ever more significant, so that our style of life can find an evangelis-*

---

ing transparency, clarity and force in order to be a sign and prophecy.

We always have need of theocentric, gospel and prophetic fraternities committed to embodying the Gospel in different apostolic and missionary forms. We are urgently asked not to break off the search for the living and true God who is the reason for our hope, for that God who does not allow himself be imprisoned in our expectation, but wants us to open up without fear to the truth of His presence. He awaits suitable answers from us, concrete signs within the history that is unfolding, that is changing and risks leaving us on the margins.

May the Spirit help us to be always more faithful to our mission and to experience in depth the beauty of the Franciscan vocation to which we have been called.

Br. Giacomo Bini, ofm  
Minister General

to a broader sharing with whoever should drop by, even for a few hours.

### **The Life of the Fraternity**

The rhythm of the Fraternity's life is clearly set by common prayer, always open to all.

#### **MONDAY –FRIDAY**

06.00 Office of Readings - Meditation  
07.00 Morning Prayer  
15.00 Mid-day Prayer - Silence  
18.30 Celebration of the Eucharist – Evening Prayer  
21.30 Night Prayer

#### **SATURDAY**

06.00 Celebration of the Eucharist – Morning Prayer  
15.00 Mid-day Prayer  
18.30 Evening Prayer/reading of Sunday Gospel  
21.30 Night Prayer.

#### **SUNDAY**

08.00 Morning Prayer  
10.30 Celebration of the Eucharist  
15.00 Mid-day Prayer  
18.30 Evening Prayer  
21.30 Night Prayer

al and community prayer that express the primacy of the spiritual life.

And then fraternal listening, seeking awareness among the Friars through dialogue, frequent questioning on the progress of life, fraternal correction as an assumption of responsibility for one's brother. And again, the listening to and discernment of the signs of the times in order to be able, by responding to the provocations of the more significant daily events and of external reality, to create a style of life that is flexible in its timetable and ways of expression and capable of integrating itinerancy as an attitude that involves its whole existence.

- b) *Simplicity and sobriety of life.* Though conscious of our incapacity to live poverty radically, we consider it fundamental that the choice of living quarters, the use of goods and the gathering of objects are carried out in a style of essentiality. It is important that the Friars live from their work and assume having little as the criteria of daily life, giving privilege to the style and witness of life in their commitment to evangelisation.
- c) *Openness to reception.* In harmony with the space, commitments and style of life, the Fraternity is disposed to receive those, Friars or non-Friars, who wish to pass a few days or a short period dedicated to reflection, to reconciliation with themselves and to prayer.
- d) *Church and Provincial insertion.* In seeking the place it seemed important to us to value where we were not already present and where, therefore, our Fraternity would be desirable. The Friar priests make themselves available at weekends for collaboration in the pastoral services of the area in accordance with the requirements of the Bishop and/or the pastor. The Friars are open to occasional requests for meetings, retreats, etc., from both the local Church and Province; requests that are evaluated in accordance with the internal balances and development of life. At weekends the Fraternity is open

*“We always have need of theocentric, gospel and prophetic fraternities committed to embodying the Gospel in different apostolic and missionary forms”*



## THE FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY OF CELLE-LIGURE

*(Province of the Friars Minor of Genoa, Italy)*

---

### **The meaning of a presence...**

Our experience of life does not have the pretension of proposing a new and proper way of living Franciscanism today. We think, however, that even this small sign can help in rediscovering the vitality of the Franciscan way of life by expressing some aspects that we believe should result in a more immediate reading and an easier understanding: the rediscovery of gospel radicalism, of a simple, poor and prayerful life, lived in a small receptive Fraternity and working towards self-financing.

We are not protected or hidden by great structures that are difficult to run. It is not a hermitage, far from inhabited places and isolated. Nor is it a Fraternity inserted in especially difficult social contexts. It is rather a kind of “family Fraternity”, desirous of breaking the bread of the Word with those who come to seek silence, prayer, sharing of burdens and an answer to vital questions.

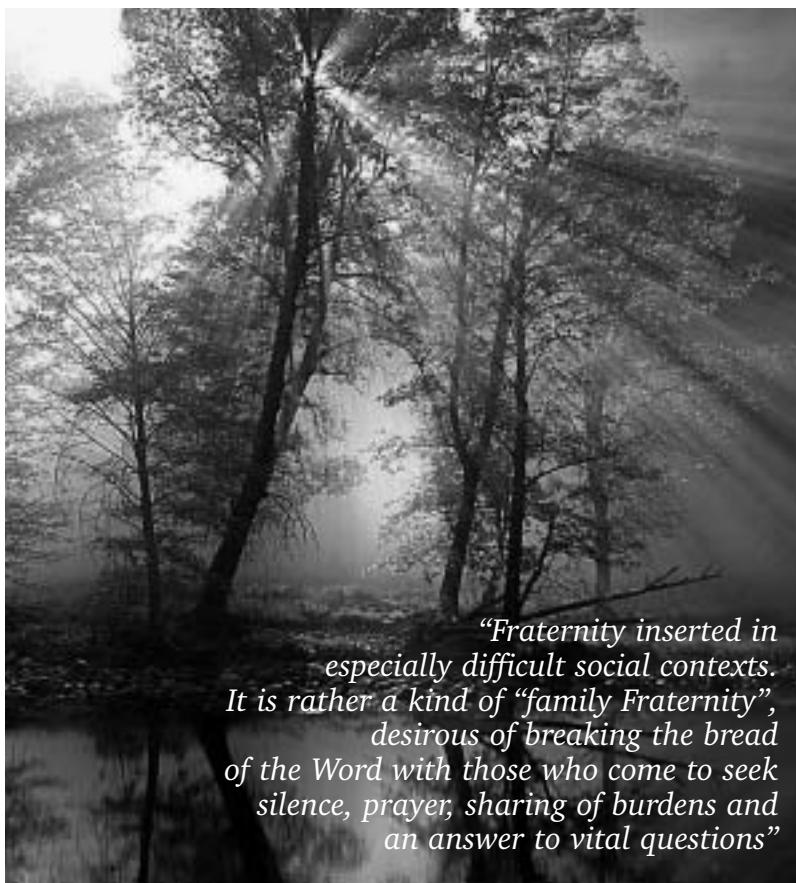
To carry out the project we believed it necessary to have a place of easy access but of tranquil nature. We found it in an old farmhouse in the heights of Celle Ligure in the area of Pecorile, which also consists of ample grounds and a small wood. This is the first settlement of the Friars Minor in the diocese of Savona-Noli.

### **What kind of project?**

Our Provincial Chapter of June 2000 accepted the proposal to open a Fraternity based on listening, simplicity and sobriety of life open to the reception of others, inserted in the local Church and in the life of the Province.

*a) Listening.* First of all to God, with a life centred on the Word and Eucharist, with prolonged periods of person-

Provincial Definitory, offers transparency and information on the progress of the project, participates in the activities of the Secretariates and Commissions of the Province, visits the other Fraternities and always has space to welcome the Friars of the Province.



*“Fraternity inserted in especially difficult social contexts. It is rather a kind of “family Fraternity”, desirous of breaking the bread of the Word with those who come to seek silence, prayer, sharing of burdens and an answer to vital questions”*

## SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE “NEW FRATERNITIES” OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

### The Debate

About 25 years ago, between 1960 and 1975, our Order learned of a movement of “small Fraternities” that has involved about 750 Friars, especially in the French-speaking countries (cf. AOM, June 1977). These Fraternities later disappeared but not without having had an important influence on the life of the entire Order. In recent years an analogous movement has appeared, driven especially by young Friars, who have celebrated their 5<sup>th</sup> European Meeting. Even if the times have changed, like the generations, it does not appear to be pointless to question the experience of the past and the reflections that it gave rise to.

### The starting point: the project

It is not possible to set out, to seek to live something new without a project, a proposal. For us it can only deal with *vita evangelii Jesu Christi*: to accept the revelation of God and of his love in Jesus Christ, to make it the centre and distinctive sign of our whole existence, to live it in fraternity and in the humble service of all. This is the “heart” that shows the path to be followed, that is put at the centre of everything and on which it is necessary to agree. The situations and places in which this project is carried out, no matter how important, are still secondary.

### The founding core group

To begin it is necessary to have convinced people, who know what they want. Two or three are needed, very mature humanly, autonomous and complementary, because we are not dealing with a project of one person, but of a group. The initiative, matured by experience, contacts, reflections and discussion, should spring from them,

not from decisions, very generous but theoretical, of Chapters or Councils.

### **The role of authority**

To authority (Ministers, Chapters, etc...) belongs the duty of stimulating, discerning and encouraging. It can – and should – provoke, awaken, seek out suitable people, defend it from distrust and misunderstanding. It will be preoccupied also with doing it so that the “traditional” communities and the new Fraternities will maintain contacts and help each other.

### **Putting the project into practice**

Three Friars form the minimum basis, which must be increased as soon as possible: with less than five (or four!) Friars, a Fraternity cannot last long.

The concrete programme must assure a just *hierarchy* and *coherence* between the three founding values of our vocation: life of faith, fraternity, and presence among others (mission). A true focus of liturgical and personal prayer requires interiorisation, calm, time and fidelity. Truly *fraternal relationships* need the habitual presence of each and everyone. The *mission* consists, first of all, in witness, which is given through our way of life and in the open welcome to whoever comes to us or to whoever we join.

While the small Fraternities of 25 years ago sought to become inserted especially in the world of work, in its hopes and struggles, those of today, marked by the topic of ecology, are more oriented towards the world of the poor and marginalised. In both cases the desire is to share their condition.

These types of “insertion” respond to different needs and movements that concern society and the Church: they are, at the same time, appeal and grace. And still they are not the centre of our project: whatever our situations and insertions may be, we are continually called to live, in the

### **Evangelisation (cf. GGCC 85)**

To carry out the duty of announcing Christ and Christ crucified, the Friars propose to: rediscover the presence of God, especially among the poor (cf. GGCC 87,3); be a Fraternity that evangelises through and from life; develop a multi-purpose pastoral activity based on an analysis of reality, secularisation and work with non-believers; to publicise the significant aspects of the Franciscan charism, such as equality, solidarity, celebration, recognition of the good, giving thanks, etc.; celebrating the faith rooted in the people, according to the style of St. Francis (cf. GGCC 97); be a possibility for knowing and experiencing the Franciscan way of following the Gospel for whoever is seeking or interested in it.

For such a purpose the Fraternity takes care of: Fraternal life; social-political study and analysis in community and personally; participation in social-cultural movements of the district; presence, as a help, in the parish; collaboration with committed groups (human rights, Caritas, Justice and Peace, etc.); work in youth pastoral activity and in the pastoral care of vocations; group animation.

### **Belonging to the Province (cf. GGCC 115,2)**

To live the Franciscan charism in a new way, in conformity with the sentiments of the Church and in accordance with the life of Fraternity, the Friars of the project pursue the following objectives: to embody at the present time the richness of the Franciscan charism; to bring the reality of the Province closer to popular environments; to make the presence of the Province in the area of Castilla possible; to contribute to the renewal of the Province; to respond to the question of re-modelling the Fraternities; to be a place of encounter and welcome for all the Friars of the Province.

To put all what is proposed into motion, the Fraternity of Valladolid keeps up a constant dialogue with the

logue and dynamic of confrontation; communal discernment of activities, commitments, work, etc.; common purse; space in the dwelling for welcoming others.

### **Life of prayer (cf. GGCC 20)**

Mindful of the essential dimension of the life of the Friar Minor, which resides in giving glory to the Lord and in restoring all good to Him, the Friars set themselves to celebrate the love and presence of God each day (cf. GGCC 20), to study profoundly the Word of God (cf. GGCC 22), to live “action and contemplation” in unity, to develop interiority on the basis of the reality in which they live.

To make this option really concrete, the Fraternity sets aside places and times to develop, personally and in community, the “spirit of prayer and devotion”. There is an Oratory in the House, each morning there is an hour of communal and personal prayer, a short community prayer meeting to orientate the day’s work, weekly celebration of the Eucharist in Fraternity and, on Sundays, in the parish of the district and there is a monthly retreat.

### **Minority (cf. GGCC 66)**

To become evermore like Christ, the members of the Fraternity, in seeking and working for the kingdom of God, have the “lesser in society” as their point of reference (cf. GGCC 66,1), are in solidarity with the marginalised (cf. GGCC 66, 2), devote themselves to opposing unjust structures and favouring the recognition of rights (cf. GGCC 69) and trying to realise a simple way of life.

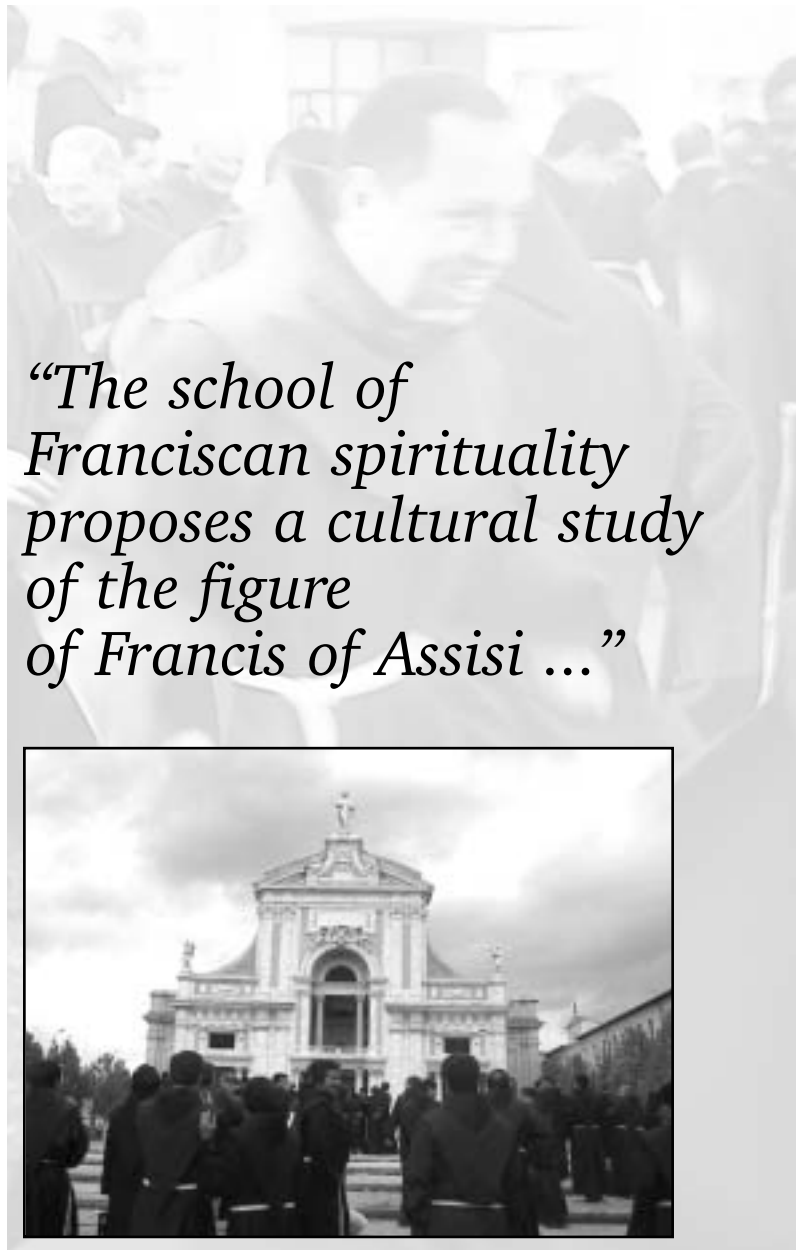
The means used to realise this end are: insertion into a popular district, living like the people of the district; house work carried out by all members of the Fraternity; self-maintenance through waged work; participation in voluntary services; sharing any excess to requirements of the Fraternity; welcome for all; constant evaluation of duties, style of life, etc.

Church and throughout the world, some form of evangelical life, as Friars Minor, minors and at the service of all.

### **Relationships with the Church and the Order**

Even though we are seeking something new, different, more faithful to the Gospel and the world, it is necessary to be vigilant so as not to judge the Friars who remain in traditional structures, or the Church that we would wish to be more evangelical or the world of today. The Franciscan vocation does not consist of judging or denouncing, but in giving witness and loving each person.

Br. Thaddée Matura, ofm  
*Avignon, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2001*



*“The school of Franciscan spirituality proposes a cultural study of the figure of Francis of Assisi ...”*

## **FRATERNITY OF VALLADOLID**

*(Franciscan Province of Arantzazu, Spain)*

### **Introduction**

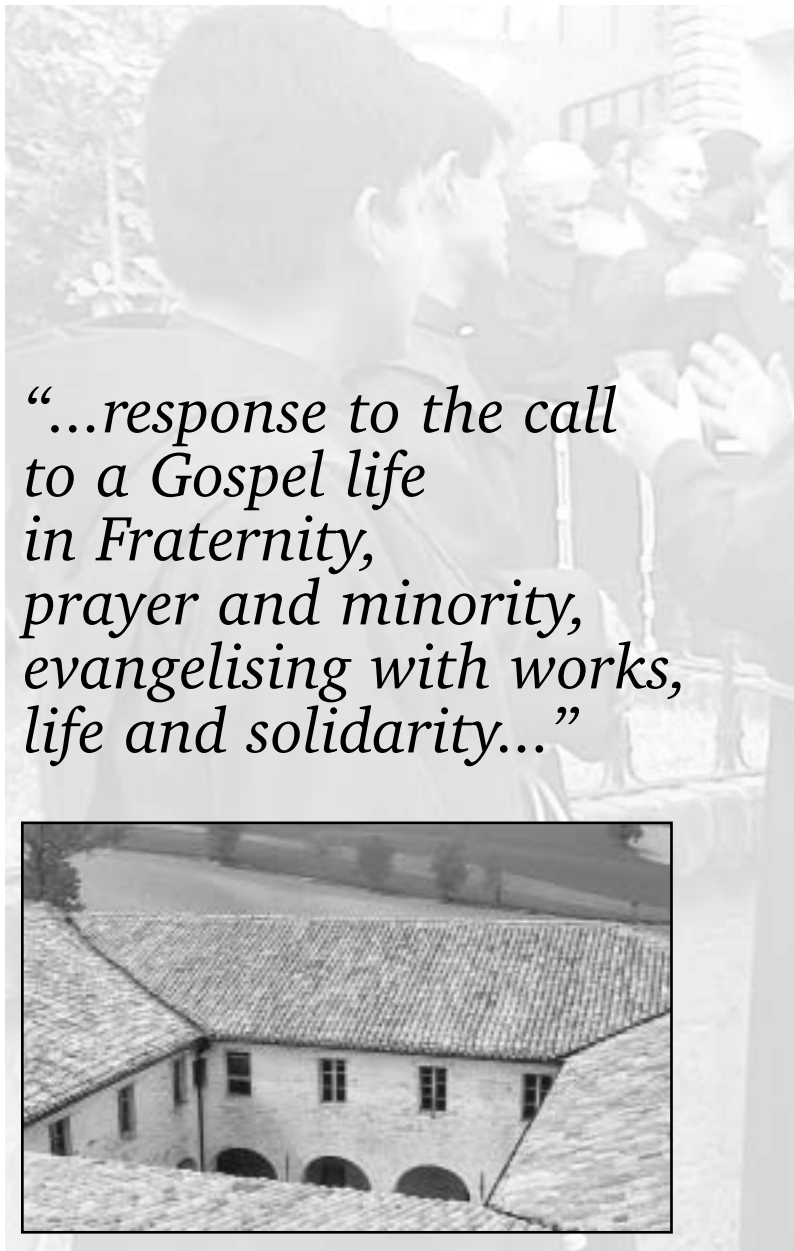
The idea of a project for a Fraternity inserted in a popular district of Valladolid came up in October 1993. The idea, first of all, is fruit of the fraternal dynamism of the Province, especially of the Fraternities of Burgos and Durango, of the feeling of being responsible for and being participants in the journey of the Province and of the stake in broadening and enriching the type of Franciscan presence, especially in the area of Castilla. Subsequently, the idea began to be transformed into a project through various meetings of the promoters, of which we have always informed the Minister Provincial, to analyse our personal and fraternal reality, the motivations for and the supporting lines of the project.

These can be summarised as follows: response to the call to a Gospel life in Fraternity, prayer and minority, evangelising with works, life and solidarity, being always aware of belonging to the Provincial Fraternity.

### **Communion of life in Fraternity (cf. GGCC 39)**

Conscious that our peculiarity consists of living a common life in Fraternity, the Friars propose to live a common path of human, Christian and Franciscan maturity (cf. GGCC 39), to recognise one's brothers, in their diversity, as a gift from God (cf. GGCC 40), to promote co-responsibility and mutual obedience in the setting-up of the Fraternity (Cf. GGCC 45), to take care of each other with solicitude and love (cf. GGCC 44), to be open and welcoming to all people (cf. GGCC 51 and 52).

To facilitate the achievement of this end, the Fraternity, composed of four Friars, uses the following means: the personal and community life project; weekly meeting; dia-



*“...response to the call to a Gospel life in Fraternity, prayer and minority, evangelising with works, life and solidarity...”*

## THE SCHOOL OF FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

The experience began in Milan, in the Convent of S. Angelo, at the end of the 70s; during the last six years the Convent in Brescia – S. Gaetano – has also made the proposal its own.

### The objectives and method

The school of Franciscan spirituality proposes a cultural study of the figure of Francis of Assisi and of the spirituality that takes its name from him. It is a *school* and, therefore, deals with study that gives pride of place to the area of knowledge and the cultural contents. This allows for the acceptance into the school of persons who are not specifically Christian or believers but who are, nevertheless, interested in knowledge about Francis of Assisi.

However, in tune with the Franciscan charism, the school is not conceived only as an intellectual moment: each meeting is accompanied by a moment of prayer and an evening meal with the Fraternity.

The meetings are on a weekly basis throughout the scholastic year (with Christmas and Easter breaks); each meeting provides an hour of class before supper, followed by vespers with the friars; after supper, taken with the friars in the convent refectory, there is another hour of class. The full cycle of the school is of three years in Milan and of one year in Brescia.

Experience shows that the project works. The moment of supper with the friars is seen as being especially positive; the supper, in fact, contributes to creating relationships between the participants and the friars, which is very much appreciated by the participants at the end. The participants are also asked to help in the service at table and in washing the dishes, and this also helps in creating a climate of family.

## Contents

The proposed lessons tend most of all to introduce the students to a critical reading of the Franciscan sources: during the three years a certain number of meetings are dedicated to the analysis of the Writings of St. Francis and to an introduction to the various biographies of the first Franciscan school through a historical-critical type reading; adequate space is also reserved for the knowledge of Clare of Assisi and of the female Franciscan movement.

Other meetings are dedicated to the Franciscan school and to the history of franciscanism down through the centuries; some monographic topics (missions, fraternity, ecology, etc.) are explicitly confronted and a meeting is dedicated to present-day franciscanism also.

The “teachers” of the school are in part friars, in part lay; the friars, at times, come from others fraternities of the Province, according to their competence. It is a good thing, nevertheless, to involve (even if for only one lesson) the friars of the fraternity itself, taking advantage of their competence, on different levels: art and franciscanism, music and franciscanism, literature and franciscanism... In this way the school is presented as an initiative that begins in the fraternity itself and the friars are, in their majority, involved.

## Observations

Beyond what has already been said, the school is shown to be a good aid to the formation of the secular Franciscans (those already of the SFO), and in particular for the formation of formators and also a valid project for making the SFO known to new people interested: in Brescia, in particular, the “re-foundation” of the local fraternity of the SFO have been begun from the school of spirituality.

For “publicity” of the initiative it is worthwhile, in the beginning, to spread the news through the local lay press, presenting it as a cultural initiative (which it is). It is good, however, to ask for an interview with the candidates for

We also try to pray the *Evening Prayer* each weekday.

Every second month, we set aside one full day for our community *Recollection*.

The *Friary Chapter* is held each month. We commence with some spiritual input. We then look at the month’s activities. We seek to invite others to our home for a meal: local clergy/ religious & laity; or others with whom we are associated through our work.

We regularly eat breakfast & our evening meal (dinner) together. This is a time for sharing & catching-up. We take it in turns to do the house shopping & preparation of food.

We also look after the cleaning of our house & garden.

Although Andrew has been appointed *Guardian*, we have agreed that authority is to be shared amongst us.

Thus, each of us takes on the role of being *Coordinator* of our small community for four months at time; with three of us in community, this covers the year. Andrew as *Guardian* still assumes that role when required or appropriate. However, in terms of the daily running of our community, we have found that the role of *Coordinator* works well. The Definitory has given its approval for this experiment.

- *Young lads in trouble with the law* - Andrew works as chaplain in two *Detention Centres* for young male offenders, aged from 12 to 18 years. Some of these boys are residents of our Housing Estate or come from neighbouring Housing Estates.
- *A community park* - we are helping some of the residents lay claim to a piece of land within the Estate. This land was already marked for development, but with some lobbying, the residents have been able to reclaim the land from the owners, who agreed to make the land available. The residents want to use & develop it for the benefit of the community.
- *Furniture & moving house* - Kevin borrows a small utility truck from another community of our Friars who live nearby. He is able to help some residents move house. He also collects & redistributes used furniture/ washing machines & refrigerators.
- *Hospitality* - each month we provide a meal in the middle of the day at our home & invite the local people to meet/ relax & talk about problems within the Estate.

All of these activities provide us with opportunities to get to know the people & to help some of them to grow in trust of each other & of us.

### Way of life

From the beginning we decided that every aspect of our lives in common would be addressed through discussion & sharing.

We pray together each day in one of the bed-rooms of our home, which we use as our chapel space. We pray the *Morning Prayer*; this sometimes includes the *Eucharist*.

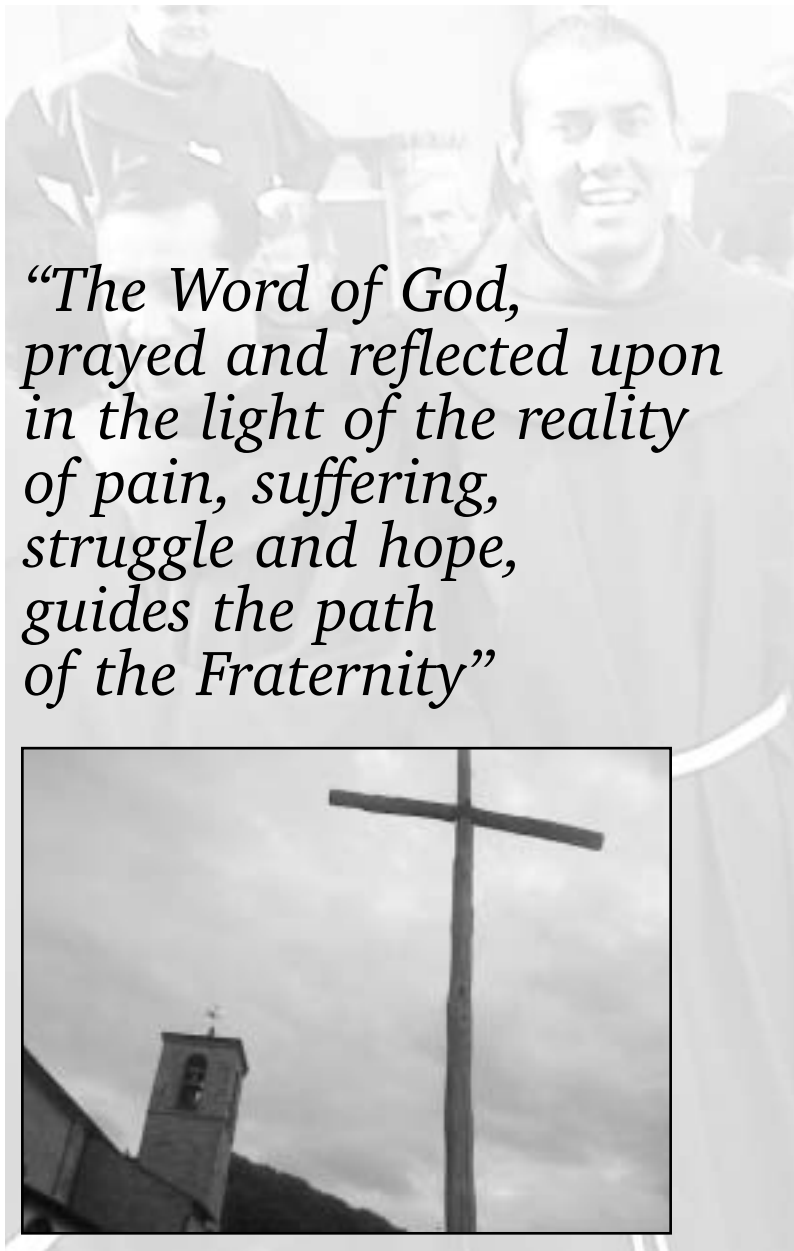
Once a week we set aside a time for personal faith sharing, which is often focused on the events of the week.

Occasionally we will also have a time for the sharing of a Franciscan theme; or a reading from the *Rule & Testament* of St Francis.

the school beforehand in order to evaluate their motives and mental equilibrium.

The experience has seen that people who have come, openly declaring themselves non-believers but interested in Francis of Assisi, have later taken very significant spiritual paths, arriving at a new approach to the faith or a new consideration of it.

The school of Franciscan spirituality can also be a form of evangelisation!



*“The Word of God,  
prayed and reflected upon  
in the light of the reality  
of pain, suffering,  
struggle and hope,  
guides the path  
of the Fraternity”*

Our primary aim is to simply live & live simply with the people of the Housing Estate.

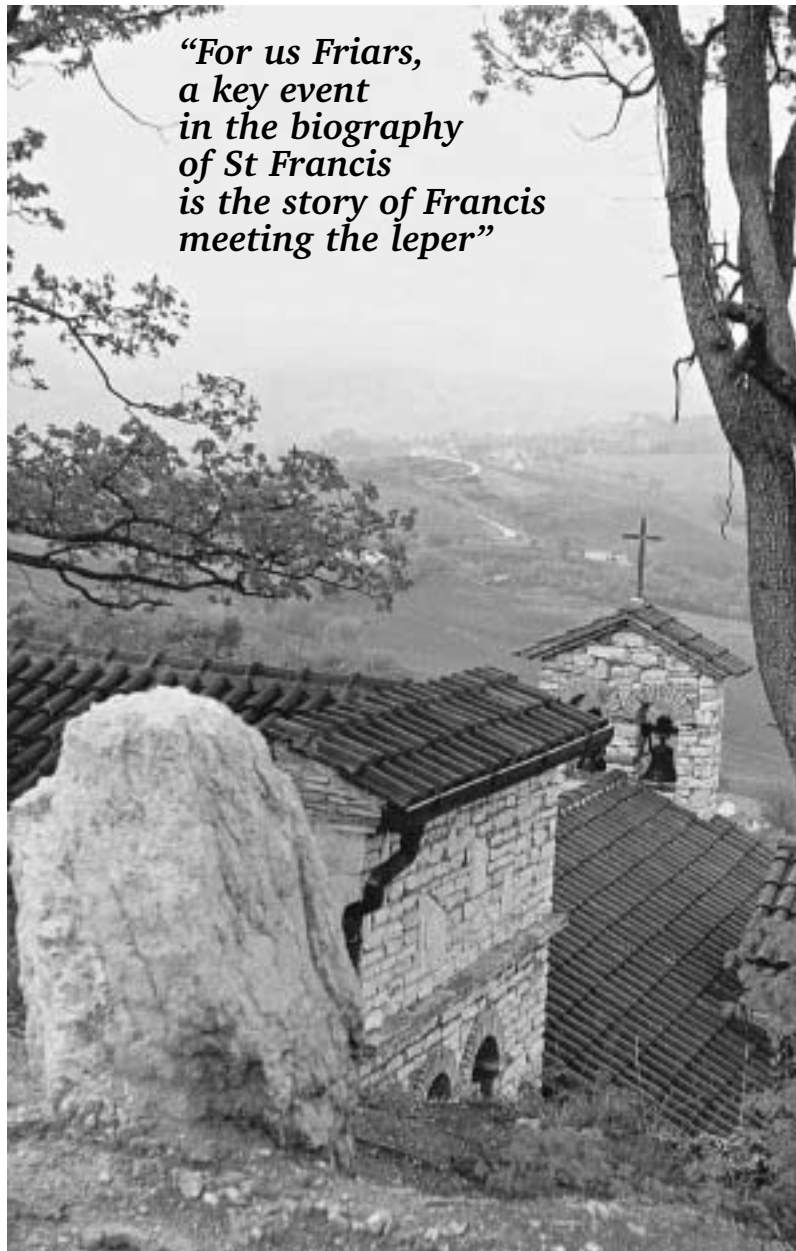
To share some of the burdens of the residents & be available for them.

By living in community as Brother Friars, we seek to give an example of Gospel Life to the wider community - a community that is non-churched.

We care for the pastoral needs of the local Catholic community, as there is a genuine pastoral need to care for this small Catholic community. We have made it clear to the local Bishop that we are not interested in being appointed as pastors or parish priests. The Bishop has respected our position but is nonetheless grateful for what we can do. The majority of people who belong to this Catholic community do not live within the Housing Estate.

Much of our energy is however directed toward the needs of the residents of the Housing Estate. Over the past three years we have become involved in various activities:

- *Cleaning-up the suburb* - when we arrived, there was rubbish to be seen on the streets; abandoned (often stolen) cars lying around; many had been burned-out. This appearance had given the suburb a bad name & it spoke loudly about how the local people felt about living here. We became involved in a street clean-up programme. The local government authority now provides two large rubbish disposal bins each month. We encourage the local people to dispose of their rubbish in these bins & help them to do this. We also have a system of having dumped cars removed from the area.
- *A community meal* – each week a meal is provided for the local residents; some do not have sufficient food in their houses; others come because they are lonely & seek company. One of us goes on a weekly quest & is given food freely from some local shops for this purpose.



*“For us Friars,  
a key event  
in the biography  
of St Francis  
is the story of Francis  
meeting the leper”*

## AN ITINERANT FRATERNITY AT THE SERVICE OF THE DISPLACED

*(The Province of St. Paul the Apostle, Colombia)*

### Identity

It is a group of friars who wish to live the project of life and service of the Province of St. Paul the Apostle in Colombia with the nature of *itinerancy* among those who have been forced to evacuate their homes and district and to serve them by being disposed to accompany communities and groups during important moments of their history (expulsion, return, arrival at places of welcome). The mission consists of the presence of a Fraternity characterised by prayer and minority, with a well-defined plan of action, disposed to respond to the demands and situations of the displaced.

The centre and driving force of the Fraternity is *life with God*: the Word of God, prayed and reflected upon in the light of the reality of pain, suffering, struggle and hope, guides the path of the Fraternity.

The *Fraternity* is lived in itinerancy on the basis of a precise life project that includes a total commitment on behalf of the displaced communities.

*Minority* is an essential requirement for this type of sharing and involves frequent movement, of a temporary nature, from one community to another.

### Motivations

At the beginning of the life of the Province there was an encounter with a particular itinerant community. It seems that this kind of Fraternity would be a way to make the life project of our Province concrete and could help to give a response to the continuous challenges provoked by the situation of injustice that we have to face, as Friars Minor, in Colombia today.

In the Provincial Chapter we understood that itinerancy could be a response to the particular *kairos* that we now live, seeking a response to the cry for help from thousands of suffering people. The reality of war brings about great ruin, especially for the impoverished majority forced to abandon all and to take refuge in the medium sized cities or in the great capitals. In the origins of the experience of these people there are often terrible stories of murder and terror that have left deep marks. The itinerant Fraternity offers their presence and accompaniment in the first moments especially so that the communities can re-build themselves.

The greater part of these groups has a tradition of popular religion that becomes mixed up with the pain suffered: our announcement of a merciful God should accompany their faith in Jesus and make it grow, even through the negative experiences.

The terrible injustices that are at the root of displacement should become an extra motive for seeking to repair the damage suffered and, at the same time, to work with the popular organisations and social movements with the aim of putting forward proposals for justice and perspectives of a dignified life. We also feel that it is important to encourage relationships between different communities on the national and international levels in order to make mutual support and solidarity possible.

### Objectives

- To identify the central line of action of our work, even through knowledge of other similar initiatives.
- To help the services already being carried out by other Fraternities on behalf of the displaced.
- To carry out an experience of discipleship from the point of view of itinerancy.
- To accompany displaced communities in moments that require an outside presence.

## LIVING WITH THE POOR IN SIDNEY

(*Holy Spirit Province, Australia/ New Zealand*)

### Origins

Three Friars of the *Holy Spirit Province* {Australia/ New Zealand} began a small “inserted” community in one of the poorest socioeconomic areas of Sydney at the end of 1998. Each of us had been searching independently in the quest of a dream to live & be with the poor & marginalised. Two of us are now aged 70 & 76; one aged 53.

We have worked in various apostolates over the years - two of us had been Provincial Ministers & the other a Novice Director.

Dan our “senior citizen” had dreamt of setting-up a soup kitchen & a shelter for homeless folk. Kevin (aged 70) had worked for some years with HIV/AIDS people. Andrew (the “junior”) had wanted to join previous small “inserted” communities that had been established over the years but was unable because of other commitments in the Province.

However, the Spirit of the Lord allowed each of us to at least partially realise our common dream: *the Provincial Chapter* of 1998 approved the establishment of our new community.

So, we have been here since December 1998.

### Objectives

For us Friars, a key event in the biography of St Francis is the story of Francis meeting the leper. Here in Minto, we live & work amongst people who in many ways are today’s *lepers*. We live in a government operated Housing Estate with the people. We pay rent, as they do. We support ourselves now, though the Province did give us a donation when we first moved here. We have been able, through the generosity of some benefactors & by adhering to a house budget, to repay that gift to the Province.

### 5. Sent by the provincial Fraternity (cf. GGCC 112)

The Friars feel that they are sent by the Provincial Fraternity, but remember that it is within the competence of the Provincial Chapter and of the Minister Provincial to evaluate and decide on what activities or style of life responds to the demands of the times and are in conformity with the Franciscan charism. They therefore wish to: implement the decision of the Province to have a Franciscan presence in a poor and marginalised district; be a place of welcome for the Friars of the Province; offer the young Friars in formation the possibility of sharing in this style of life; permit searching young people to have an experience of Franciscan life; be available to the various needs of the Province.

To reach these objectives, the small Fraternity: receives one or two Friars; contributes to the common fund of the Province; offers their availability to meet the needs of the Province; meets other Friars by visiting the other Fraternities or by participating in the various meetings planned by the Province.

- To encourage the reconstruction of the social fabric and that of individuals.
- To seek national and international solidarity with these communities.
- To encourage the experience of the Church as the people of God even through the experience of being expelled from one's home.
- To give new life to our Provincial project through our experience.
- To support projects for reparation and justice through the recuperation of historical memory in the communities we meet.
- To work out a project of life and service on the basis of the spirituality of itinerancy.

### Method

The Friars begin with a process of sharing their personal life project in order to work out a first outline of a fraternal project for the itinerant Fraternity.

They try to know various experiences in this field and a serious process of formation is prepared for those tasks required by this service. The Fraternity undertakes to give a service of accompaniment that involves at least two Friars; Friars in temporary profession will be accompanied by solemnly professed Friars.

Sustenance will be the fruit of the labours of the Friars (recourse to the table of the Lord, projects of economic backing...).

The group is open to either temporary or permanent participation by other religious, male or female, of other congregations or by lay people who are interested in sharing in the project.

*“The strength of the Fraternity has been that of starting from the needs and concrete expectations of the people that it has met”*



### **3. Praying: “the spirit of prayer and devotion”** (cf. GGCC 19; *Priorities*, 1)

Since the main preoccupation of the Friars Minor is “to have the spirit of prayer and devotion”, the Fraternity tries: to acknowledge the gifts of God and to thank Him for such gifts (cf. GGCC 20,1); to celebrate daily the love of the Father for us and for the world (cf. GGCC 20, 2); to honour the Sacrament of the Eucharist (cf. GGCC 22, 1-2); to meditate on the Word of God in the present day (cf. GGCC 22); to join in the prayer of the people, sharing the reality of their life (cf. GGCC 27,2); to go deeply into “the spirit of prayer and devotion”.

To live “the spirit of prayer and devotion”, the Fraternity reserves space and time for personal and communal prayer. There is an oratory in the House, Morning and Evening Prayer, weekly Eucharist of the Fraternity and Sunday Mass in the Parish, a retreat twice a week and spiritual exercises each year.

### **4. Called to evangelise (cf. GGCC 83)**

Conscious of having been sent to proclaim the Gospel, the Fraternity seeks to realise their Franciscan vocation by: presenting the Church as a sacrament of salvation and liberation for all men, especially for the poor (cf. GGCC 87, 3); participation in the duty of evangelisation given to the Church (cf. GGCC 83,2); inserting the Christian and Franciscan presence in the places of poverty (cf. GGCC 97), supporting the people of the district, from their reality (cf. GGCC 94).

To carry out such proposals, the Fraternity concentrates its attention on: its fraternal life; liturgical and personal prayer; personal study; the weekly meeting of the Fraternity; service to the people of the district; help with the parochial ministry in the Parish; animation and formation of groups; collaboration with provincial and inter-Franciscan initiatives; participation in movements for human rights, justice and peace, etc.

Constitutions, the Friars, considering fraternal communion as the first form of evangelisation, intend to: attain human, Christian and Franciscan maturity by helping each other (cf. *GGCC* 39); accept each other as a gift from God (cf. *GGCC* 40); live the spirit of the Rule and Constitutions in a fraternal life in common through work, prayer, mutual service (cf. *GGCC* 42); serve each other (cf. *GGCC* 44); promote a responsible and reciprocal obedience through communal discernment (cf. *GGCC* 45); be welcoming of all, especially of the Brothers and Sisters of the Franciscan Family (cf. *GGCC* 51 and 52).

To achieve such objectives, the four Friars that make up the Fraternity: live like the people of the district; follow a personal and community project, evaluated each year; meet weekly for formation, communication and discernment; make a spiritual retreat twice a month; participate in the provincial dynamics of “small Fraternities”; keep part of the dwelling available to welcome others.

## 2. Present, inserted and minor (cf. *GGCC* 64)

Being inspired on *how* the Friars should go about the world, according to St. Francis, the Fraternity proposes to: acknowledge God as the ultimate and only good (cf. *GGCC* 65); embrace the conditions of the lesser people of the society of our times (cf. *GGCC* 67); give testimony to Gospel values in present-day society (cf. *GGCC* 67); share in the needs of the most insignificant and involve themselves in the defence of their rights through non-violent action (cf. *GGCC* 68 and 69); procure the means of subsistence through work (cf. *GGCC* 77 and 78).

The daily attention to achieving such ends will deal with: living, within the limits of possibility, the same life as the people of the district; carrying out, on the part of all the Friars, of the house-keeping chores; to carry out, by selection of the Fraternity, a waged employment; to become involved in the social movements of the district.

## THE PROVINCE OF WEST FRANCE

(*Saint Palais*)

### Geopolitical context of the Basque countries

The Basque Countries are located in Spain and France, divided by the Pyrenees and overlooking the Atlantic Ocean to the west. The coast is frequented by tourists but the interior is mainly a rural area with some small industries and commercial centres.

*Donapaleu-Saint Palais* is a small town of 2,000 inhabitants, a commercial and administrative centre for a “district” of 8,000 inhabitants.

The history and language of the Basque Countries are very old. The Basques are claiming their autonomy for centuries, which is partially recognised in Spain but not in France.

The Church, with a historically strong presence, has long been the place of memory for the Basque language and culture, especially through the liturgy. But the young militant seekers of autonomy no longer come from Church environments; they are even very critical of the Church. Some speak of a rupture between the militants, often the young who are very politicised, and the other inhabitants who seek non-violent ways to affirm their autonomy.

### The history of the birth of the fraternity

The Franciscans have been there since 1851, through Basque Friars from the south, who took refuge here from Spain. After the expulsions decreed by the French State (1880 and 1903), the Friars returned in 1938 with the task of reception and formation.

From 1972 till 1984 a new form of presence was experimented with: two Friars lived in a rented apartment, shared the work of the peasants and made themselves available for the instruction of the young. The experience

ended with the premature deaths of the two, but their memory is still alive among the people.

In 1990 the Fraternity found it necessary to rethink the project: they are doing it with the help of competent laity and by creating the Zabalik association (open to all).

### **Zabalik: open to all**

The association developed the activities that were already being carried out in a more limited form: the project of the Fraternity is summed up in the words: *welcome and openness*.

#### *Those who make the “walk”*

Saint Palais is a stop on the walk to Santiago de Compostela: in 1999, 1360 pilgrims were received, six times as many as in 1993. We are speaking of convinced believers, of people searching or, at times, of someone who is more interested in enterprise in the sense of “competitive”: there is, therefore, the possibility of relationships and of announcing the Gospel.

#### *Vagabonds without fixed abode*

There are two rooms reserved for them. In 1999 there were 240: they usually sleep one night only and they are offered a meal.

#### *The welcoming of groups*

More than 300 meetings are held each year. It has been a choice from the beginning to put rooms and other structures at the disposal of other associations, even “alternative” ones: Church movements; Basque cultural and political associations; peasant alternative organisations (biological...), charitable associations... Meetings of believers and non-believers are helped in this way, both are grateful for the welcome that is reserved for them by the Friars and the laity.

## **FRATERNITY OF “SANTURTZI” OF BIZKAIA**

*(Franciscan Province of Arantzazu, Spain)*

### **Introduction**

As a consequence of the proposal of the Provincial Chapter of 1988 with regard to the creation of a Fraternity inserted among the poor, a group of Friars immediately began to take concrete steps to make the Chapter mandate a reality.

Following various meetings, reflections and evaluations with the Minister Provincial, the project of a Franciscan Fraternity inserted among the poor was presented for the approval of the Definitory in May 1989. A search was made in various places in regard to the location of the small Fraternity, dialoguing with the local people. The choice, finally, was Santurtzi, in the district of St. John, because it is a very marginalised district where there is a religious assistance limited to Sundays.

From the beginning, the Fraternity adopted the attitude of “feeling themselves on a journey” and, therefore, of deepening their consciousness of the reality in which to live in order to carry out an insertion that is evermore involved through a constant revision of the way of life, of the style of presence and of the work. All of this for the purpose of offering an “explicit” announcement of the Gospel through testimony of life, without, therefore, renouncing to give “the reason for the hope” we have (1Pt 3,15).

The essential lines of the life project, incarnated in the district of Santurtzi, can be summarised as: a Fraternity sent by the Provincial Fraternity to announce the Gospel through its presence, spirit of prayer and devotion, minority, welcome and sharing in the life of the poor.

### **1. Living Fraternity as a presence (cf. GGCC 38)**

Following the form of life revealed by the Lord to St. Francis and asked for by the indications of the



*“the Fraternity adopted the attitude of “feeling themselves on a journey”*

*The welcoming of people in retirement or on holiday*

People in transit, but also local inhabitants, seek spiritual accompaniment: “The Friars are the soul of the house”

### **Strong points and the possibility of opening up**

The strength of the Fraternity has been that of starting from the needs and concrete expectations of the people that it has met: it is an on-going work of *discerning the signs of the times*. This place is marked by the current questions of our society: a society in movement, in search of itself and of places of welcome to stop and find a brother disposed to listen and capable of helping them read their own history.

For ten years Zabalik has sought to be open to these challenges, through cooperation between Friars and laity. In the project, each one has only one role, unique and complementary. It is a way, for the Friars, to live *expropriation*; they are not altogether “at home”, even if they have an autonomous life within a greater project.

We have already pointed out the danger of a split in the Basque Countries, a political and religious split. All the people of the place have underlined the great value of an international Fraternity that could be a concrete sign of possible reconciliation, a prophetic place from which could come a new word for the people locked into this situation.

### **New appeals**

#### *Pilgrims*

Many pilgrims are hungry to know, to choose that which does or does not nourish them. Beyond the welcome it would be possible to offer them:

- A simple liturgical life, marked by our Franciscan spirituality,
- An exposition of the Franciscan life and spirituality,
- A first approach to the Basque Countries and culture.

Some people ask to stay longer, in order to be accompanied spiritually.

The accompaniment is possible even “walking together” with the pilgrims towards Santiago. Two Friars could make themselves available to accompany some group...

#### *The homeless*

The welcome for them is an essential part of the identity of the house, which is also recognised and financially supported by civil institutions. Today, this welcoming is a little marginalised in respect to all the rest.

Perhaps it could be thought of as a place of gradual rehabilitation for people in difficulty (cf. La Foresta in Italy). There is a house nearby, the property of a member of Zabalik, which would suit well; the important thing is to avoid the whole thing being put on the shoulders of one Friar: it must remain the commitment of the whole Fraternity, even if all the Friars are not personally involved.

#### *The welcoming of groups*

The house is alive precisely because of all the groups that come. Perhaps the dialogue with these people could be deepened. This would require the Friars to know what is going on in the Basque Countries well and to learn the language.

The neighbours tell us that it would be incomprehensible for them to have pilgrims welcomed but not the people of the area.

#### *Openness to the social and diocesan life*

Mons. Jean, the parish priest of Saint Palais and Episcopal Vicar, has manifested the interest of the Episcopal Council in the project and their disposition to reflect together. Priests are also scarce there: the presence of Friars, who two by two would announce the Gospel, could be a new way of living our itinerary mission.

Community. The effect and reaction to this type of announcement was surprising.

Finally, we would like to point out an initiative launched together with the itinerant Fraternity of Emilia-Romagna. A seminar of two days was held in our Friary of Rezzato (BS) in October last to learn the art of narration. Roberto Anglisani, one of the actors who presented the show “Francis, head first”, guided us. About fifteen Friars, among them students from the Venetian and Lombardy Provinces, participated in this course.

#### **Open workshop**

As it can be seen, there are more projects being set up than in operation. We are aware, as we go along, that we should not plan everything, but be constantly alert to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We feel guided by a hand and we are conscious of the fact that the design is defined slowly as it is being carried out. We have some solid points with regard to our life with God and fraternal life while we remain open in mind and heart to accept those suggestions that the Spirit gives us, through persons or events, which are more useful in bringing about the Kingdom of God on this earth.

- Hermitage time, which follows immediately after a mission and last a few days in which, living the Rule for Hermits of St. Francis, we dedicate ourselves to Lectio Divina, Adoration, prayer, study and rest.

### Life 'ad extra'

For this pastoral year we are participating in all the Missions to the People planned by our Province, since this was a specific request of the Definitory.

Besides this, following the indications of our Bishop, we are setting up a post-Mission programme to accompany the Parishes for some months during the sensitive time in which the light of enthusiasm of a Mission to the People is extinguishing and it is necessary to begin ordinary pastoral activity again.

Recently, we acquired the use of an old, but dignified, *camper*, which we hope to use in different ways. For example, as a mobile listening centre, as a means of gathering "the distant" right where they are, in discotheque, market, popular festivals, etc.

We have chosen to exercise an explicit announcement of the Gospel. An interesting thing has turned up in this regard. There are some lay Movements that have been doing this for many years. One of the two Friars has done a course on evangelisation run by 'Renewal in the Spirit', a course for laity that is within the capacity of anyone who has no higher diploma in study. It included teaching and group dynamics. A mission was carried out during the final two days. The central nucleus of the course was the learning of the *Kerigma*, in both content and way of announcing. In the *Kerigma*, the announcement of the love of God for "you now" and from eternity is allowed in addition to the four classical points of apostolic preaching: a) Jesus is the solution of God, b) our response in faith and conversion, c) the gift of the Holy Spirit and d) the setting up of and entrance into the Christian

### Conclusion

Many of the appeals and challenges put before society and the Church today are present in Saint Palais.

For the past year only one Friar has been there and so the need to renew the presence is urgent. The Friars who wish to share this experience of mutual complementation between Friars and laity should, first of all, find out about the places and situations, submit themselves to listening to the people, discern and pray to discover a new project.

#### *Necessary qualities*

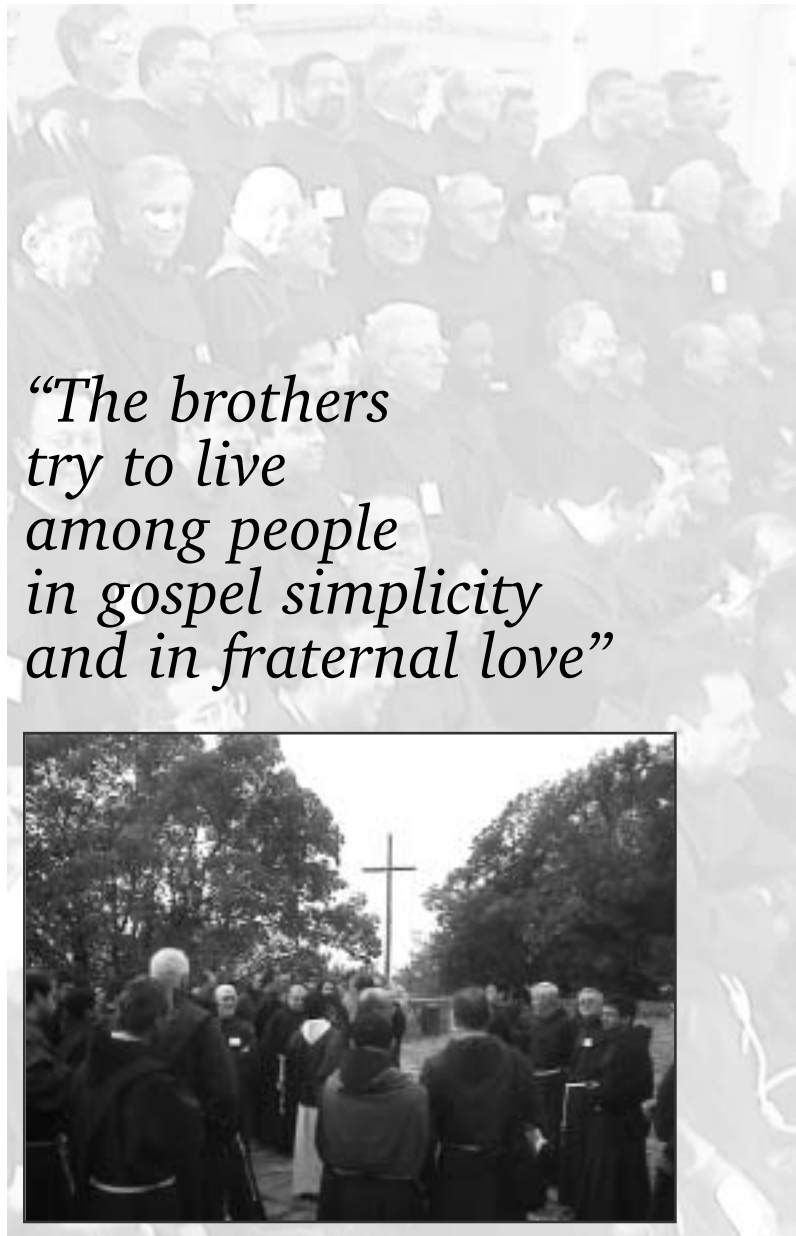
The will to live a Fraternity and not a personal project.

The capacity to really collaborate with the laity in the everyday running of the project.

The curiosity and the sympathy for Basque culture in order to profoundly understand the movements that are passing through it (thus the need to know the language).

The capacity to listen and give spiritual accompaniment.

The knowledge of languages in order to receive the many pilgrims who come from all over Europe.



*“The brothers  
try to live  
among people  
in gospel simplicity  
and in fraternal love”*



## **ITINERANT EVANGELISING FRATERNITY**

*(St. Charles Borromeo Province of Lombardy, Italy)*

### **Beginnings**

During the Provincial Chapter of 2000, the Province of St. Charles Borromeo of Lombardy (Milan) decided on the creation of an itinerant evangelising Fraternity. The idea was born during the years prior to the Chapter and was discussed by all the Fraternities of the Province. It appeared urgent to find a new form of evangelisation, seeing the fall in the number of people who are brought together through the traditional forms of apostolate (parishes, popular missions, different preaching, etc.).

The project is in the process of being brought into being, given the short time since the decision was made. At the moment, two Friars (one priest and one non-priest) are involved full-time. They reside in Saiano (BS), in the ex-minor seminary of the Province which is occupied by a community of recovering drug-addicts from Mondo X. The place was chosen because it does not require a stable presence or a continuous pastoral service. This allows the Friars to absent themselves for all the time necessary for itinerant evangelisation. The first year was dedicated especially to research and comparison with similar experiences, besides listening to the expectations of the local Church. The project that is taking shape is as follows:

### **Life ‘ad intra’**

In our common life we try to give privilege to listening to the Word of God, the Eucharist and fraternal life. To do this we have subdivided our time:

- Ordinary time, in which we carry out a routine similar to that of any Friary,
- Mission time, when we are totally dedicated to the people,

*“In our common life  
we try to give privilege  
to listening  
to the Word of God,  
the Eucharist  
and fraternal life”*



## THE FIRST ITINERANT COMMUNITY

*(Province of Holy Martyrs in Korea)*

The idea of founding an Itinerant Community was presented and discussed at the Provincial Chapter held in 1988, and has continued to be studied, but due to a shortage in the number of brothers in the province and also due to a lack of volunteers, the implementation of this desire has been postponed. Finally, the Interim Provincial Chapter in 1994 made a final resolution on it, and came to found this community in 1996 on a southern island (Bogil-Do) of Korea which belongs to the Archdiocese of Kwangju. In 1999, having had a presence and service on this island for 2 years, the brothers moved to another place called Dong-Kang, which also belongs to the same Archdiocese. Up to now, the brothers staying at this place have been serving in an isolated and neglected parish station.

### Community Life

At this moment, two brothers (one priest and one brother) are living together at the Parish Station on Dong-Gang, which has two rooms and a kitchen. This community is open to everybody, and if visitors want, they can stay with our brothers. As our brothers are supposed to live with the local people, the daily timetable of this community is quite flexible. However, the evening time, except for some special occasions, is solely given to brothers. Since it is difficult to have a time of silence in the midst of people, each brother has a personal monthly retreat for one or two days. In the beginning, this community had to seek financial help from the province, but now it is self-supporting. Brothers, while doing manual works for the people, do not get any wages, but thanks to generous help from the parishioners or people (rice and other food), the brothers do not need to worry about their daily food. Other needs (for example,

the operation of a van) are met by Mass stipends, offerings and lectures. The brothers try to live among the people in gospel simplicity and in fraternal love.

### Activities

The Brothers' priority is the pastoral care for the isolated parish station (saying Mass, confessions, church education for the parishioners, and visiting the sick parishioners etc.), but the brother are also engaged in rendering a helping hand to farmers through manual work and through teaching, and the brothers are giving spiritual assistance to the Secular Franciscans in that area, and sometimes direct a retreat for the Catholics when asked by some diocesan priests.

### Plans and Prospects

*Plans:* to try to help parishioners with beginning the manufacture of enzymes which is geared to raising funds for the parish station; paying more attention to spiritual renewal for the parishioners; thinking of our departure from this parish station, the brothers are thinking of inviting a professional lay catechist and of buying a van for the parish station.

*Prospects:* the brothers think that for the sake of giving more stability and development both in the spirituality and finance of this parish station, they may have to stay here for the time being, and, when this parish station is able to have one professional lay catechist and to have a van, they will leave for another place. Due to some circumstances, it is thought to be ideal to change a place about every two years.

of the sun, the snow, the birds and the starry nights, freely offer us, without any barter. This gift from God, through creation, continues to guide us and remains one of the key "places" for contemplation, one of our masters.

### Our wish

We wished to share our experience of life and we would like to get to know those of other Franciscans.

We are affiliated to other communities, Franciscan and non-Franciscan, spread throughout the world. We feel that the contemplative spirit calls many of us to commit ourselves anew in the world, to form a more just social order, to discover the wonder of the order God has put in things through our relationships which call us to interior and exterior fullness of peace: Shalom.

We know we have a lot to learn and to offer. We are full of awe and gratitude for what God had done and wishes to do through us and for us all.

equally among those present, in the certainty of the sacredness of work and as an occasion for forming community; the practical activities mould the person and our relational life.

Generally, in the flow of time, we are formed by living the family dimension. This has offered different people the experience of healing and hope in order to live family life in its varied forms. Both the students and the other guests have been formed by the family experience, even to reconsidering their careers and life projects. The gift that our family life on the *mount* offers the guests is “transferable” and essential; it can be taken home free of charge, in fact, the formation and transformation that it offers is, simply and above all else, that of the heart and person.

The sense of humour, the laughter and the warmth of our house receive and offer a welcome to all of us, giving us the courage to continue in our conversion. We are blessed with a *simple* charism in a culture and a context that takes care of us. There is nothing complicated, we always seek simplicity and we are centred on God in the *essentials*.

The trust that we have been given with baptism seems to encourage the students and other guests to undertake new ways, new forms of service and direction. We Friars have seen various young people join volunteer corps on national and international service.

### The Cantic of Creatures

At the beginning we were attracted by rural localities, by woods and hills. We have learned so much living here and from the early days we have cultivated fruit and vegetables for the table, planted flowers and cared for the small wood. Nature, wild and cultivated, which surrounds us, has taught us to appreciate the delight of Francis in his relationship with all creatures. More than by the human community, we have been struck by the benefits that the trees, the cold mornings, the days made warm by the heat

## THE FRATERNITY OF KANG-NUNG

(Korea)

### The Beginning

In 1967 the Franciscans began to work in the parish of Chumunchin that lies a half-hour’s journey from the present fraternity.

After 30 years, in 1997, it was decided for different reasons, to return it to the diocese and we asked the Bishop to allow us work within the diocese.

The Bishop gave the permission willingly. One of the works that he recommended to us was that of building a centre for the old, the sick, etc. However, he left us free to live and work according to the Franciscan charism.

We opted for a new-experience fraternity in the Province. After a year we decided that it should be a fraternity that would have neither house nor activities of its own. A fraternity that would dedicate itself to the help of others in their work and that would not have its own house in order to be able to move easily if necessary.

### The Fraternity

From the beginning two friars lived in it. One was a priest, the other a non-cleric. Recently another friar, a non-cleric, has joined us on a provisional basis.

We live in a two-storey rented house. We live on the upper floor that has three rooms with a drawing room and kitchen. On the ground floor we have set up a room as a chapel and we use the rest of the space for other activities. At the moment there are some handicapped people living there temporarily.

We begin the day with the Divine Office and Mass with meditation, which lasts about an hour. We have set up a schedule to pray together at mid-day and in the evening

but because of our activities it has been almost impossible for us. Generally, we pray in private.

We try to have our meals together but it also is almost impossible.

### The Activities

When we worked in the parish of Chumunchin, one of the friars was in charge of the Secular Franciscans of the area and, at the same time, worked with a group of handicapped.

One of the friars continues with this work for the Secular Franciscans and handicapped. The Secular Franciscans are from various parishes and some of them live more than an hour away. They are divided into four areas and they are attended to once a month in each area. The two friars go to the monthly meeting in two of the areas because they have Mass there also.

The handicapped live at home. Some of them are married. Almost all of them work.

The friar responsible for them visits them in their homes, organises a monthly meeting for a group of them and takes those of them who cannot fend for themselves or who find it difficult, etc. out for a trip.

The same friar also takes responsibility for taking some old people, who live far from the Church and have a bad bus service, to Sunday Mass by coach.

The activity of the friar priest is more concentrated on parish work and other sacramental activities.

In the city of Kang-Nung there are six parishes and in a nearby city there is one more. Some of them are very small. Only one parish has an assistant.

The friar priest says Mass every Saturday evening in a hospital where a religious sister is responsible for the spiritual help of the sick and of those who work there. At night there is another Mass in one of the parishes. Every Sunday there are three Masses and confession in different

or groups involved in the life of the Church, in the pastoral care of prisons, the poor, alcoholics and drug-addicts, besides people who work in family pastoral activity. Thomas Merton noted how the hermit tradition was born especially as a lay movement of itinerant preachers in search of a hill for a retreat, rest and conversion. He told us that Francis belonged to this current and drew the ancient wisdom of the desert, the hunger and original thirst for an incarnate God from it, as well as the taste for and fervour in preaching the Gospel as Good News for both the poor and the rich. His enthusiasm – and our desire of offering it to the young of today especially – spurs us into continuing.

### An open community

Right from the beginning, ours has been an “open” community, made up of sub-communities that participate in decision-making, preparation of meals, in the joy of tasting them, in the cleaning and care of the house, in leading the daily prayer. Our homilies, based on the Sacred Texts, are always a dialogue with the members of the community that is gathered. This commitment to *openness* means the absence of a cloister: the guests live with the Friars, the Friars live among the guests in the house and in the hermitages. Prayers, meals and the daily duties are shared



Ireneus is committed to simple, joyful and healing communion with God and with all creation through contemplation and communal experience of the justice of God, of love and peace in contemporary daily life. Those who share the mission of the *Mount* are united to God in making all things new through the creation and formation of a community that transcends any particular place and that is open to all peoples, ages and cultures”.

### The Mount Retreat begins

The *Franciscan Retreat of the Mount* was incorporated as a *non-profit organisation* in the State of New York on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 1982. After more than two years of seeking, a property was found in the city of West Clarksville in the County of Allegany, about thirty miles to the east of the campus of the University of *St. Bonaventure*. From a house with two bedrooms on 228 acres and some tents in which some of us slept and another tent used for prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist, *The Mount*, in 1984, had grown to having a chapel, a house for the community, seven small hermitages, a garden with paths, a small lake and other places where the guests could find solitude and fraternal life.

Our guests come from the surrounding towns and cities, but also from further afield. They can be individuals



parishes. He also attends the parishes on Sundays and weekdays, or for a period, when the parish priest has to be absent for some reason or another. On one occasion he had to do this for a month.

Once a month, the second Sunday, he attends a mission station that is far from the parish.

Every Friday evening, from 2 to 5 and from 7 to 9 he has confessions-consultations in the most central parish of the city for all who may want to come.

He also attends to various communities of nuns for Mass and confession.

He has also guided some Bible-study groups for periods. He has also attended and taught catechism to groups of soldiers in a nearby camp.

A friar who was there was a period joined a group of volunteers from the city and he dedicated himself to bathing some old people who live alone.

We want to extend our activities but, for the moment, it is impossible. The Masses, confessions, etc. take too much time. Once it was necessary to celebrate – between Saturday and Sunday – eight Sunday Masses. And every second Sunday of the month it is usually necessary to celebrate 5 Masses. Is he a Mass-saying machine?

It would be interesting and important to dedicate ourselves to other activities. It would be easy to find them, but for the moment and as long as we are two in the community...

*“The itinerant Fraternity is a missionary Fraternity that lives at alternating periods in prayer, without money or fixed abode and in mendicancy”*



## THE FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY OF MOUNT IRENEUS

*(West Clarksville, N.Y., USA)*

### Preface

During the turbulent, difficult and at times violent years of the 60s and 70s, on the rural campus of St. Bonaventure University, in the eastern part of New York, USA, a new search for justice and non-violence born of spirituality was begun.

Breaking with the experience of cloisters and seeking to journey with the young, Dan Riley found himself hungry for peace, a hunger that united him to the patron of the University of St. Bonaventure, who simply “longed for peace”. Young and old sought to see once again the embodiment of this truth, not only in activities but also in our style of life, in prayer and action.

We wanted to get out of the confines of the American egocentric culture. We wished to get off the narrow path of increasing materialism and social mobility to find a new way. We prayed, sought, studied and were formed by our old “Way” between the mountain and the marketplace; between Mount Ireneus and the University campus. We knew that we needed a place for young and old, students, teachers, Friars and Sisters, dedicated “to prayer and quiet re-creation”. But it was more than a “place”, the students, from the beginning, said “let’s go to the mountain in order to go to the valley”.

University students, Franciscan Sisters, laity and Friars, made up the animating body and the commissions. They worked out a missionary declaration of intent based on our Franciscan heritage, while relations with our Province and the University of St. Bonaventure were stabilised.

A fundamental principle of our declaration is: “rooted in the Franciscan tradition, the community of Mount

*“We are full  
of awe and gratitude  
for what God  
had done  
and wishes to do  
through us  
and for us all”*



## PROJECT OF LIFE FOR AN ITINERANT FRATERNITY

*(Italy-Romania)*

### Introductory Statement

We, coming from different Provinces, have come together in St. Pierre (Toulouse, France), the seat of the “Community of the Lamb”, to study a Project of Life for an itinerant Fraternity.

Beginning with the hymn from the Letter to the Philippians (2,1-11), we have listened to the challenges of *Novo Millennio Ineunte* and re-read the Franciscan Sources and the GGCC. After a few days of work, sustained by the Liturgy with the Community of the Lamb and the Word of God, we have arrived at defining the project.

Having weighed up the dangers and the risks of a life “on the street”, we have arrived at the conclusion that the itinerant Fraternity can be our way of following in the footprints of the poor and crucified Christ.

### The Project for an Itinerant Fraternity

The itinerant Fraternity is a missionary Fraternity that lives at alternating periods in prayer, without money or fixed abode and in mendicancy in order to give witness to the *Christi vivendi forma*.

#### *1, The Spirit of prayer and devotion.*

The itinerant Fraternity is a “contemplative” Fraternity. It is a spiritual, mystical journey that puts us in search of the “poor one”. We do not seek to get in touch with any social category as such. We want, first of all, to follow Jesus: to make our own his very movement of abasement, of obedience right to the cross: to go out to the poor and follow Jesus.

Priority, therefore, must be given to prayer and sharing of the Word.

In reading the Word we give pride of place to the reading of the Gospel (cf. LR 1: “The Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ”).

The Fraternity reserves long periods of time for personal prayer: adoration, meditation on the Word of God, etc.

### *2. Fraternal Life in Community*

For the style of life on the street the Fraternity will have to be a small group (3/4 people). The planning of the life will be carried out together in frequent chapters, even daily. Periodically (once a week) a revision of life should be made and, with greater frequency, fraternal correction.

Each evening, during Compline, reciprocal pardon will be sought.

Whenever it dwells in an area where there are Franciscan communities they should linger with them in fraternal relationships and friendship. Periods or days of rest and retreat could also be provided in these convents (e.g. on Sunday...)

When the Fraternity has achieved a certain solidity it can be judged opportune to receive other religious, priests and/or lay, that want to share in the experience.

### *3. Minority*

The Fraternity will live without money and without a fixed abode, begging food and lodgings when necessary.

This choice brings the fraternity to share the life of the poor on the street (ER IX: “They must rejoice when they live among people considered of little value and looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside”).

The poor become our family as we can become family for them.

The choice of mendicancy is made in order to give witness to a poor God who knocks on the heart of man: to beg

clothing and shelter; rather we seek to build relationships with those we meet, and care for them in as personal and individual a way as is possible for us.

3. We wish to make a special effort to serve our sisters and brothers by sharing in their struggle for justice.
4. We seek to help all who come to us to grow in their relationship with God, and to be open to the help they give us to grow in our relationship with God.
5. We promise mutual love, respect and accountability to each other, and as a team, we pledge to remain flexible and open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
6. We seek to involve others in our ministry.
7. We will support ourselves and our ministry through our work and through begging for alms. In begging, we will avoid the security of institutional program funding, and rely instead on the love of the poor in the hearts of individual people.

munity and the individual smaller communities, at different times, leave the area to spend time in contemplating and reflecting on God, our lives and our work.

### How we work

There is no Director, no “boss”. We work as a “Team.” Each week we meet as a group and discuss events, decide policy, and plan for the future, all by consensus. Decision making is collegial. And then in ministry we rotate positions each day so that everyone does everything as much as possible. This keeps everyone on a equal footing and fosters ownership of the ministry by all those involved.

A documentary was made about St. Francis Inn - our work and life together called “There is a Table for Four.” It was shown on National Television and is repeated often especially during the Christmas season. A copy may be obtained by calling 1-800-299-7729 or by faxing (518) 452-3956.

St. Francis Inn’s staff has a wide age spread. The year long volunteers (known as the Franciscan Volunteer Ministry) are in their early 20’s. Some of the religious Friars and Sisters are in their 60’s. One friar just turned 70 (and is perhaps the most spirited!)

The wonderful thing about working for the Lord especially as a friar is that nothing is really a failure. We can afford to take chances. We can begin even if we don’t know any of the details-they will come in time. We take a step in faith, and let the Holy Spirit do the rest. And if, in fact, it doesn’t work out, we can walk away singing, because the effort was a service to God and in His sight it is wonderful.

### Guidelines for Ministry

1. We consider our lives lived in the spirit of St. Francis to be our basic ministry and so we do not wish to serve the poor, but to be poor and to serve our brothers and sisters.
2. In our service we seek not simply to dispense food,

is a way of being bearers of the Good News and of being able to offer Jesus (Acts 3,6: “I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!”).

### 4. Evangelisation and Mission

The choice of bearing the Good News to the poor is not exclusive because we think that through a presence of friendship with these it is possible for us to open up a relationship with all without the exclusion of any people. The poor are not a social category to which to turn but are the heart of humanity: following the poor Jesus, it is possible to reach this heart and, through it, open up to the announcement of the Good News for all people: rich/poor, healthy/sick, children/old, atheists and those of other religions.

The Fraternity offers to people that it meets a presence of friendship and fraternity, through which it is desired to communicate, to make known and experience Jesus and his Gospel (cf. the two ways of *evangelising of the ER XVI*).

### The Project is still open

We are conscious that this project, defined thus in its essentials, can exclude friars who try itinerancy in a different way. We have, nevertheless, preferred to outline a precise project with some long-term choices that leave some aspects undetermined and this is not so much in order to be opposed to other ways of living itinerancy but to offer to the interested friars the possibility of knowing clearly the type of life that they intend to take on.

We hold that it is opportune, however, that the different projects of itinerant life must be in some way coordinated among themselves and that there should be the possibility of an interchange of experiences.

Having discussed for a long time the three different possibilities of structuring (1. An international Fraternity; 2. An

Italian inter-provincial Fraternity; 3. Provincial Fraternity) we arrived at a solution that could be better than the three. We are more interested in the possibility of the experience of itinerant life continuing and that it be open also to friars of different Provinces (not only Italian) and that it could be possible to do it in different parts of Europe and/or the world.

Br. Jean Claude Chupin (Province of France-East)

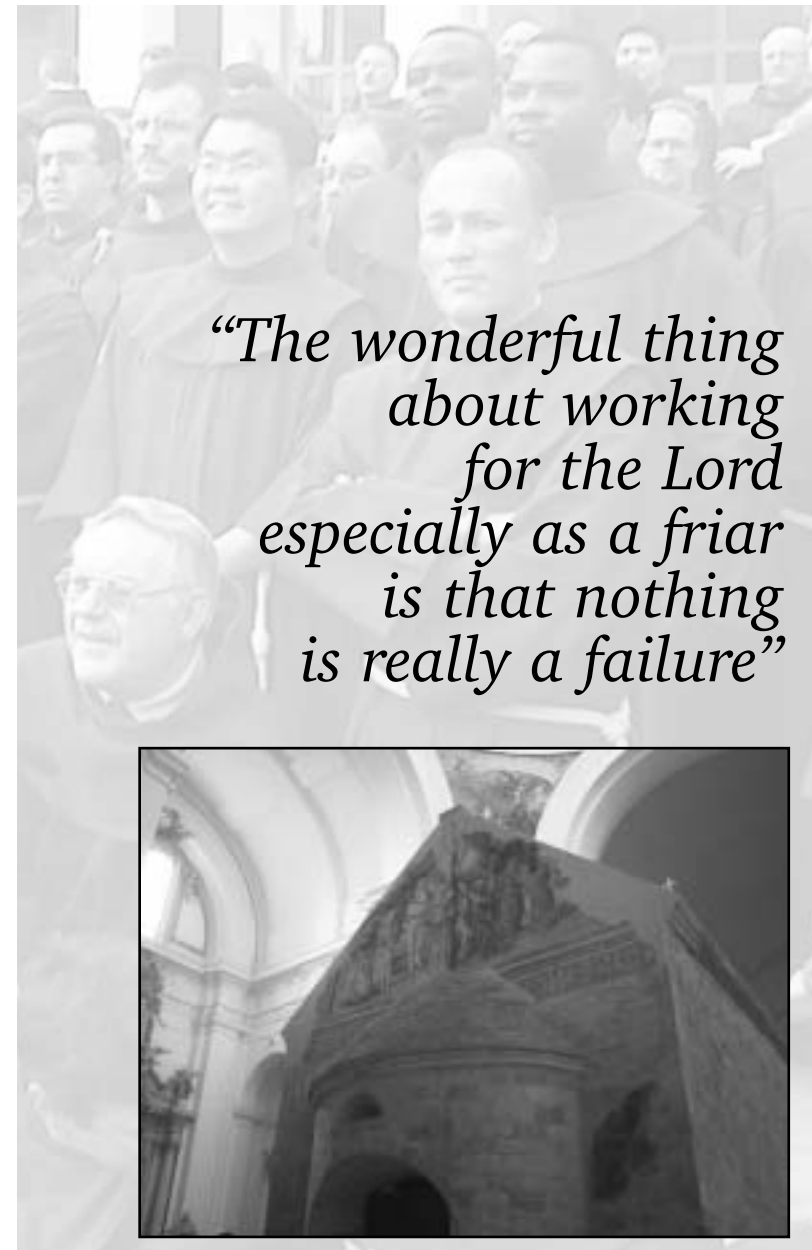
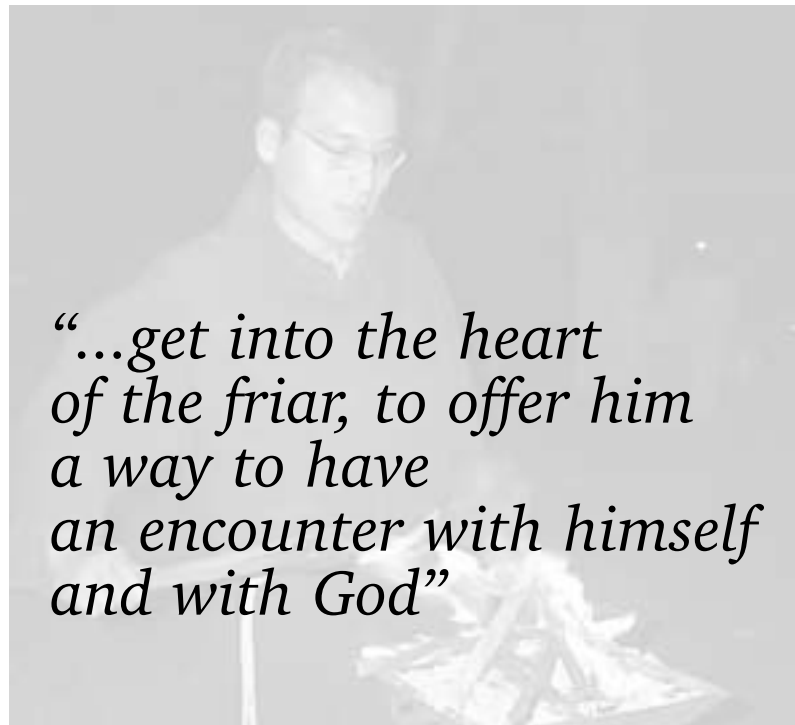
Br. Paul Iorio (Province of Umbria)

Br. Mario Misseri (Province of Umbria)

Br. Mario Vaccari (Province of Liguria)

Br. Luca Panza (Province of Lombardy)

Br. Jaume (Capuchin of the Province of Cataluña)



able to sit down and eat with the 15 guests that came that first night. Now, 21 years later, the Inn feeds 200 at breakfast and between 350 and 450 each day for the main meal.

#### *Lifestyle*

Soon the friars felt the need to define their spirituality and their style of ministry. The Inn was to be a Eucharist-based community. We need to be fed at the Lord's Table first, and then we will be able to go out and feed others. It soon became obvious that some sort of guidelines would have to be decided upon to express the spirituality and the disposition of the ministry. So the friars set up 7 guidelines for working and living the Franciscan spirit in this ministry. The Guidelines are listed below. Every week we take one of the Guidelines and spend some time in prayer and sharing on how that Guideline is being lived out. This keeps us rooted in the original spirit of the founding friars.

#### *Development of the Project*

The way of living and ministering was attractive. Soon Franciscan Sisters asked to join the ministry. Later, a year long volunteer program was started for 4 or 5 young adults out of college to come and serve with the Franciscans.

As it stands now we have an unusual but interesting grouping of Franciscan spirited workers. There is one large community made up of 4 smaller communities. The 4 communities live in separate houses in this same neighborhood. Everyone is interacting on two levels. As a large Franciscan "mixed" community we pray together, work together and recreate together. But each entity does the same in their particular smaller community. The friars live in a separate house. They have their own time to pray, recreate, and share their friar life. The Sisters live two blocks away. And they, too, pray, recreate and live their religious vocation together. The year long volunteers likewise live separately in prayer and in community. And the permanent lay people form a community as they live out their lay vocation in Church ministry. Both the larger com-

## A PRAYER EXPERIENCE

*Vive-Province of Str. Francis Solanus in Argentina*

### **The reason for the experience**

This experience was born of the question that some of us friars have been asking ourselves constantly: Why do the friars not pray and, in the measure that they are careless, abandon prayer?

There are many excellent documents that speak to us of the need for prayer; and so we believe that experience does not consist of making a defence of it. For that reason we think of trying to get into the heart of the friar, to offer him a way to have an encounter with himself and with God.

### **Methodology**

Therefore, the methodology followed has been to begin by provoking an encounter with oneself, discovering the concrete difficulties that I have in praying: Why do I not pray? We continue with the discovery of the idea I have of God since my life, as a consecrated person, will depend on the image I have of God. From there we try to help to provoke an encounter with the Lord by proposing a valid form: prayer as a way towards intimacy with God.

Four experiences have been carried out during a year and a half with an average of four friars on each course.

The reasons for which they are carried out with only four friars are the following:

- We try to have as similar a situation as possible to any of our fraternities, which are always few in number.
- In order to carry out a personal accompaniment of each of the friars, attending to the difficulties that he can experience both in prayer and in the distribution of his time.
- In order to carry out in a normal way the activities proper to a fraternity: kitchen, cleaning, etc.

### The project

The length of the experience is of 15 days and the horarium is similar to that which can be found in any fraternity.

It begins with morning prayer (at 07.30) and, after breakfast, there is a presentation of the days tasks and an aid to reading and praying is given out. We later gather for sext and lunch. In the afternoon we meet at 15.00 for the presentation of the afternoon, distribution of the aid to prayer and reading and then each one plans his time until, at 19.00, we meet to pray vespers and celebrate the Eucharist in turn.

During each day we ask for the maximum of silence of which the friars are capable, out of respect for others and the need for each one to give himself an opportunity of interiorisation. The result is excellent.

Each day, in the afternoon, the friar in charge of the accompaniment goes to the room of each one to hold a personal dialogue on the difficulties that the friar can encounter and on how he can discover what the Lord wants of him.

On the Sundays that coincide with the experience, the Eucharist is celebrated with the people, having prepared the sharing of the Word through *Lectio Divina*; this gives new and rich results for the majority of the friars (especially the older ones).

### The fruits

The concrete results that the friars get out of it are as follows:

- It is possible to have a prayer life in the midst of normal activities in the life of the fraternity and it is necessary to pray.
- The friars usually ask the question: Why is the exercise of the *Lectio* not carried out in the fraternities?

## ST. FRANCIS INN

*(Philadelphia, U.S.A.)*

### Introduction

St. Francis Inn is located in the heart of the city of Philadelphia, in one of the poorest neighborhoods in America. Old row houses are crumbling with neglect; vacant lots are covered with garbage; there are open drug deals on nearly every corner; prostitutes walk the streets and the very poor live in conditions of squalor.

How did the friars get here? In the late 1970's there were many Franciscan documents coming from Rome, encouraging the friars to "live and work among the poor. Three friars took this invitation seriously and, following the promptings of the Holy Spirit, they asked permission to go to the poor city of Philadelphia and bring some form of Franciscan presence to the people.

### The Inn

The three friars stayed in various rectories over a period of months to decide how to realize their goal. They were struck by the overwhelming extent of the poverty. Having spoken with the people, they decided to follow Matthew 25 "When I was hungry you gave me to eat, when I was thirsty you gave me to drink..." It is then they decided to open a Soup Kitchen for the poor - St. Francis Inn.

A significant dynamic in this process was that the friars did not decide among themselves what the people needed....they lived among the people for a while and learned to love them and then the people told the friars what they needed! And so they set about finding a building for their new ministry, enlisting help from local parishes, unions, spiritual groups. Soon, in December, 1979, St. Francis Inn was born (1802 East Hagert St., Philadelphia, PA).

The first meal was cooked by the friars and they were



*“We need to be fed  
at the Lord’s Table first,  
and then we will be  
able to go out  
and feed others”*

## THE EXPERIENCE OF ITINERANCY IN THE FORMATION PROJECT “ONLY ONE LOAF”

*(Frascati-Roma, Italy)*

### After the example of St. Francis

*(cf. Ratio Formationis Franciscanae, nn. 36-38)*

The itinerary of St. Francis is the example for the life and formation of the Friars of our time, who are also called to take the same path until they reach the full stature of Christ (cf. Eph 4,13), by being faithful to the mission of announcing the Gospel to all peoples.

### The genesis of the project

The provincial Chapter of 1999 established, “in accordance with that requested by the ‘Priorities’”, that “during the period of temporary profession a year of specific Franciscan formation would be inserted” with some courses and formative experiences supervised and evaluated by the Secretariate for Formation and Studies.

The Formation Council, in its meeting of 24.02.2000, entrusted the responsibility of carrying out the project to the Master of initial formation.

### Lines

Here are some *lines*, to be modified and approved following the evolution itself of the Project in the period of preparation for the experience.

1. *Objective.* To have an experience of the evangelical vocation of the Friar Minor where God would be the protagonist of our life.
2. *Guiding Principles.* The Franciscan formative action must take into account the guiding principles contained in *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae* in numbers 40-50.
3. *Means.* An experience of itinerant evangelisation according to a specifically Franciscan style.

4. *The name: “only one loaf” (Mk 8,14)*. Having set off, the disciples realised that they had only one loaf. They are preoccupied, because they still do not understand that, though having little, they really have everything. In fact, that loaf is the Lord.

5. *Method*.

- *The way of where to go*: select a Diocese, go to the Bishop and ask his blessing; get to know the place and the people.
- *The way of being (“only one loaf”... Jesus)*: establish an intimate and personal relationship with Him; occupy the last place in order to be minors; share fraternal life (cf. VC 92).
- *The way of having (“only one loaf”)*: experience the condition of precariousness: without means, money or home.
- *The way of saying (“only one loaf”)*: say little, the essentials such as peace, blessing, love, the mercy of God; let Him speak with his Gospel.
- *The way of acting (“only one loaf”)*: live the daily commitment of simple, manual work (cf. GGSS 29); take on each task with the responsibility of the whole Fraternity (cf. GGCC 79,1).

### **The organisational part**

1. *Place*: Have the Bishop indicate 3 or 4 towns that are in a precarious state from the social and religious point of view.
2. *Times*: July-August, dividing up the time for a stay of 10 to 15 days in each town.
3. *Style of life*: itinerant evangelisation organised in this way:
  - *Prayer and devotion*: Morning Prayer, Eucharist, 1 hour of personal prayer, offer an hour and a half of *Lectio* of the Gospel with Eucharistic adoration in the evening after supper to all.

The students bring their normal growth and development issues to the program. They talk with us about issues with their girlfriends and boyfriends. They talk with us about their classes, what the church teaches, what they believe, and what they want to do with their lives. One of the goals of this program is to expose the students to real Franciscan life, to show that the friars live normal lives, have friends, and normal human ups and downs.

### **Our Hope...**

It is our hope that through this “up close and personal look” at Franciscan life, some of the students might be drawn to join us. And in fact, so far, two of the young men have expressed interest in Franciscan life and are in a discernment process and are in contact with our vocation office.

The friars find themselves to be energized by the presence and vitality of the students. They keep us in touch with the young people of today and their concerns.

one prayer time a week, and household responsibilities. The whole community meets monthly for a chapter-like sharing of life. The students are welcome to join the friars anytime in their community prayer.

The students recognize the friars' need for time to themselves and respect our time and space, but they often stop by the community room in the evening to share high points or frustrations of their day.

The program is open to both male and female students. Students must be at least 18 years old and have completed at least one year at the university. At the present time there are two men and two women.

The women live on the second floor, the men on the third. Students learn about the intern program through participation in the campus ministry program of the parish. We have found the students' parents to be quite supportive of this living situation; they are happy to have their sons and daughters live in what they perceive to be a healthier environment than the typical college dormitory.

### **The Purpose of the Program**

The purpose of the program is to offer the students an experience of community, ministry, and leadership. In return for free housing, the students work ten hours a week in the campus ministry program. For their work, they plan, organize, and lead student retreats and service projects to the poor. They reach out to other students on campus.

They tutor younger students who need individual help. They help in the liturgy. They help with catechetical programs. They also do such ordinary things as answer doors, phones, and stuff envelopes. Each student meets for a half-hour every month with a member of the campus ministry staff to reflect on the experience.

The students are encouraged to have their friends and family to the house to visit, study, or recreate so that other students can learn about the friars and the program.

- *Fraternity*: We entrust ourselves to God and make ourselves followers of the poor and crucified Christ as true brothers; we go to make the Fraternity visible.
  - *Minority-poverty-solidarity*: to restore all His goods to the Lord, without keeping anything for ourselves; to experience the liberating efficiency of poverty; to be in solidarity with the brothers, especially the poorest; to be itinerants, sharing the work of others, begging food and lodgings.
  - *Evangelisation-Mission*: to bring the Gospel to every family; to be at the service of the Parish Priest; allow themselves to be guided by the Bishop in total obedience and in service to the local Church.
4. *Duration*: the participation is of at least a month for the temporary professed.
  5. *Participants*: besides the temporary professed, the solemnly professed may participate.
  6. *The experience*: It is guided by the Master of the temporary professed, or else there should be a responsible solemnly professed Friar selected by the Formation Council.
  7. *Evaluation*: It is important that the journey be marked out by timely evaluations of the style of Revision of life that the professed have already taken along the path of formation. It is important to have a final evaluation, made by the Council for Formation and Studies, so as to communicate it to the whole Province later.
  8. *Difficulties*: It is useful to indicate the possible difficulties to be encountered during the meetings of preparation for the experience.

*“The purpose of the program is to offer the students an experience of community, ministry, and leadership”*



## SHARING FRANCISCAN LIFE WITH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

*(St. John the Baptist Province, Cincinnati, Ohio, USA)*

### Seed of an Idea

For a number of years, Friar Alan Hirt, OFM, was thinking of ways to share Franciscan life with university students with whom he worked. Alan was serving as pastor of St. Monica-St. George Parish which provides campus ministry to the Catholic students of the University of Cincinnati.

In the fall of 1999, with approval of the Provincial Council and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, he and Friar Jeff Scheeler, OFM began a live-in student campus ministry internship program. At this time, the program is in its third year.

The first year, two students participated, the second year, three students, and the third year, four students, which is the maximum number the house can hold.

### How we live

The friars and students live in the same rented house, near the church and the university, with the friars, who now number three. A friar on sabbatical (Friar Roger Bosse, OFM) is now living in the house, which brings the total community to seven.

The friary is located in area where most of our neighbors are university students; there is lots of noise, traffic, and parties.

The friars live on the first floor of the house, with their own kitchen and community room, and prayer room. The students live on the second and third floors, with their own kitchen, dining room, and living room. Each student has a private room. The friars and the students share at least one evening meal a week (taking turns preparing the meal),