



ENCOUNTER

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EAST ASIAN CONFERENCE - COMMON INTEGRATION PROGRAM
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*Integrated Friars as Agents of Hope for Renewed Humanity
and Restored Environment in the Context of Asia*



EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the second edition of *Encounter*, the official publication of the East Asian Conference–Common Integration Program (EAC-CIP). This issue invites readers to embrace hope. A hope rooted in the love of Christ, as reflected in the lives of the Franciscan friars preparing for their solemn vows. As St. Paul writes, *Caritas Christi urget nos* (2 Cor. 5:14). It is Christ's love that compels us.

The 14th EAC-CIP calls us, friars and lay faithful alike, to rise to the challenge of this year's theme: *"Integrated Friars as Agents of Hope for Renewed Humanity and Restored Environment in the Context of Asia."* Within these pages, you'll encounter humble, faith-filled human experiences that become encounters with God. These stories transcend cultural, linguistic, and traditional boundaries. In this shared journey, we discover that we are brothers to one another and to all creation.

Let us not be afraid to hope together.
Pax et bonum!

BIEN JUSTINE PATRIARCA, OFM
Editor-in-Chief



MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY FOR FORMATION AND STUDIES OF THE EAST ASIA CONFERENCE

As the 14th East Asian Conference – Common Integration Program (EAC-CIP) comes to its close, we give thanks to the Lord for the gift of fraternity we have shared during this one-month journey. Gathered were friars preparing for Solemn Vows from the Northern and Southern Philippine Provinces, the Provinces of South Korea and Vietnam, and brothers from the Foundation in Papua New Guinea.

The EAC-CIP has once again reminded us that we are not only members of our local entities, but part of a broader Franciscan communion in Asia. Our time together has been marked by learning to adjust—in prayer styles, food, manners, and cultural expressions. These simple, everyday encounters became opportunities for humility, patience, and openness of heart.

St. Francis taught us: "The Lord gave me brothers." We do not choose them; yet, by God's grace, we embrace them. This is the very root of our missionary calling: to accept one another in fraternity. From here, mission begins.

May what we have experienced here continue to inspire our provinces and foundations, strengthening our common witness of peace and goodness.

Pax et Bonum!

JUDEE MAR MAQUINAD, OFM
Secretary for Formation and Studies of the East Asia Conference



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE EAST ASIA CONFERENCE

29 August 2025

Dear Brothers,

Pax et Bonum!

As we bring to a close our East Asian Conference – Common Integration Program (EAC-CIP) here in the Philippine Province of San Pedro Bautista, my heart is filled with gratitude. Thank you for your active presence, your openness, and your fraternal participation which have deeply enriched our bond as East Asian brothers. Truly, this encounter has been a school of communion, where each of us has been shaped and strengthened by the gifts of the other.

I also wish to extend our heartfelt thanks to your Provincials and Ministers who generously sent you to this gathering. Their support, encouragement, and confidence in you made this experience possible, and their trust is a sign of their love for the growth of our brotherhood across East Asia. May our gratitude reach them, as this program bears fruit not only in us but also in our Provinces.

We celebrate this moment in the light of the Jubilee of Hope 2025, a time when the Church calls us to be pilgrims of hope in a world marked by trials, yet also filled with God's promise. Our journey also takes on special meaning as we commemorate the 8th Centenary of the Canticle of the Creatures. St. Francis' hymn of praise reminds us that fraternity extends beyond our circles—it embraces all creation, calling us to live with simplicity, joy, and gratitude.

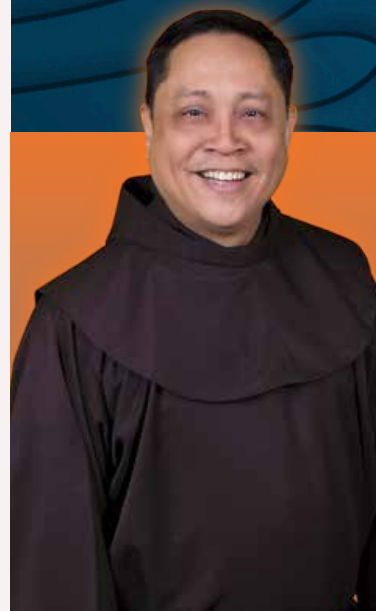
As you continue your formation, I pray for your solid commitment to our Franciscan life, that the seeds planted during these days may grow into a wholehearted "yes" to God. May all of you, in God's time, make the final embrace of our vocation in the solemn profession of vows.
Peace and all good!

Fraternally,

LINO GREGORIO V. REDOBLADO, OFM

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14th
EAC 2025
EAST ASIAN CONFERENCE
COMMON INTEGRATION PROGRAM



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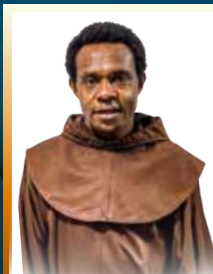
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Where Brotherhood Begins

Niño Rosal, OFM



Later that night, the welcome party brought laughter, music, and dancing—a celebration of life and brotherhood. It was a joyful reminder that fraternity is not only found in silence and prayer, but also in spontaneous laughter and the rhythm of community.

This one-month program is a sacred time to build bonds that will strengthen us in our future ministries. The friendships we form, the stories we exchange, and the prayers we offer together will become cherished memories—seeds of fraternity that will blossom wherever we are sent.

As we walk together through this integration program, may this experience prepare us not only for our solemn profession, but for a lifetime of service rooted in love, simplicity, and joy.

We are pilgrims together, and this journey has only just begun.

Franciscan Life

Joseph Nguyễn Xuân Thế, OFM

As I discern for my solemn profession as a Franciscan, I was drawn to the radical poverty and simplicity that Saint Francis embodied. Jesus' words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" in Matthew 5:3 resonated deeply with me. I am called to let go of worldly attachments and trust in God's providence. Like Saint Francis, who renounced possessions to live a life of simplicity, I am invited to embrace a life of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

As I prepare to make my solemn profession, I ask myself: Am I willing to surrender my attachments and desires, trusting that God's plan is better than my own? Will I dare to follow in Saint Francis' footsteps, living a life of simplicity, detachment, and service? Finding out the answers to these questions, I pray that I may be filled with the peace and joy that comes from living out my Franciscan vocation.

Light in the Darkness

Jazon Mark Garin, OFM

Br. Angel's Talk reminded us that while Franciscan life is never easy, it is profoundly beautiful when lived with faith and courage. Br. Angel Cortez, OFM, shared his mission experiences in the Philippines and abroad, opening our eyes to the realities of society and the challenges faced by the poor and the marginalized. His testimony was deeply inspiring, especially for us young friars preparing for our complete commitment to the Franciscan way of life. We were moved by how he endured trials and hardships, even risking his own life for the Church and for God's people, particularly in consoling and accompanying victims of violence in the pursuit of justice. May this common integration program strengthen our resolve to remain faithful to our calling, and may the spirit of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis, guide us always to stand firmly for what is right in the eyes of God and His people.

Amen.

THE FEAST OF OUR HOLY FATHER ST. DOMINIC

RODEL MASOCOL, OFM



The Feast of Our Holy Father St. Dominic de Guzmán is truly a day of rejoicing and gratitude for the gift of this great saint. As Franciscans, we joyfully uphold the long-standing tradition of attending his feast day Mass, with a Franciscan priest presiding; in return, on St. Francis' feast, a Dominican priest presides. This beautiful exchange reflects the deep spiritual friendship between St. Dominic and St. Francis who are two pillars of renewal in the Church and persevered through trials for the sake of the Gospel.

In this spirit of mutual love and respect, this year's celebration was especially meaningful. It became a moment of genuine fraternal bonding with our Dominican brothers, made more memorable by the presence of the participants of the East Asian Conference–Common Integration Program. We shared our lives, mission, experiences, and, most joyfully, our laughter during our interactions. The warmth of brotherhood reminded us that our shared calling transcends differences. As we honor St. Dominic, we are inspired to defend and live the truth with courage and love, answering our mission to be faithful witnesses of the Gospel in today's world.

Visit to the Inserted Communities

Joseph Bùi Tấn Tài, OFM

On August 9, 2025, our group of EAC-CIP participants visited two Inserted Communities of young friars: the Kapanata and the Kasama Inserted Communities. These are small communities located in poor neighborhoods, where the brothers live and serve among the local people. Life there is far from easy: the rooms are small, living conditions are limited, and transportation is often difficult. Yet, the brothers remain joyful, simple, and full of zeal. We listened to their heartfelt sharing about the joy of living close to the poor, and we learned valuable lessons about patience, compassion, and fraternity.



This visit not only gave us a more realistic view of missionary life, but also inspired in each of us a deeper desire to commit ourselves fully to the service of others.

AT THE FEET OF OUR LADY: REMEMBERING OUR ROOTS

NIKKO ALFREDO SUNGA, OFM

On August 9, 2025, the friar participants of the OFM East Asian Conference – Common Integration Program (EAC-CIP) visited the historic Franciscan Church and National Shrine of Our Lady of the Abandoned in Sta. Ana, Manila. The church, built over 447 years ago, is home to the 300-year-old canonically crowned and miraculous image of Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados, a devotion that came from Valencia, Spain.

The friars were warmly welcomed to the Camarin de la Virgen, where lay volunteers and devotees introduced them to the Marian devotion. Inside the shrine, they sang the Salve Regina before her altar. They were also greeted by Br. Jun Mendones, OFM, Guardian of Sta. Ana Friary, Br. Virgilio Del Mundo, OFM, Rector and Parish Priest, together with the resident friars.

After the visit around the vicinity of the church, the brothers prayed Vespers and shared dinner at the friary. During the meal, they learned of Br. Angelito Salazar's passing and prayed the *De Profundis* for his soul.



<SPIRITUALITY OF THE YOUTH AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE>

In today's digital age, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an essential part of young people's lives. AI supports learning, creativity, and opens up new opportunities, but at the same time poses challenges such as over-dependence, misinformation, and ethical concerns. Therefore, the youth need to approach AI with critical thinking, responsibility, and the right orientation.

A shining example is Blessed Carlo Acutis – a teenager who used the media to proclaim the Gospel and inspire love for the Eucharist. With simple faith and a passion for technology, Carlo showed that the Internet is not only a tool for entertainment but can also become an instrument of sanctification and evangelization.

At the same time, Saint Francis of Assisi advised his brothers: "When you are sent to any place, do not be quick to use words to teach. Above all, remain with them, until the Lord shows you when to speak." This reminds us that presence, companionship, and love are the most effective ways to draw young people closer to Christ. In truth, the Lord is already present within them; our mission is simply to help awaken and illuminate the image of Christ in their hearts.

O Lord, make me an instrument of your peace!

<Martin Nguyễn Ngọc Đăng, OFM>

A MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE ON *Holy Mother Clare's Feast Day*

PAUL LY NGOC KHAI, OFM

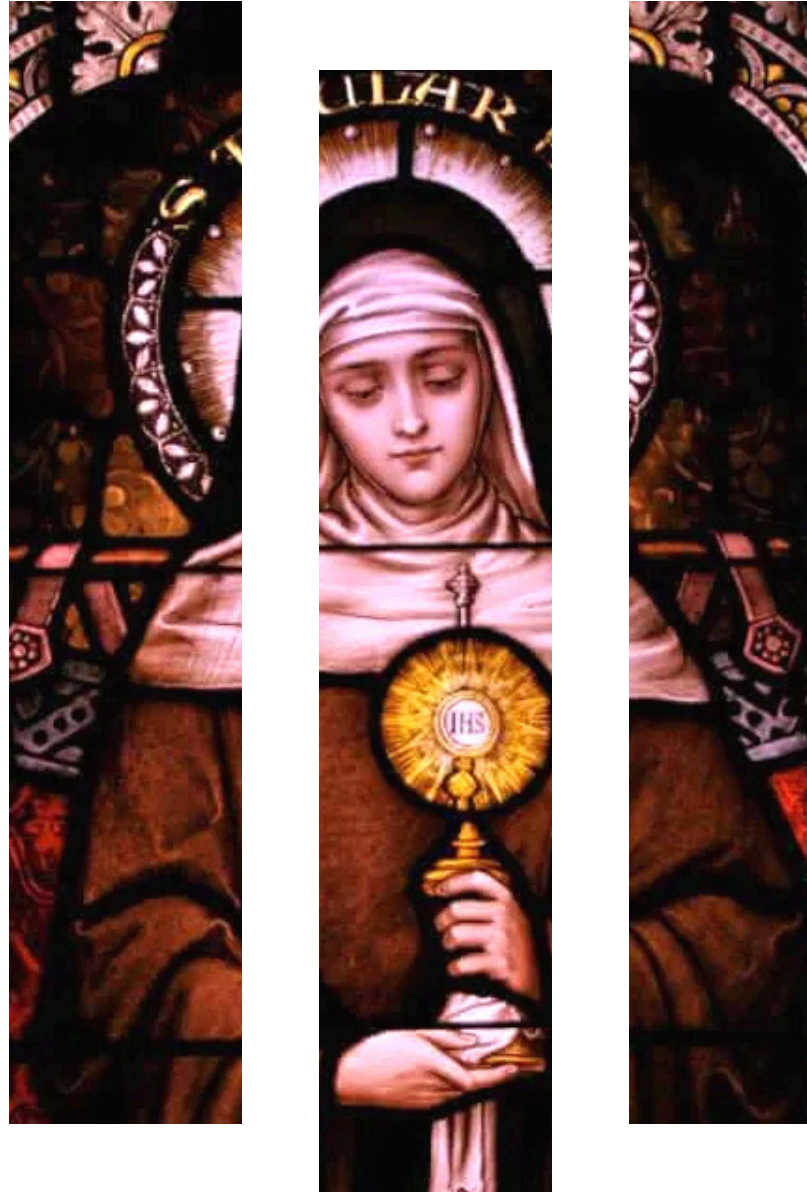
Part of my East Asian Conference–Common Integration Program (EAC-CIP) 2025 course in the Philippines was to attend the feast day of Saint Clare. As it was also my first time in another country, it was a very deep and significant experience. The church had a very sacred and solemn atmosphere as many people came, and the faces of the devotees showed a big and sincere love for Saint Clare, our spiritual mother.

After the Holy Mass, the joyful procession came next amidst music and dances. It was amazing to see how the faith and the culture mingled together. The sky gave a little rain, but it was not so bad. I believe it was a sign like a grace from God: a rain of blessing as this experience helped me to understand the deep piety of the Filipino people. It showed me as well that our Franciscan family is one, even if we are from different places, culture, and nationality: transcending all the common barriers to unity.

Celebrating Saint Clare's Feast Day

Joachim Nguyễn Văn Hường, OFM

Every year on August 11, the Church joyfully celebrates the heavenly birthday of Saint Clare of Assisi. She was a virgin who gave her youth completely to the One she loved—God. She is also considered a spiritual mother to many young women who love “Lady Poverty.”



Her name means “light,” and her life truly brought light to the world. She shared the light of the Gospel not through outward beauty or sparkle, but through simplicity, poverty, and deep prayer from the heart. The path she began in following Jesus about 800 years ago still bears beautiful fruit in the lives of her spiritual children today.

Saint Clare, before God's glorious throne, please pray for us—children of Saint Francis and your spiritual family. Praise be to the Most Holy Trinity! Viva Santa Clara! Viva!

Reflection about the Clarean Spirituality

Peter Trần Khôi, OFM

During my time in the Philippines, through the presentation of Br. Randy G. Rendora, OFM, I was deeply touched by the living spirit of Saint Clare. She did not choose a contemplative life as an escape from the pains of the world, but rather as a way to share and suffer in solidarity with all of humanity. This taught me that faith is not only in prayer, but also in communion with others.

The path of Saint Clare invites me to four steps: to look – to consider – to contemplate – to imitate. To look with eyes of love, to consider as a sign of hope, to contemplate in silence before God, and to imitate through simple yet loving actions are the ways of this path. The questions raised in the session made me reflect: how can the Cross become not only a burden but also a source of hope; and how can the contemplative spirit be a light in today's world?

Spirituality of St. Clare

Michael Nguyễn Văn Sơn, OFM

When I studied about the spirituality of Saint Clare, I found out that she had a very profound vision through the four (4) steps: Gaze, Consider, Contemplate, Imitate. Saint Clare showed through these steps a method of prayer that is both easy to follow, and has depth in concrete action. It aims to always turn to God through specific contexts, put all our hope in Him and imitate Him in all our ways.

Her spirituality calls me to answer these by living simply, steadfastly, and with hope in the Lord.



Filled-grace Visit to the Poor Clares' Monastery in Sariaya

Francis Xavier Lê Đại Vương, OFM

The final destination of our church pilgrimage was the Monastery of Saint Clare. There, the brothers felt as though they had returned home—a home of love and fraternity, where sisters and brothers meet, where St. Francis and St. Clare embrace, and where God and humanity are united.

This sacred encounter was expressed when the brothers sang the Blessing that St. Francis once gave to Brother Leo, now offered to the sisters. Within that hymn resounded not only a song but also a gentle plea: that the sisters may keep the brothers in prayer, so that they may walk faithfully and steadfastly in their mission; and at the same time, a prayer that God may pour out abundant blessings upon the sisters.

In return, the sisters imparted their own blessing upon the brothers, invoking God's presence and grace upon their journey. Thus, like two streams flowing into one "Franciscan River," their lives converged and mingled in this brief but grace-filled encounter. And from this moment, each one carried away a profound hope—the hope of eternal life, gained by walking in the footsteps of their Holy Father Francis and Holy Mother Clare.

Franciscan Justice and Peace

Anthony Nguyễn Hoàng Thi, OFM

On the morning of August 12, 2025, a lively session entitled “Franciscan and Justice and Peace” was presented by Br. Baltazar Obico, OFM. He emphasized that justice and peace are the common aspirations of every individual and nation. In today’s context of globalization and a market economy where wealth is created while the gap between rich and poor continues to widen, the Franciscan spirit is challenged to flourish, encouraging true justice and peace. Saint Francis was born into a class-conscious society where the poor had no voice. He renounced his family wealth to live among the poor, following the example of Jesus in loving all people. This spirit is clearly expressed in the Rule of the Order of Friars Minor, which invites everyone to love their neighbor and return all good things to God: the source of peace and every blessing.

National Museum Visit

John Baptist Lê Hồng Thuyên, OFM

Peace and goodness to all! This day was a special day for all of us, especially those from Papua New Guinea, South Korea, and Vietnam; we were able to visit the anthropological museum of the beautiful country of the Philippines.

We were warmly welcomed by the museum staff as together we learned about the history and culture of the country and the people of the Philippines. Everything was new and interesting, starting with the artifacts that have existed for hundreds of years along with its material and spiritual heritage.

San Agustin Museum Visit

Peter Hồ Văn Mạnh, OFM

Last 15th of August we had a good trip to the San Agustin Church. The Church is located along General Luna Street in Intramuros, Manila. It is very old, yet, still new and beautiful. It is under the care of the Order of Saint Augustine (OSA). Since this was the first time I came there, I was very surprised by the Church with its big and comfortable structure. I felt my soul being lifted to heaven, to God with its ambience.

I admire and respect the old Christians of that time for both their intelligence and their zeal for the house of God. Standing inside the church, I felt so small and insignificant. With that, I was empowered to answer the invitation to continue the tradition and renew my faith in the Church like the Christians of old.

Besides that, we also saw the history of the formation and the preservation of the culture of the Philippine people: an indispensable part is the history of the formation of writing, the diversity of ethnic groups on this archipelagic country, all of which opened up a new horizon for us wherein surprise and admiration blend together.

Finally, this was also an opportunity for us to see the presence of God as God unites us in diversity, generosity and love. I wish you a journey to discover God’s love, forgiveness and tolerance. Thank you!



Overnight at Villa Escudero

Charles Trần Văn Lộc, OFM

Greetings to all brothers in the love of Christ!

On the afternoon of August 16, after visiting old churches of Laguna and Quezon and the Monastery of Saint Clare in Sariaya, we traveled to the Villa Escudero for some rest and fraternal sharing.

The following Sunday morning, we woke up and joined Holy Mass as a sacred moment to begin the day. Afterwards, we enjoyed various activities such as carabao ride, bamboo boat ride, swimming, and visiting the museum. A highlight of the day was the unique experience of having lunch right under a cool waterfall, in a refreshing and joyful atmosphere.

In the afternoon, we watched a vibrant cultural performance presented by the Filipino people. At around 3 p.m., we boarded the bus and returned to the Provincial House, carrying with us joy, kindness, and the peace of Christ.

ST. ANTHONY SHRINE FRIARY VISIT

Peter Lê Hữu Tuyên, OFM

On August 15, we visited the community of the friars at St. Anthony Shrine in Sampaloc, Manila. Upon our arrival, we joined the Eucharistic Celebration of the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the birthday of St. Anthony of Padua. It was a meaningful moment to pray and give thanks together with the parishioners and devotees.

After the Mass, we were welcomed with a warm and friendly dinner shared between the friars and the local community. The atmosphere was filled with joy and fraternity as everyone sang together, creating a sense of closeness and unity. This experience allowed us to witness the strong bond between the friars and the faithful, as well as the beauty of living the fraternity on mission. It was truly an evening of gratitude, joy, and brotherhood.



Missionary Zeal of the Franciscans

Jason Ricardo Salado, OFM

Our pilgrimage to the Franciscan-built churches in the provinces of Laguna and Quezon was a grace-filled journey that touched both heart and spirit. Walking through these sacred spaces, I was deeply moved by the enduring presence and missionary zeal of the Franciscans whose dedication to spreading the Gospel continues to bear fruit in the lives of the faithful.

Despite the long hours of travel and a few minor troubles along the way, the experience became even more meaningful. Though the structures themselves are impressive and rich in history, it is the deeper spiritual foundation that leaves a lasting impact. One can truly feel the Franciscan spirit urging all to live out and share the Gospel.

This pilgrimage opened my eyes not just to the beauty of our heritage but to the quiet but powerful way faith has been passed on. It left me renewed, not only as a visitor, but as a companion in the ongoing mission.



SPES NON CONFUNDIT IN FRANCISCAN LENS

JAMES BUBU, OFM

In our class about hope I came to realize that hope is not simply an optimistic feeling about the future, but rather a genuine trust in God's providence and love, even in the midst of difficulties. The life and example of St. Francis of Assisi continually remind me that true hope is born from humility, poverty of spirit, and a deep sense of fraternity with all creation. Francis himself did not cling to material security, but instead placed his entire confidence in God, finding joy and peace even in times of suffering, rejection, and uncertainty. His spirituality shows me that hope is not passive but an active way of living that resists despair and radiates encouragement to others. This challenges me to look at life differently, to trust that God can bring light out of darkness, peace out of conflict, and life out of death. It teaches me to embrace my own limitations and wounds without losing faith, knowing that God's grace works even there.

Biblical Foundation of Franciscan Spirituality of Creation

Joseph Nguyễn Quang Thiên, OFM

Humans are both the cause and the solution to global climate change. This solution was discovered by Saint Francis of Assisi, who recognized that all creatures reflect God's beauty. The biblical foundations for this idea are found in Book of Daniel and Psalm 148, which call all of creation to praise God.

Initiatives and Current Understanding of Laudato Si

Benjamin Tovue, OFM

Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* reminds us that creation is not simply a backdrop for human activity but a living gift entrusted to our care. The session stressed that people still cannot believe climate change and that the earth is in danger. This disbelief, or indifference, is one of the greatest challenges we face. This situation invites us to see the world not only with our naked eyes but also with a deeper vision of responsibility and faith. Science today with its technological advancements allow us to see pollution, deforestation, melting ice caps, and rising temperatures. But *Laudato Si'* challenges us to go further and beyond mere observation into a conversion of heart and lifestyle. To understand *Laudato Si'* is to understand that everything is interconnected. My actions—how I consume, waste, or conserve—affect the well-being of others, even those I may never meet. It is also to see that ecological crisis is deeply spiritual: it calls us back to gratitude, humility, and responsibility before God, the Creator.

Additionally, living in harmony with the world stems from God's own creation of all things. Saint Paul also emphasized this idea, showing that all things are waiting to be in harmony with each other and with God. In short, as a Franciscan friar, our calling is to live in harmony with all creatures and contribute to the healing of the world.

Sweet Vacation

Joseph Phạm Nguyễn Minh Hoàng

From August 20 until August 23 we had a short vacation in Palawan Island. This was a wonderful time, where we experienced watching corals with many colorful small fish together, gazing at the sunrise and sunset together, and most of all, we also had Holy Masses together. We saw beautiful sceneries and admired the majestic beauty of nature revealing the omnipotence of God. This was truly a wonderful time with the many first experiences I had. Thank you all, thank you for being with me on this sweet, and meaningful vacation.



First Impressions of the PHILIPPINES

Francis Assisi Trần Mai Anh, OFM

When I arrived in the Philippines, the first thing that impressed me was the old and beautiful churches; some of which are around 400 years old. These churches often have Baroque and Spanish-style architecture with thick stone walls, high domes, and tall bell towers reaching up into the sky. Inside, the churches are decorated with finely carved statues, altars made of precious wood, and colorful stained-glass windows that sparkle with light. The design blends European Christian influence with local culture, creating a unique and unforgettable beauty.

Talking about the people of the Philippines, what stood out to me most was how kind, cheerful, and welcoming they are. Locals often greet you with bright smiles and are ready to help strangers with warmth and sincerity. They live in a friendly and close-knit way, making you feel like part of a big family. Filipinos also deeply value tradition and religion. Every Sunday, it is common to see whole families attending Mass together, showing their strong faith. In daily life, they enjoy a peaceful lifestyle, not rushing and just savoring each moment, and finding joy in simple things.

God's Marvelous Work

Joseph Phạm Nguyễn Minh Hoàng

My first time visiting Palawan, I was struck by how simple and natural the scenery was. It gave me a deep sense of peace. I got to experience the island's marine environment, and my favorite part was swimming in the sea, watching the fish and coral reefs—they were so beautiful and amazing. Truly, God's creation is full of wonder.

I spent three wonderful days in Palawan: one cool day, one rainy day, and one sunny day. It reminded me of how Saint Francis felt close to nature when he admired God's creation. I thank God for His marvelous work! And I feel even more love for the Franciscan calling, and I'm more determined to commit myself to it.



This gentle, joyful, and heartfelt way of life left a lasting impression on me, alongside the historic beauty of the churches and the majestic nature of this island paradise.

Unforgettable Memories of Hope

Joseph Lê Hoài Nam, OFM

I felt truly blessed to have attended the CIP program during the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025. Walking in hope, I longed for new experiences while immersing myself in an international environment. From the very beginning, I was deeply impressed by the warm and friendly welcome from our brothers in the Philippines. The brothers from many other countries were also incredibly kind and approachable. Despite speaking different languages, everyone integrated and adapted quickly, creating a spirit of harmony and genuine connection.

The program was organized in a highly professional and profound manner. From the Masses and prayer sessions to the workshops, visits, and recreational activities; everything offered me invaluable lessons and meaningful experiences. I learned to open my heart, listen, and appreciate cultural differences. Above all, I truly felt the presence and guidance of God in every moment of this course.

With all these, I entrust all the goodness to God, giving thanks for the countless graces He has granted me through this year's CIP program. I also sincerely thank the organizing committee and our Filipino brothers for making this program so wonderful, leaving me with unforgettable memories and strengthening my hope for the future.

A Retreat into God's Heart

Peter Khoa Chu Trong Quỳnh, OFM

During the last week of EAC-CIP, we have undergone a hermitage retreat in Silang, Cavite near Tagaytay. Perhaps, people may wonder why it is necessary to experience hermitage. It is time to step away from the noise of the city. At the venue, the only sounds you can hear are the chirping of the birds. Truly, it is a time for silence and solitude through God's creation.

This retreat reminded me of my novitiate days, when we lived in small rooms with simple beds, sharing space with our brothers like in the early days of St. Francis of Assisi and his first companions. But more than the physical space, the most important place is the soul. It is where we encounter God and speak to Him intimately, just as St. Francis did on Mount La Verna.

With a quiet heart, I prayed and reflected: "Let the Holy Spirit guide you and move you, so you may clearly understand God's will and have the courage to follow the path that St. Francis walked. Lord, let me know You and know myself."



Extended Family

Joseph Phan Anh Chung, OFM

My trip to the Philippines left a deep impression on me due to the locals' incredible friendliness, warmth, and hospitality. They always have a smile on their faces and are ready to help with genuine enthusiasm. This experience taught me a valuable lesson: being sincere and welcoming is the key to creating unforgettable memories turning strangers and visitors into friends and family.



Franciscan Spirit Beyond Borders

Richard Rosete, OFM

Our Vietnamese brothers embodied a profound call to live as joyful Franciscans throughout their cultural night presentation. I was edified by how their dance and music radiate our Franciscan charism and spirituality. The rhythm of their steps echoed the harmony and peace we are called to embody as lesser brothers. Contemporaneously, the melodies of their songs symbolize prayers of praise to God, reminding us that our daily life and ministry must be rooted in worship and adoration of the Most High. The narratives of their experiences in Vietnam are also an invitation to look for the commonalities. Indeed, amidst cultural diversity there is a unifying grace of Christ that binds us as one Franciscan family.

I was enriched to encounter the mystery of a universal brotherhood transcending borders, languages, and cultures. A fraternal communion that reflects the cosmic fraternity of creation itself, where our Seraphic Father Saint Francis of Assisi embraced all creatures as brothers and sisters.

Filipino-Korean-Papuan Cultural Night

John Kim, OFM

The Cultural Night led by the delegates of South Korea, Papua New Guinea, and the Philippines, was an amazing experience where we, as brothers, celebrated our diverse backgrounds. Despite coming from different countries, cultures, and languages, we were united as one through our performances whether in songs or dances, and sharing delicious foods especially the lechon.

The communal effort of preparing our performances brought us closer, and the day was filled with joy and happiness, proving that we can connect and celebrate our unique identities together.

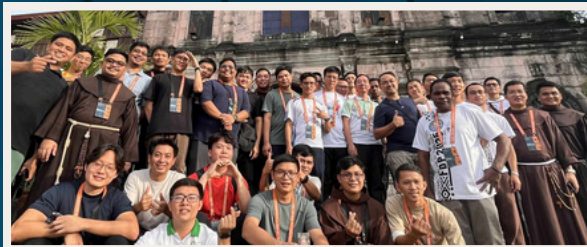
The Cross as Our Bridge

Joseph Trần Văn Thắng, OFM

Jesus said, "Whoever wanted to follow me had to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me." The life of a Franciscan friar involved balancing mission and contemplation, yet maintaining harmony between them remained a challenge. Saint Francis reminded us to work only in ways that nourished the soul and avoided temptation. He encouraged occupations rooted in goodness, cautioning against excessive focus on work that distracted from prayer. During the retreat



we returned to the heart of the Gospel: the Cross. For Saint Francis, the Cross was a bridge between mission and contemplation. His mission was to live among people with love and compassion. As the Common Integration Program ended and we prepared to return to Vietnam, we hoped the retreat days had renewed our devotion. May each friar have experienced Christ walking beside us, helping us carry the Cross not as a burden, but as love alive in our hearts.





SYNTHESIS STATEMENT

We, the 33 participants of the **East Asian Conference – Common Integration Program**, representing the **Province of San Pedro Bautista-Philippines** (5 friars), **Province of San Antonio de Padua-Philippines** (3 friars), **Province of St. Francis of Assisi-Vietnam** (22 friars), **Province of Holy Korean Martyrs-South Korea** (1 friar), and **Foundation of St. Francis of Assisi-Papua New Guinea** (2 friars), unite in reflecting on the rich experiences and transformative learnings gained during this impactful gathering.

The East Asian Conference – Common Integration Program (EAC-CIP) deepened our connections across diverse cultural backgrounds and enriched our spiritual lives. The month-long program featured meaningful encounters in workshops, liturgical celebrations, communal prayers, cultural presentations, and fraternal exchanges. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the host province and the organizing committee, whose dedication and planning ensured that every aspect of the program was executed adequately. Their efforts allowed us to immerse ourselves in the experience without distraction. Additionally, we acknowledge the invaluable contributions of all participating entities, the leadership of the East Asia Conference, and the wider Franciscan Order, whose collective guidance and support were key to the program's success.

Reflection on the General Theme:

Celebrating the 8th centenary of the Cantic of Creatures, we, the friars of the 14th EAC-CIP come together to reconnect and integrate with our common home. In a world afflicted by divisions, wars, and rapid climate change, we come together as a fraternity bearing the zeal of a mission to become beacons of hope as pilgrims in Asia. We are called together as one family coming from different cultures, languages, and backgrounds to celebrate unity in diversity. We bring and share our own stories and listen to others.

Insights on the Whole Program:

We realize that we are an international fraternity, and we grow and improve in our shared bonding. In our goal to communicate and fraternalize well we bridge this gap by using the English language as we discover how Franciscans lived out their charism in each entity. The experiences of the fraternal love and care of the brothers even though we are different and exposed to new environments like in the immersion program, pilgrimage, and excursion are deeply cherished. We learn to communicate beyond words even though we do not fully understand, the language of fraternal love sustains and enriches us in our encounters.

