

A NEW ERA FOR FRATERNITAS

When, in November 1967, during the mandate of Br. Constantine Koser as Minister General, the first issue of Fraternitas was published, the objective was that the newsletter would be a tool to strengthen the ties between the friars.

Over time, the bulletin has consolidated as a means of disseminating the activities and mission of the Order and since 1998 it has begun to be produced in eight languages. Initially sent by post in paper format, from 2002 it was decided to distribute it only in digital form.

This issue, 306, inaugurates a new phase of Fraternitas, with which the Communication Office, with conviction, reaffirms the original objective for the Order to grow ever more as a global family which, in its unity, fulfills the dream of St. Francis. We therefore propose a new graphic layout and new distribution channels for this instrument of the OFM family.

Every first and third Wednesday of the month, you will receive a simplified version of the bulletin to your e-mail address enriched with various in-depth links. You can choose to receive the email in one of the three official languages of the order, by

registering at the following address: <http://eepurl.com/ihCQlr>

In continuity with the previous mode, Fraternitas will continue to have a PDF format in eight languages which can be downloaded directly from the [Order's website](#).

The content of the bulletin also changes, and is enriched with more direct and informal information. In addition to the appointments of the Minister General, you will be able to find out about the commitments of the Definitors and those in charge of the offices of the General Curia. You will also find a section dedicated to the life of the Order in the world, with a list of the newly professed and deceased friars.

Finally, a photo gallery will show, in a simple and attractive way, an overview of the Franciscan mission in the world. As in the past, the heart of the bulletin will be made up of the news that appeared on the [Order's website](#) in the previous weeks.

We thank you for your faithfulness in reading Fraternitas and we count on you to disseminate this important communication tool of the Order.

Fr. Evódio João, Director

Curia OFM Agenda

- From January 30 to February 7 Br Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, visits the Province of the Immaculate Conception, Brazil.
- On February 6 and 7 Br Fabio César Gomes, Pro monialibus General Delegate, takes part in the gathering, in Baronissi (SA), of the Italian Poor Clare abbesses of the Campania and Basilicata regions.
- From 8 to 17 February Br Massimo visits the two Provinces of Colombia: Santa Fe and San Pablo.
- From 8 to 17 February Br Konrad Cholewa, Definitor General, will participate in the opening of the new missionary presence of the Province of the Immaculate Conception (Poland) in Botswana, the first Franciscan presence in this country.
- On February 9, Br. John Wong, Definitor General, met with the new Provincial Definitor of Vietnam, in Ho Chi Minh City. The following day he visits the Franciscan seminary and the senior friars of the Province.
- From 11 to 13 February Br. John visits the Franciscan mission of Laos, in the Diocese of Pakse.

Building the Synodal Path 27TH UCLAF ASSEMBLY IN SÃO PAULO

Under the theme "Building the Synodal Path as Friars Minor", the 27th Assembly of the Union of Latin American Franciscan Conferences (UCLAF) was held in São Paulo, Brazil, from 23 to 27 January. The general objective of the meeting was to "take up again the Synodal Way to renew our vision and open up to the future, starting from today's Franciscan identity, around the reality of Latin America, as communion and participation of all brothers in this context". The last meeting, in 2020, was held online due to restrictions imposed by the global pandemic. The meeting was attended by the Minister General, the General Definitory, the Secretary General for Formation and Studies, the Secretary General for Missionary

Evangelisation and the Animator of the General Office for Justice and Peace and Integrity of Creation, together with all the Ministers Provincial and Custodes of UCLAF.

The participation of the Minister General and his Definitory, accompanied by other members of the General Curia, emphasises the General Government's desire to embark on a synodal path of dialogue with the friars of the Order. Additional regional meetings will be held in the near future.

Br José Alirio Urbina Rodríguez, president of UCLAF, said



Union of Latin American Franciscan Conferences

UCLAF comprises the three Franciscan Conferences that bring together the 26 Provinces and Custodies in Latin America: the Franciscan Bolivarian Conference, the Franciscan Conference of Brazil and the Southern Cone, and the Franciscan Conference of Our Lady of Guadalupe. It is an animation structure of the Order of Friars Minor that is now 55 years old. It was born under the renewing impulse of the Second Vatican Council to promote unity and collaboration in the life and mission of the Order in the Latin American context. In these years, it has sought to encourage collaboration in its evangelising presences (historic shrines, vicariates, parishes, education, communication, social work and missionary initiatives) and formation based on the Franciscan charism.

WORLD OFM

Brazil: First Professions, in Rodeio, of 6 novices of the Provinces of Imaculada Conceição, S. Francisco de Assis and S. Francisco Solano



Mexico: Guardians and heads of fraternities meeting in the Provincia Santo Evangelio



Holy Land: Pilgrimage to the Jordan river for the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord



France – Belgium: Brothers of the Province Bienheureux Jean Duns Scot



Columbia: 8 brothers making their first professions in Ubaté, Provincia de la Santa Fe



Italia: Ordination as deacons of Brothers Antonio, Daicolos and Rénatus in San Severo, Province of San Michele Arcangelo

that participants were invited to "take up the different challenges and projects, starting with the mandates of the 2021 General Chapter". He pointed to some of the issues that were on the table at the meeting: "We dealt with the Amazon Project, the departure from our Order by some friars, the safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults, the responsible and social use of Church and Order property, and the Order's centenary celebrations".

The particular objectives of the meeting were:

- Strengthening listening and fraternal dialogue as UCLAF, starting from its Conferences, assuming a present and a future of hope considering our current realities and contexts.
- Assuming the mandates of the General Chapter 2021 in the life, actions, projects, and decisions of UCLAF in its Conferences to renew the present and embrace the future with hope starting from our Franciscan identity.
- Assuming the guidelines, processes and procedures of the Commission for the Safeguarding of Minors and the responsible and supportive use of the patrimony and goods of the Church and the Order for the strengthening of the Franciscan identity.

- Strengthening, through fraternal dialogue between the Minister General, the General Government, and the different Conferences of UCLAF, the accompaniment and fraternal animation of the friars of the Entities of the Conferences.

Br César Külkamp and Br Joaquín Echeverry, the Definitors accompanying the three Conferences that form UCLAF, said that "the Assembly meets with great expectation of animating one another, after the restrictions due to the pandemic. In communion with the whole Church and the last General Chapter, the plan is to launch the challenge of a synodal journey, starting from listening to the brothers of the entities that make up UCLAF. We want to relaunch the challenge of embracing our identity as Friars Minor, with attention to the challenges of our time and our religious and Franciscan life contexts and seek ways of re-enchantment and restructuring that will allow a more prophetic response".

Minister General's message: [Italiano](#) | [Español](#) | [Português](#)

Daily chronicles of the Assembly are available on the Order's [website](#)

Franciscan Centenary - Franciscan Family THE INAUGURATION AT GRECCIO WITH 6 MINISTERS GENERAL

In the presence of the six Minister Generals of the Franciscan Family, the Franciscan Centenary was inaugurated on 7th January, with a series of events retracing the last stages of the life of St Francis of Assisi, leading to the 800th anniversary of the Passover of the Seraphic Father.

The celebration, presided over by Br Luciano de Giusti, Minister Provincial of the St Bonaventure Province of the Order of Friars Minor, took place in the church of the sanctuary of Greccio where, on Christmas night 1223, St Francis desired to celebrate a very special Christmas.



In the first part, a copy of the Later Rule was enthroned at the foot of the altar. Then, passages from the Rule and Testament of St Francis were read, closely related to each other, forming a profound unity, both nourished by the one great evangelical ideal that always guided the steps of St Francis.

berto Genuin, OFM Cap; Br Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR; Br Tibor Kausar, OFS; Sr Daisy Kalamparamban, Vice-president IFC-TOR.

The celebration was broadcast and the video is available at the following link: <https://youtu.be/0t3r28Ay9pg>



Five Centenaries split into four years

The Centenary is divided into 5 Centenaries divided into 4 years, in which it will be possible to reflect and contemplate the Rule and Christmas in Greccio (1223-2023), the gift of the Stigmata (1224-2024), the Canticle of the Creatures (1225-2025) and the Transit of Francis of Assisi (1226-2026).

The Centenarians are part of a single thematic project, which will develop gradually and harmoniously according to the chronology of the events celebrated.

The second part recalled the first Christmas in Greccio, when St Francis, as recounted by Thomas of Celano, the saint's first biographer, wanted to show contemporary eyes the hardship that the Family of Nazareth had to face to give birth to the baby Jesus.

The key themes proposed for the celebration of the Centenaries will be considered from multiple perspectives, present in

In the last part of the celebration, the six Minister Generals, accompanied by Brother Luciano de Giusti, carried the statue of the Infant Jesus in procession to the Sanctuary's cave.

The following took part in today's celebration: Br Massimo Fusarelli, OFM; Br Carlos Alberto Trovarelli, OFM Conv; Br Ro-



every celebration, which refer to the theological dimension (our being in Christ), anthropological (our being brothers and sisters), ecclesiological (our being in communion) and sociological (our being in the world).

The celebration of the Centenaries becomes a propitious occasion to support, as a Franciscan Family, the ecclesial reform that the Pope is carrying out in his pontificate. Furthermore, the celebration of Centenaries also has aids, the objective and purpose of resolutely directing our gaze towards the future and charismatically strengthening our Franciscan identity.

This centenary is directed at the entire Franciscan family and all the men and women who feel challenged by the figure of Francis of Assisi, his life and work.

For the occasion, the Franciscan Family, through a Commission of the Communication Offices, has created the official website www.centenarifrancescani.org to disseminate reflections, themes, official documents and news that will provide the guidelines for experiencing this great Franciscan event together.

A journey for the Franciscan Family

The expression Franciscan Family is used in a broad sense to indicate all religious groups that are inspired by the charism of Saint Francis. In fact, the Franciscan charism has inspired men and women over the centuries, both laymen



and women, male and female religious, or priests, who have formed different groups over the centuries. The Conference of the Franciscan Family is made up of six members: the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM), the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual (OFMConv), the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin (OFMCap), the Minister General of the Third Order Regular (TOR), the Minister General of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO), the President of the International Franciscan Conference of brothers and sisters of the Third Order Regular (CFI-TOR)

THE DEATH OF BENEDICT XVI

“It is with pain that I inform you that the Pope Emeritus, Benedict XVI, passed away today at 9:34 am, in the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery in the Vatican”. With these words, Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican Press Office, gave the news of the return to the Father’s House of Benedict XVI, which took place on December 31, 2022.

In a note published on the Order’s website, Br. Massimo expressed his condolences on behalf of the entire Order:

“The Order of Friars Minor joins in mourning the loss of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, while recognizing the gift he was for the Church and for the world and particularly appreciates his closeness to Franciscan places and Franciscan theology, above all through his research on St Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, Seraphic Doctor. May the Lord welcome his good and faithful servant and make his long mission at the service of the people of God and humanity bear fruit.”



The closeness of Pope Benedict to Franciscan theology and places

“Joseph Ratzinger as a young man studied the theology of the history of St. Bonaventure, from a new perspective”, highlighted Br. Massimo. “St. Bonaventure emphasizes the historical character of Scriptural statements. In fact, the life of the Church is like 'a seed that grows over time' (Lectures on the work of the Six days of Creation). Similarly, Sacred Scripture is seen as the earth that produces buds(cf. Gn 1:11) in a manifold way in that it produces a soul 'teeming with life' (Coll. XIV, 1).

'From an objective point of view, Scripture is certainly complete, but its meaning is to be found in a continuous development that unfolds throughout history and which has not yet ended' (J. Ratzinger, Saint Bonaventure, p. 29). We are today able to explain many things that the Fathers were not yet able to express, because what for them was still in the darkness of the future for us represents an already accessible past.

From Scripture, therefore, always new knowledge develops. In it, so to speak, something still happens; and this happening,

this story will go on as long as there is a story. New meanings are discovered in Sacred Scripture, the 'multiform theories', which are like drops in the infinite ocean. The future is contained in Sacred Scripture and can only be interpreted if the past is known. These 'multiform theories', unlimited meanings, are like seeds enclosed in fruits. And who can know them all, given that a single seed gives rise to forests which, in turn, produce an infinite number of seeds? So it is with the 'seeds of meaning' of Sacred Scripture which, 'with the passage of time, are involved in a constant process of growth' (ibidem).

Nonetheless, there is still much that is obscure. 'This represents for the theologian, interpreter of Scripture, an important awareness: it shows him that in his interpretation he cannot disregard history, neither from that of the past nor from that of the future. In this way, the interpretation of Scripture becomes the theology of history, illumination of the past as a prophecy about the future' (ibidem, p. 30). We welcome this ever valid lesson, which also helps us to deepen the reading of our Franciscan charism”, concludes the Minister General.

MISSIONARIES AROUND THE WORLD

In these days, some brothers of the Order are joining different missionary situations around the world, either for a trial period or for a definitive commitment.

Br Mario Debattista, of the Province of the Holy Spirit (Australia), is heading to Africa, a continent where he has already lived and worked, specifically as guardian in the "St Francis of Assisi" Foundation in Sudan and as formator in the fraternity of Juba, in South Sudan.

This is a beautiful sign of availability offered by the Province of Australia, in spite of its reduced forces, with an important presence for that young Foundation, which is about to set out once again, and which will soon welcome

four other Asian missionaries who are preparing to share its mission.



In the Custody of the Protomartyrs of Morocco, two brothers are present today for a time of experience, so as to assess a possible vocation to live among the people of that nation according to the Rule and in the spirit of our charism.

Two other brothers have arrived in Cuba for a time of trial period: this

presence, now entrusted to a US Province in collaboration with the Franciscan Conference Our Lady of Guadalupe (Central America and Mexico), is also setting out again to be an evangelical leaven in that country.

Finally, in February, a new Franciscan presence will be inaugurated in Africa, in Botswana, thanks to the brothers of the Province of the Immaculate Conception in Poland.

Thanks to these brothers who accept facing the missionary vocation, and best wishes to all the friars of the Order in reviving this missionary spirit which is the oxygen of our vocation.

January 2023

REFLECTIONS BY BR MASSIMO



From the 23rd to the 27th January all the Ministers Provincial and Custodes of Latin America gathered in São Paulo, Brazil, to thank the Lord for the gift of our Franciscan vocation at the beginning of this Centenary. They evaluated the present journey of the Order on this continent and look to the future. We, the friars of the General Definitory, also took part to share with our Ministers and Custodes the life and mission of this great continent.

Realities differ in the many countries where we are present. Our brothers of-

ten live at crucial intersections. First of all, there is the cultural change that is taking place and the desire for greater awareness of the different peoples. There are forms of inequality and poverty caused by injustice and the movement of migrants. There is the ecological issue, with particular reference to the Amazon. And there is a proliferation of different religious and Christian communities that see Catholics in a new position, pushed beyond themselves towards a renewed evangelisation.

In the reality of Latin America there are many challenges that demand of our friars that they read the signs of the times and recognise the actions that can transform reality by the power of the Gospel.

If there is talk of a "lost time" for the development of the continent, there is also an invitation to hope in order not to lose contact with the men and women who live every day in different situations, of-

ten marked by injustice and poverty. Together we need to search for the peace found in fraternal coexistence.

We want to continue to participate in the growth of the Church as a hospitable fraternity for many, as well as for the various actors of civil society with whom we cooperate.

In Latin America, religious life is called to rethink itself, in contact with reality, listening to the Gospel, which is at the heart of the Franciscan charism.

In a synodal journey as Friars Minor in Latin America, we want to renew our vision and embrace our future, starting from today's Franciscan identity, around the present day context of Latin America. We do not want to repeat the patterns of the past, but to look with courage and passion to the future that has already begun.

VENERABLE MARIA MARGHERITA DIOMIRA OF THE INCARNATE WORD

During the Audience granted on 19 January 2023 to His Eminence Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, Prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, the Supreme Pontiff



has authorised the Dicastery to promulgate the Decree concerning the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Maria Margherita Diomira of the Incarnate Word, a professed religious of the Sisters Established in the Charity of the Good Shepherd, born in Firenzuola (Diocese of Florence-Italy) on 26 April 1651 and died in Florence on 17 December 1677.

The Venerable Maria Margherita Diomira of the Incarnate Word (1651- 1677) was a young mystic who was sanctified within the walls of the Convent of Charity, founded in Florence by the priest Vittorio dell'Ancisa in 1589, where the so-called 'Stabilite' sisters lived in contemplation and the service of welcoming young women. Through the practice of

the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius, she learnt to meditate on the mystery of the Incarnation, which became the centre of her spiritual life.

Stricken with consumption, she offered herself as a victim of love to the Lord, and with this feeling, she died in great fame of holiness on 17 December 1677, at the age of just 26.

The Cause of beatification, which began in 1704, was entrusted in 1885 to the Postulator General of the Observant Friars Minor, Brother Bernardino da Grotte di Castro. Today, after a long journey, it has reached the goal of the promulgation of her heroic virtues.

MINISTER GENERAL'S VISIT TO LITHUANIA



From 2 to 5 January, the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, accompanied by the Definitor General of the Anglophone Conference, Br. Jimmy Zammit, visited the Province of Lithuania. They were four days full of meetings, reflections and sharing in a land that has seen the Franciscan presence from the thirteenth century, after the death of St. Francis. With ups and downs, this presence has grown and taken root in the country. With the advent of the Soviet Union, the official presence ended and several friars were forced to go on mission abroad, while others remained clandestinely at home.

In 1991, the re-establishment of the Province began, which today has 36 friars and 2 novices, distributed in 6 houses. The friars work in the parishes, in the sanctuary of the hill of the Crosses, in youth and vocational ministry, in the service of charity and in the mass media.

Among the activities, the meeting with the Poor Clares of the Kretinga Monastery, founded 25 years ago by that of Mantua (Italy); meeting in Klapeida with the local fraternity and visit

to the cancer hospital spiritually assisted by the friars, who together with the laity offer treatment, assistance and facilitated accommodation for the sick and their families; meeting with the Vicar Provincial; meeting with some government representatives; meeting with the Apostolic Nuncio and with the Bernardine Sisters.

A particular moment was the visit to the Hill of Crosses, a very important place for Lithuanian faith and devotion. Razed to the ground several times during communism, it has always been reborn and to this day constitutes an important point of reference for the whole community. Here Br. Massimo planted a cross in memory of his visit, accompanying it with prayers for all the friars of the Order and for the Franciscan family. Next to the Hill stands the friary, which is twinned with the sanctuary of La Verna.

Br. Massimo and Br. Jimmy visited the Province to accompany and support its path of renewal, through important choices to be made at this time.

Deceased Brothers*

- 22-01-2023: Fr. Swamy Dayananad - St. Thomas Apostle Province, India
- 14-01-2023: Fr. Francisco van der Poel - Province Santa Cruz, Brazil
- 09-01-2023: Fr. Marijan (Mate) Mandac - Province Dalmatiae S. Hieronymi, Croacia
- 05-01-2023: Fr. Peter O'Grady - Province Hibernia, Ireland
- 04-01-2023: Fr. Frederico Zillner - Province "Nossa Senhora da Assunção do Maranhão e Piauí", Brazil

* Data received by the General Secretary: secgen@ofm.org

CELEBRATING THE RULE 1223-2023

Celebrating the *Regola Bollata* reminds us that, for Francis of Assisi, the core of it is the Gospel. Prayerful listening to the words of Jesus Christ made him exclaim together with his first brothers: "This is what we desired, this is what we were looking for!". And Blessed Francis said: "This will be our Rule" (Anonimo perugino 11).

Actions

- Consider what still remains an inspiration as you read the Rule and the Gospel.
- Reading the Rule, rewrite your personal life and fraternal project.
- Constantly confront ourselves with our Rule, so that it may enlighten our personal and fraternal discernment with the aim of living as brothers and minors.

No member of the Franciscan Family professes his own Rule privately, because he is called to live the Gospel in fraternity. ([Guidelines for celebrating the centenaries of the Franciscan family: 2023-2026](#))

[Read here more about the Franciscan Centenary](#)

VATICAN RADIO INTERVIEWS MINISTER GENERAL

Vatican Radio interviewed Br. Massimo Fusarelli. The interview was broadcast on January 23, for the column "The Pope's Window". The complete interview is available at this link on the Order's YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/sM16u2sS9DI>
During the interview, the Minister referred to some important issues of world affairs and Order:

Ukraine

I was able to gather the splinters of a strong and rooted people who also have a point of reference in their faith. In a center where children and war orphans are taken in, they gave me drawings, strangely full of colours. Bright. Among the stories that I still carry with me, I saw an old lady curled up in a blanket on the floor and she had nothing around her, a plastic bag and then a cage with a small parrot that she brought back from a small village.

Eighth centenary

It is a centenary that traces the last years of Francis years that culminate in the stigmata and from which the tension between the primitive ideal and the adaptation of the growing minority fraternity to reality. Francis himself fought and experienced this tension, which finds its highest point in the definitive approval of the Rule. So we want a memory of the last years of Francis that is not harmless and not shameful.



Franciscan charism

We want to deepen our identity. I come from Angola, and there they are already planning a journey and some initiatives to make Saint Francis better known in these years, with the children, with the schools and with the catechumens who are new to the Faith.