

4 OCTOBER 2023, SOLEMNITY OF ST. FRANCIS

LETTER FROM THE MINISTER AND THE GENERAL DEFINITORY

Dear Brothers and Sisters,
May the Lord give you His peace!

We are close to celebrating the feast of our father and brother Francis, which on this occasion coincides with the beginning of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which will have as its theme “For a synodal church: communion, participation, mission” (First session). The theme, method and process proposed by Pope Francis for the Synod refer to topics such as: fidelity to the Spirit, walking together, listening, dialogue, discernment.

Discernment, through listening and dialogue, is not foreign to our spiritual tradition and our origins, as St. Bonaventure testifies who describes Francis as the one who “*had learned from the Supreme Master the great things*”, but who, not for this reason “*had the humility to ask the little things of those smaller than him. He used to seek – adds the Seraphic Doctor – with singular zeal the way and the way to serve God more perfectly, as He pleases best. This was his supreme philosophy, this was his supreme desire, as long as he lived: to ask the wise and the simple, the perfect and the imperfect, the young and the old, what was the way in which he could most virtuously reach the summit of perfection*” (Legenda Maior 12,2).

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GENERAL CURIA AGENDA

- Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, was in Assisi on the 2nd October for the Conference of the General Ministers of the Order and on the 3rd he participated in the Conference of the Franciscan Family. As part of the celebrations of the Solemnity of the Seraphic Father St. Francis, on the 3rd October he celebrated the Transitus and to-day, 4th October, he celebrates the Holy Mass at Our Lady of the Angels.
- On the 5th October, Br. Massimo will visit the Monastery of St. Claire (San Severino Marche, Italy), for the 800th Anniversary of its foundation.
- On the 6th October he will meet the Professors of the Pontifical University Antonianum (PUA) and the Friars of the Gabriele Allegra Fraternity (FGA) in Rome.
- From the 7th to the 12th October, at the Porziuncola in Assisi, Br Fábio C. Gomes, General Assistant pro Monialibus, and Br. Hieronimus Dei Rupa, Deputy Secretary of the General Secretariat for Formation and Studies (SGFS), will participate in the international meeting of representatives of the Franciscan Hermitages.
- On the 9th October Br. Massimo will be at PUA for the inauguration of the Academic Year.

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On this occasion we would like to deepen the theme of listening, so important in our life and mission. Our charism, in fact, was born from the Gospel heard by Francis at the Porziuncola, listening to the Gospel that immediately became also listening to the Church, represented in the priest who explained to the young Francis the meaning of those words. In the course of almost fifteen years, the original *forma vitae*,

which began with this happy encounter with the Gospel, has been adapted through listening to the brethren and the signs of the times, carried out above all in the Chapters.

In this way, through a fraternal discernment carried out by Francis and his brothers, the Franciscan charism gradually acquired its textual configuration that received definitive approval eight hundred years ago in the *Regula Bullata*.

Full text of the Letter: [Italiano](#) - [English](#) - [Español](#) - [Deutsch](#) - [Français](#) - [Hrvatski](#) - [Português](#) - [Polski](#)



GENERAL CURIA AGENDA

- On the 10th and 11th October on Mount St. Anne in the Province of Saint Hedwig (Poland), the meeting of all the Secretaries of Formation and Studies, Mission and Evangelization and JPIC Animators of the North Slavic Conference will be held. Participants will be Br. Konrad Cholewa, General Definitor, Br. Darko Tepert and Br. Hieronimus Dei Rupa, Secretary and Deputy General Secretary for Formation and Studies, Br. Francisco Gomez Vargas and Br. Dennis Tayo, General Secretary and General Animator for the Mission and Evangelization, Br. Daniel Blanco, Director of the General Office for JPIC, the President of the North Slavic Conference and the respective secretaries and animators of the Provinces of the North Slavic Conference.
- From the 9th to 11th October the General Definitory will meet in the General Curia the Ministers of the Conference of Provincial Ministers of Italy and Albania (COMPI) and of the Conference of Provincial Ministers of Spain and Portugal (CONFRES). The two Conferences will continue to meet until the 13th October.
- On the 11th and 12th October Br. Massimo will meet the Guardians of the Hermitages in Assisi.
- From the 12th to 14th October Br. Jimmy Zammit, General Definitor, will participate in the assembly of the English Language Conference (ESC) in Kansas City (USA).
- From the 12th to 14th October Br. Albert Shmucki, General Definitor and Director of the General Office for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, will participate in a conference on Protection in Rama (Bosnia – Herzegovina).
- The opening of the interprovincial postulancy of all the provinces of Poland will be held on the 13th October at the Borki Wielkie friary. Br. Konrad, Br. Darko, Br. Hieronimus, all the Provincial Ministers of Poland, the Formators and the Postulants will participate.
- From the 14th to 16th October Br. Darko and Br. Hieronimus will visit the Formation Houses in Krakow (Poland) and surrounding areas; on the 18th and 19th Br. Darko will be at the interprovincial Novitiate of Leżajsk, which brings together students from three Polish Provinces.
- From the 16th to 19th October Br. Fábio and Br. Cesare Vaiani, General Definitor, will participate in the online meeting of the International Commission for the revision of the General Constitutions of the Poor Clares.
- On the 18th and 19th October Br. Jimmy Zammit, Br. Darko and Br. Francisco will participate in the Board of Directors of the Secretariat of Formation and Studies of the US Provinces in Burlington, Wisconsin (USA).
- From the 15th to 20th October Br. Massimo and Br. Jimmy will be in Kansas City (USA) for the Chapter and the canonical erection of the new Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW CARDINAL PIZZABALLA

“THE WORLD STILL NEEDS SAINT FRANCIS”

The Ordinary Public Consistory for the creation of new Cardinals was held on Saturday the 30th September in St. Peter's Basilica. Pope Francis, amongst the 21 cardinals, created Cardinal His Beatitude Pierbattista Pizzaballa, OFM, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. The OFM Communications Office interviewed him a few days before the Consistory.

As a Franciscan, how do you feel about receiving this new service?

After the initial surprise, I tried to understand what this meant, and little by little I am understanding it from the reactions of my church in Jerusalem, of the other sister churches with which we have good relations and, more generally, of the various communities that make up the complex and varied society of our diocese, Palestinians, Israelis, Jordanians and Cypriots. They are all very happy with this choice. This made me understand that you shouldn't look at yourself, at your position. Rather, this new service enables us to grow in relationships between the various communities, to be aware of having to also be a clear voice in the world for all these brothers and sisters of ours, learning to listen more and more to our territory and its communities, to serve it, love it, but also guide it.

What significance does your nomination have for the Patriarchate of Jerusalem?

For the Patriarchate it is a great encouragement. Jerusalem is the heart of the life of the world, and yet in a certain sense, it is also its periphery.

We live in a border that is not only geographical, but also cultural and religious, always a harbinger of political and religious tensions, which are still creating deep wounds in the lives of these populations, especially the Palestinian one, thirsty for justice and dignity, with enormous economic and social inequalities. The choice of Pope Francis, of whom everyone - as I was saying - is proud, has strengthened the spirit in the community. We feel even more strongly the mandate to be witnesses of the Risen One in this wounded land, working with everyone to build contexts of peace.

What is your message to the Christian community in the Middle East?

We have lived through some very difficult years. I have just returned from Syria, having participated in the episcopal consecration of our brother fr. Hanna Jallouf. I encountered a prostrate, tired country, where it is really difficult to have trust.



If Syria's situation is extreme, the situation in other countries is also serious, from every point of view.

I tell them that we have no right to give up. These situations must encourage us to work more together, to have the courage - for once - to put aside our always too many divisions and jealousies.

We have the duty to place beautiful signs of encounter, collaboration and resilience in our respective territories. Only in this way will we be able to rebuild some trust, which is desperately needed.

Too often our reflections and analysis start from the even serious problems we experience! Instead, we must start from our vocation as children of the Risen One, and realize it despite everything. In other words, we should not put our own pain at the centre of our perspectives, because this risks closing us in on ourselves and extinguishing us little by little.

At the centre of our search should be instead the desire for life, which arises only and exclusively from the encounter with the Risen One. Only in this way will we be able to speak credibly about hope. What are we Christians of the Holy Land and the Middle East called to do? What is our specific vocation, here and now? What does the Lord call us to do? How can we express the beauty of our vocation in these torn contexts of ours? Too often our small or large fears block our ability to love and are at the origin of our omissions.

Instead we should desire to challenge others in love. There is no other way.



Can you give a message to the friars around the world?

Continue to be a simple and presence of light in the life of the Church, close to the people, which is being close to Christ. The world will always need those who, with a simple and beautiful, poor and happy life, know how to bring a word that reaches the heart, especially for those who are thirsty and hungry for justice, for truth, for something that goes beyond material life.

The world still needs Saint Francis, his radical love for Christ, which then translates into an equally radical love for the life of the world, without the need of making too many calculations.



Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, was present at the Consistory in St. Peter's, and commented on the event as follows: *"St. Francis in the Rule asks the friars to always remain in communion with the Church of Rome and therefore with the entire Church. We achieve this above all by living our vocation as brothers and minors, without seeking honours and being amongst the first places. We can read in the choice of our brother amongst the Pope's closest collaborators from this perspective of service, so as to bring our vocation to be the servants of all to the highest level of the Church. We know that it is not easy for anyone and for this reason it requires continuous purification. Therefore for our Order, before being a great honour, having another cardinal represents a responsibility to live our vocation in communion with the ministry of the Bishop of Rome, for the good of the whole Body of the Church"*.

When asked how this title can help the Holy Land, Br. Massimo replied: *"The choice of Br. Pierbattista, who to-day is the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem and who has lived in that blessed Land for more than thirty years, is a great sign for the Holy places, for the Church that lives there and also for the Order, in its 800-year service in the Custody of the Holy Places. I believe that the Holy Father thus wanted to offer a word of encouragement to the Mother Church of Jerusalem, increasingly reduced in numbers, yet firm in its desire to bear witness to the Gospel and remind all the Churches of the world that our roots are in Jerusalem, in the Holy Land. We therefore welcome this nomination as a renewed call to be present in the Holy Land, to support and qualify what is the first, the "pearl" of the Order's missions"*.

800 YEARS OF THE REGULA BOLLATA THE GOSPEL IS LIFE: THE RULE OF FRANCIS

On Saturday the 16th September, in the Sacred Monastery of St. Francis in Assisi, a round table was held on the theme "The Gospel is life: the Rule of Francis", which saw the participation of the three General Ministers: Br. Massimo Fusarelli of the Order of the Friars Minor, Br. Roberto Genuin of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin and Br. Carlos Alberto Trovarelli of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual. The meeting, moderated by Don Marco Moroni, custodian of the Sacred Monastery, was also attended by Professor Maria Pia Alberzoni, historian and expert on Franciscanism, and the writer Davide Rondoni.

Professor Alberzoni began the debate by relating the life of Saint Francis and the Rule: how was it possible that Francis' lifestyle, that is, living the Holy Gospel, could become a rule? Seeing as he had the idea of following the Gospel, but not of writing a Rule. Br. Massimo commented: "The Gospel is not a closed code, but an open code; Francis has a lively sense, a strong sense of the living presence of Jesus Christ", and continued: "Francis's time was a time of return to the Gospel, but the originality of Francis's lifestyle is that he accepts the form of the Holy Gospel above all as a unique experience, an experience that is based on the Christian experience, the discovery through the encounter with the lepers of the





"The friars helped the people in the city with simple daily tasks, in the kitchen or in the fields working the land without asking for compensation; they also served in the leper colony and this was a novelty for their time. Francis taught us that the important thing in the apostolate is the testimony of life." Here he took the opportunity to talk about an experience he had in 2010 working with the elderly, living on the outskirts with two other friars in an apartment: "For us at the time it was an important step to experience fraternity together. The experience of working and living together with people was a grace. Today we are asking ourselves again: can we also look at work as a grace? We have to do it with life..."

new face of Christ, that is, an experience of mercy".

She then concluded her speech by commenting: "Combining the Gospel and life implies that, just as the rule illuminates life, so too life illuminates the Rule; for this reason the friars meet once a year, update the experience of the Rule and listen to the voice of the church, allowing themselves to be accompanied by the Pontiff. The Rule is a living body that grows because life contributes to the Rule and the Rule calls us to re-launch life".

The second theme focused on how Franciscan life combined contemplation and apostolate, to which Br. Massimo responded:

The last topic concerned Chapter love is not possession", and then continues by reporting that there are gaps in the early years of Francis' brotherhood. In the writings we find the recommendation: "The friars should not eat from the same plate as the women", so we can hypothesize that in the beginning the friars lived with the women, but Francis presents tenderness and asks the friars to be like a mother.

Br. Massimo concluded his speech by saying: "It is a current theme in the Synod: men and women must learn to live together."

29 NOVEMBER 2023 - BASILICA OF SAINT JOHN LATERAN IN ROME

WE WILL CELEBRATE THE 800TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RULE

The Later Rule was approved by the Pope on 29 November 1223, with a letter granted at Saint John Lateran; next November 29, 2023 marks the eighth centenary.

The Committee for the Centenary of the Franciscan Family invites everyone to participate, in person or through the Centenary website www.centenarifrancescani.org, in the celebration of this centenary, which will be held on 29 November 2023 at 3.00 pm (local time) right in the Basilica of Saint John Lateran in Rome.

The celebration will help to rediscover the value and meaning of the Rule for the entire Franciscan Family through reflections and testimonies that show its relevance. The celebration will alternate different languages to also allow online participation and express the internationality of the Franciscan Family. The six General Ministers or their representatives will be present.

We invite those who can be present to participate in person and those who cannot be present in Rome to participate online, live or deferred (the celebration will remain on the Centenary website).

ARGENTINA, MEETINGS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE 800TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RULE
“EVERYTHING THAT MOVES ME, GUIDES ME”

We receive and publish an article by Br. Fernando Ferrario, OFM, of the Province of St. Francis Solano, in Argentina, on some meetings held by the provincial vocational animation team on the theme of the 800th anniversary of the Regula Bollata.

In this year 2023, in which the entire Franciscan Family celebrates the 800th anniversary of the approval of the Regula Bollata, in the Province of St. Francis Solano in Argentina, we are giving priority to living this centenary, close to young people.

At the beginning of the year, the friars and lay people who make up the provincial vocational animation team asked themselves: how can we share this event with young people? How can we ensure that this text, written in a culture and language very different from those of the 21st century, could be close to them? Which path to follow to encounter the beauty, depth and provocation of the written pages of the "Rule and Life of the Friars Minor"?

We were deeply inspired by rediscovering that Francis of Assisi and the first brothers had to go through long processes of research, questions, comings and goings, discernment based on lived experience. We were seduced by Francis' intuition to convene the so-called Chapters of the Mats, where everyone had a say, where they met to dialogue, exchange experiences, listen to each other, correct each other, encourage each other. Indeed, we were enlightened by the tensions experienced in that famous Chapter of the Mats of 1223 due to the different positions that the brothers had on how to live together.

We therefore decided to invite young people to meet as the Mats Chapter and share: what are we young people experiencing today? What happens to us in our daily lives? What are we looking for, what do we desire? Do Jesus and Francis have something to say to our times, to our own vocations?

There were three meetings, one in each of the three geographical areas with which we commonly organize ourselves in the Province, which in turn are three areas with very different cultural characteristics, challenges and possibilities.

We gathered under the motto "Everything that moves me, guides me" and the song "La esperanza despunta ya" ("Hope is rising now") resonated in those days like an incessant echo.



These meetings also wanted to respond to an insistent request from young people, which is the thirst and need for training. This is why we delve into the humanity of Jesus and Francis of Assisi. Firstly, by connecting with the great upheavals they experienced, which allowed us to realize that they were people who allowed themselves to be moved by reality, by their people, by the God present in history in many different ways.

Afterwards, in a personal and fraternal moment, we shared everything that moves us by answering the questions: what moves you? What do you want? What are your dreams? The next day we took a further step and saw how in Jesus and Francis, when they wanted to walk guided by their desires and dreams, they went through difficulties, experienced crises and had to discern and choose.

Once again the moments of listening and dialogue served to respond and share some provocations: what are my difficulties, my fears, my uncertainties? What steps would I like, but dare not take? Everything that moves me, where does it take us?

Starting from this concern, some young people who have been on the path for a longer time and who have adopted Franciscan spirituality as a life option, shared with us their emotions and their steps taken in life.

A young friar in formation shared, some young people who



OFM WORLD

Solemn professions in the province del SS. Redentore (Spalato, Croazia)



New website of the Province of Friars Minor of Puglia and Molise (Italy)



80 years of Franciscan presence in Goias (Brazil)



Chapter of the Custody of Christ the King (Switzerland)



"Festa del Canticco" in San Damiano, Assisi (Italy)

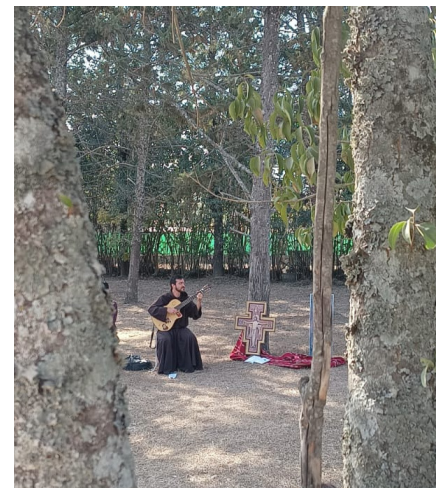


Solemn Mass for the 800th anniversary of the Greccio Christmas in Lima (Peru)

have trained and have opted for ecological and land care projects, others who through their professions have chosen to be at the service of people with addiction problems in marginal neighbourhoods; other young people accompany vulnerable families, or have taken action to create spaces of welcome and care for victims of violence, gender violence and for the rights and lives of children.

After these three meetings with over 150 young people, we perceived once again the gift of this way of living, of understanding and of being in the world. As we looked at each other before saying goodbye, to return to our homes, the words of the disciples after the personal and intimate experience with the Risen One were repeated in each of us: "Didn't our hearts burn on the way?"

They were days of celebration, knowing that we are not alone on this journey, but that we are a family, #SomosSolano.



"The rule and life of the lesser brothers is this: To observe the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience without anything of our own, and in chastity. Brother Francis promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Honorius and his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church; and the rest of the brothers are obliged to obey Francis and his successors"

SEPTEMBER 2023

REFLECTIONS BY BR MASSIMO

On the 17th September, we celebrated the Feast of the Stigmata of St Francis, as we prepare to commemorate the 800th anniversary of this culmination of the Poverello's evangelical journey. We are still in the midst of the centenary of the Rule and the Greccio Christmas.

During my visits and my various contacts with Friars throughout the world, I note different levels of attention and commitment to the Franciscan Centenary 2023-2026. In some Entities I find a convinced response, in others a more discreet one, and there is no shortage of places where I also register a certain weariness or detachment from the journey.

I understand very well that we are all very busy with so many things and on so many different levels, and we can feel that there is always something extra to do, and this can certainly be tiring and demotivating.

However, when I look for a deeper reason, I am puzzled. In fact, it is not primarily a matter of having a full calendar of events. What is more important is the charismatic itinerary that we have the opportunity and the grace to travel together, helped also by the lines prepared for us by the Conference of the Franciscan Family and by the General Secretariat for Formation and Studies. Let us try to bring the memory of the last years of Francis, so significant, into our formation journeys. Not only among ourselves, but with the whole Franciscan Family and with many people of good will.

Perhaps the openness with which we all participated as a



family in the preparation for the centenary will be its most beautiful and lasting fruit.

I hope, therefore, that the celebration of these years will be a blessed occasion to re-read and deepen together the charism of Francis and of our Fraternity in our time. If the General Chapter of 2021 has asked us to return dynamically to our identity as Brothers and Minors today, this is our opportunity. I encourage those who are already on this journey and remind them not to stop after a few celebrations.

I would like to ask everyone not to let the Centenary pass by with that certain distraction or laziness that can seize us at this time, which seems to dull all passion and enthusiasm. I believe that this journey is truly urgent, so that we do not passively experience the great changes that are taking place around us and within us, but that we live them, starting from who we are, who we want to be and how we want to live the Gospel today as contemplative brothers in mission among the poor.

TIME OF CREATION 2023

PEACE WITH GOD, PEACE WITH HUMANITY, PEACE WITH CREATURES

On the occasion of the Season of Creation 2023, we publish an extract of the article by Br. Giuseppe Buffon, OFM, Professor of History and Integral Ecology of the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Antonianum University of Rome. The full text is available at www.ofm.org



In Gubbio in 1982, on the occasion of the Eighth Centenary of the birth of Francis of Assisi, for the first time the ecological movements, in the name of the Poet of the Song, attempted to involve the Catholic Church in their heartfelt commitment to safeguarding the environment.

The seminar they organized on science and religion in the face of the ecological crisis, entitled "Terra Mater" (Mother Earth), enjoyed vast communicative success, attracting the attention of the entire national sociopolitical range, without mentioning the feedback on an international level. [...]

In the Angelus of the 3rd October 1982, Pope St. John Paul II, precisely by referring to the Gubbio seminary, surprised everyone with statements that not only seemed to overturn those of *Laborem exercens*, but which dared to indicate respect for nature as an instrument of social reform, as a viaticum for peaceful coexistence, as a path to peace:

Tomorrow is the feast of Saint Francis, and with this date the eighth centenary of his birth ends. In the light of the extraordinary testimony of love for God and all his creatures, offered by Saint Francis, I would like to extend a special greeting to those who participated in the "Terra Mater" Seminar in recent days, held in Gubbio. It has rightly been underlined that the future of humanity and planet Earth is in danger due to the deterioration of the relationship between man and the environment, as well as the relationships between people, classes and nations. It is necessary and urgent that, following the example of the Poverello-Poor man, we decide to abandon reckless forms of domination-custody towards all creatures. By getting used to loving and respecting inferior creatures, man will also learn to be more human with his equals. I am happy, therefore, to encourage and bless those who work to ensure that animals, plants and minerals are considered and treated, in a Franciscan way, as "brothers and sisters".

In reality, Pope St. John Paul II, precisely on the occasion of Peace Day in 1990 (Peace with God the Creator, peace with all creation), would have drawn attention to the connection between ecology and peace, between care for creatures and commitment to the construction of peace:

In our days there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, by regional conflicts and by the injustices still existing among peoples and nations, but also by the lack of due respect for nature, by the disorderly exploitation of its resources and the progressive deterioration of the quality of life. This situation generates a sense of precariousness and insecurity, which in turn favours forms of collective selfishness, hoarding and abuse.

Pope St. John Paul II had already distinguished himself for



particular attention to the theme of peace. And, even subjecting himself to the risk of criticism from prominent representatives of the Catholic Church, he had dared to summon representatives of the major religions to the homeland of St. Francis for prayers in favour of peace. It was the 27th October, 1986. A month earlier, on the 29th September, inspired by the meeting in Gubbio, the exponents of religions and scientists from the ecological movements had met, again in Assisi, for an alliance in favour of the protection of natural environment.

This event, unlike the day for peace, which had sparked mobilization in the name of the so-called Spirit of Assisi, went almost unnoticed, as if the environmental crisis were less serious than the social one and, above all, as if there was no difference between the two. No connection. [...]

The signing of a joint commitment between the Great Mosque of Rome and the Antonianum University for the launch of an energy community in favor of peace, to "make energy for peace", on the 13th March 2023, the tenth anniversary of the election of Pope Francis, it had precisely the aim of avoiding the divorce between environmentalism and pacifism because, as Pope Francis himself states, *the crisis is unique, indeed, it is a crisis precisely because thought is polluted by harmful dichotomies, precisely because conflict prevails over unity, the sense of reality is disturbed by polarizing ideologies.*

DECEASED BROTHERS *

- 12th September: Br. Marius Deschênes, Custody of the Holy Land
- 12th September: Br. Felix Stanislav Slouka, Province of St. Wenceslas (Czech Republic)
- 6th September: Br. Louis Vitale, Province of S. Barbara (USA)
- 27th July: Br. Abel Jesús Rodríguez Alonso, Province of the Immaculate Conception (Spain)
- 10th July: Br. José Gabriel Francés Domínguez, Province of the Immaculate Conception (Spain)

* Information received from the General Secretariat secgen@ofm.org

THE CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES

PUA STUDY DAY ON “ENERGY AND CLIMATE”

The third edition of the "Mother Earth, Sisters Stars" Festival was held in Umbria from the 1st- to the 10th September 2023, dedicated to integral ecology, scientific research, dialogue between science and faith within the broader context of the Season of Creation 2023.

Amongst the initiatives, on the 9th September was a Study Day organized by the Pontifical Antonianum University dedicated to the theme "Energy and climate", which was also attended by Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General of the OFM and Grand Chancellor of the PUA, who in his speech focused on the Canticle of the Creatures by St. Francis.



Br. Massimo recalled that the Canticle was written when the Seraphic father had almost completely lost his sight and that therefore his description of creation was the fruit of his experience of faith. "Francis recognizes everything as a gift received and to be returned - said the Minister General - certainly not to appropriate it and become its masters, its rulers, but to serve it. Francis is clear that he wanted to be a brother with and amongst creatures and a younger brother, not the first to impose himself. [...] He interweaves men and creatures in the one plan of God. Without such a plan we do not understand the other and vice versa".

The message that flows from the Canticle therefore becomes

very timely in the analysis of Br. Massimo. "Francis recognized creation as an immense living organism, inhabited and crossed by finality towards its fullness, where man and creatures find their place and their function.

In the Canticle Francis not only sings of the Lord as the One from whom everything flows and to whom everything returns, but also as the One whom we learn to love and serve through reality, through the world, through creatures, with them and for them. [...]

In the development and journey of history, today we have one more sheet to enter into this great symphony that is the Canticle and, in it, must be Francis' sensitivity regarding creation".

SOLIDARITY WITH THE PEOPLE OF MOROCCO

THE MINISTER GENERAL IN SUPPORT OF THE VICTIMS OF THE EARTHQUAKE

In solidarity with the people who suffered the violent earthquake that struck the region of Marrakech, Morocco, on the 8th September this year, the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, invites the sisters and brothers of good will to support the fundraising launched by the [Fondazione OFM Fraternitas](#).



"As Friars Minor we have been in Morocco for 800 years - is the message of the Minister - always close to that people, amongst and with the Moroccans. This presence, since the time of St. Francis and St. Clare, has never been lacking in eight centuries and to-day, even more so, we are called to help and support the Moroccan people".

The friars are already committed to bringing basic necessities to the victims of the earthquake, but food, water and medicines are needed, especially in the rural areas most affected by the earthquake.

The Custos of the Custody of the Most Holy Protomartyrs of Morocco, Br. Stéphane Delavelle, OFM, shared with us that the work of the local friars are already doing: "The parish of the Holy Martyrs of Marrakech,

managed by the Friars Minor, has been supporting single-parent Moroccan families and sub-Saharan migrant families for many years. Many buildings and homes have collapsed in the historic centre of Marrakech and especially in the mountainous areas, difficult to access. In the mountainous region of the Atlas, the night temperature does not exceed 4 ° C and soon snow and cold will arrive: the population, now and in the near future, needs even more vital aid. We believe that it is our role, as Franciscans and as a Franciscan family, to think and provide for these people."

The Friars Minor have been present in Morocco since 1219.

St. Francis and St. Clare had expressed the desire to bring the Gospel to the Islamic world; after the meeting in Damietta with the sultan Malik Al-Kamil in October 1219, the General Chapter decided to send five Italian friars to Morocco: Br Berardo da Calvi, Br Accursio and Br Adiuto da Narni, Br Ottone da Stroncone and Br Pietro da San Gemini; these martyrs died in Marrakesh on the 16th January, 1220. The Augustinian canon Fernando of Lisbon, after seeing the relics of their mangled bodies, decided to enter the Order and take the name of Anthony: it was St. Anthony of Padua, today venerated throughout the whole world.

"We pray for Morocco which suffered a 6.8 magnitude earthquake with an epicenter 70 km from Marrakech, in a rural area. In cities, homes are built in a modern way, but most homes in rural areas are built with pressed earth that crumbles with nothing. Unfortunately, many people lost their lives.

These people are very exhausted... but they teach us to trust in God (Allah!) and not to lose hope! They teach us!", shared with us Br. Franco Drigo, OFM, who lives in Morocco.



A HOT SOUP IS A WARM WELCOME IN THIS COLD WORLD

THE GENERAL DEFINITORY SHARED LUNCH WITH THE POOR OF ROME

On 12 September the General Definitory went to the "Soup Kitchen of the Poor", at the International College of St. Anthony in Rome (in via Matteo Boiardo, 21), a charity service offered with the help of the work carried out by the Antonian Association of the Friars Minor. The Definitory shared in this service that for over 20 years the Franciscan friars have been giving to the poor, following the example of St. Francis, who always had a slice of bread to share with others.

It was a meeting in which, in addition to serving food, the friars were able to exchange experiences and give some warmth to the cold life of the people who live on the street, each of whom has a history of suffering that has brought them to where they are now. In this soup kitchen, the Franciscan friars, with

the help of a group of lay volunteers, offer food four times a week: Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday. Br. Antonino Clemenza comments: "I have been here for 20 years and in these 20 years I have seen many changes, even in the poverty of Rome. This is a place very close to Termini station [the largest train station in the city] and as in all cities, stations are the place of refuge for the homeless; So, a plate of food is always available and the doors are always open



to everyone."

The facilities of this canteen are welcoming, clean and also rich in art. "A few years ago we invited street artists to create something, and the first things we wanted to create were the frescoes that are inside, which are originals: they were made specifically for this place.

Before the pandemic, a photo contest was held in Rome: we organized an exhibition on the theme of "fracture", which was attended by several photographers who, at the end of the event, wanted the works to remain here", commented Br. Antonino Clemenza.

For more information on the *Mensa del Povero – Associazione Opere Antoniane* visit the website www.antoniano.org

MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF EXPERTS RATIO EVANGELIZATIONIS OF THE ORDER

The meeting of the commission of experts for the Ratio Evangelizationis of the Order, duly appointed by the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, held their first meeting at the General Curia last September 7-8, 2023. In addition to the General Secretariat for Mission and Evangelization (composed by Br. Francisco Gomez Vargas, OFM, Br. Dennis Tayo, OFM, and Br. Antonio Lanzi, OFM), the other members of the commission are Br. John Barker, OFM, Br. Francis Lee, OFM, Br. Johannes Baptist Freyer, OFM, and Br. Valmir Ramos, OFM.

The work of the commission is to continue the previous efforts and process initiated by the CEME (Executive Council for Mission and Evangelization) with regard to the formulation of the Ratio Evangelizationis. Specifically, they are to start with the result from the Instrumentum Laboris that was sent to the various entities of the Order.

On the first day of the meeting, the group discussed the possible structure of the Ratio Evangelizationis based on the responses of the friars to the Instrumentum Laboris. It was agreed that the fundamental themes and essential points from it will really have to be considered and included in the draft of the Ratio. The commission also came into a consensus that the Ratio should not be purely a juridical or doctrinal document, but something that will really inspire and serve as an impetus for the brothers to carry out their evangelizing mission. Furthermore, it should also be written in a more narrative and literary manner, that is, a document that will capture the attention of the friars and involve them in a certain process of reflection and discernment.

Toward the end of the first day of the meeting, the group met with the Minister General and presented to him the result of their initial discussion. The Minister General gave a positive response to the initial efforts of the commission and thanked them for accepting the task of coming up with the final draft of the Ratio Evangelizationis of the Order.

The second and last day of the meeting was dedicated to the drafting of a proposed structure of the Ratio Evangelizationis



which will then be presented to the Minister General and his Definitorium for subsequent approval. The group took into consideration the initial draft from the Instrumentum Laboris and the significant points agreed from the discussion of the previous day.

Led by Fr. Johannes Freyer, OFM, and Fr. Valmir Ramos, OFM, the commission came up with a proposed structure and outline of the content of the Ratio Evangelizationis of the Order. In keeping with the desire to make the document more literary and narrative, the titles of its principal chapters were taken from the words and writings of St. Francis of Assisi.

The group then agreed to meet again via ZOOM on September 28, 2023, after the draft's presentation for approval to the Minister General and the General Definitorium.

SPAIN

MSGR. JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ CARBALLO APPOINTED ARCHBISHOP COADJUTOR OF MÉRIDA-BADAJOS



[From the Bulletin of the Holy See Press Office of 14 September 2023](#)

The Holy Father has appointed Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, O.F.M., as coadjutor archbishop of Mérida-Badajoz, Spain, transferring him from the titular see of Belcastro and the office of secretary of the Dicastery for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life. Archbishop Carballo will continue to perform his duties at the aforementioned Dicastery until 31 October 2023.

ASSEMBLY OF THE TRANSALPINE FRANCISCAN CONFERENCE

BR. FRITZ WENIGWIESER NEW PRESIDENT OF COTAF

From the 18th to the 22nd September, at the Szenkút Sanctuary in Budapest, Hungary, the assembly of the Transalpine Franciscan Conference (COTAF) was held, which elected Br. Fritz Wenigwieser as new president and Br. Christoph-Maria Hörtnner as vice-president.

The assembly was attended by Br. Albert Schmucki, General Definitor, together with the Provincial Ministers of the Conference: Br. Theo van Adrichem (Holy Martyrs of Gorkum, Netherlands), Br. Michel Laloux (Blessed Duns Scotus, France and Belgium), Br. Markus Fuhrmann (St. Elizabeth, Germany), Br. Piusz Berhidai (Our Lady of the Hungarians, Hungary), Br. Erik Urban (St. Stephen King of Transylvania, Romania) and Br. Fritz Wenigwieser himself (St. Leopold, Austria and Italy). Also participating were



Br. Christoph-Maria Hörtnner, Custos of the Dependent Custody of Christ the King (Switzerland), the secretary Br. Thomas Abrell and Br. Darius Lebok, Secretary for Formation and Studies.

The meeting served to share information and experiences of the Entities involved, with an eye towards the next scheduled events. Amongst these, the meeting of the friars under 10, scheduled for summer 2024, the meeting with the General Definitory (18-22 March 2024 in Ohrbeck, Germany), the Chapter of the Mats (for the Provinces: spring 2024; for the Conference: autumn 2024; worldwide: June 2025) and of the COTAF Summer Academy in Caldaro (Italy).

MEETING WITH THE FRIARS MINOR WHO WORK AT THE HOLY SEE TOWARDS THE CHAPTER OF MATS 2025

On the 14th September, at the General Curia of the OFM, the Definitory met the Friars Minor who work at the Holy See for a dialogue and discussion in preparation for the 2025 Chapter of Mats.



During the meeting, the General Definitors listened to the suggestions and observations of the brothers who work in the Roman Curia, in order to have a "Catholic", i.e. universal, gaze for a synodal path of the Order in harmony with that of the Church. In fact, the Chapter of the Mats will take

place from 1 to 7 June 2025, in which both friars and lay people, sent by each Conference of the Order, will participate. A practice recovered from the Franciscan tradition to allow full participation to be extended to others and not just the friars. Listening to the brothers involved in the Holy See, where the journey towards the next Synod is experienced in an intense manner and with a view broadened to universal dimensions, was very useful and fruitful: "This meeting is held once a year to thank the friars who serve in the Vatican - and to encourage them to continue to serve in the best possible way, because they represent the face of the Order. The Minister General asked them to talk about synodality, so the meeting focused on the themes of dialogue and listening".

Looking toward the Chapter of the Mats 2025, the Definitory asked the Entities of the Order to also celebrate their own Chapter of the Mats at a local level, always with the method of listening to lay people, both men and women, proposing to direct attention towards three fundamental nuclei:

1. Renewing our vision: which characteristics of the charism should we open ourselves to today?
2. Walking according to a style: which prophetic style of fraternity in minority?
3. Embracing the future, testimony - mission: who and how do we serve?

The results of the Chapters of Mats of the various Entities, summarized at the Conference level, will provide the material for the General Chapter of Mats in June 2025.

OFM

ORDO FRATRUM MINORUM

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