

BR. CESARE VAIANI OFM RECOUNTS THE RELEVANCE OF ST. FRANCIS' INTUITION.
29TH NOVEMBER 2023, 800 YEARS OF THE REGULA BULLATA

On the occasion of the VIII Centenary of the Regula Bullata of the Order of Friars Minor we interviewed Br. Cesare Vaiani, OFM, Definitor General and member of the Franciscan Family Committee for the VIII Franciscan Centenary.

Br. Cesare, the Rule was approved on the 29th November, 1223, after 800 years, what do you want to say today about this to Franciscans all over the world?

The meaning of this Centenary, especially for us friars who are still committed to living the Rule, is to rediscover what is said in extreme synthesis at the beginning of that same Rule: *The Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience, without anything of our own and in chastity.* At its conclusion, this centrality of the Gospel is taken up again, affirming that we always desire to be humble and submissive at the feet of Holy Church in order to observe the Holy Gospel as we have promised. The intuition is that the Rule is a putting into practice precisely what

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GENERAL CURIA AGENDA

- From November 13th to 21st, the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, along with the General Definitory, will convene with the newly appointed Provincial Ministers and Custodes of the Order at the General Curia in Rome.
- From November 23rd to 26th, Br. Massimo will participate in the Assembly of the Franciscan Province of Arantzazu in Spain.
- From November 16th to 18th, Br. Fabio César Gomes, General Assistant Pro Monialibus, is scheduled to participate in the Congress on Mother Maria de Ágreda, a Spanish Franciscan Conceptionist, at the PUA. Additionally, he will be part of the Special Audience for participants with the Holy Father at the Vatican.
- On November 18th, Br. Daniel Rodríguez Blanco, General Director of the Office for JPIC, will serve as the moderator for the webinar on the Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*.
- From November 27th to December 1st, Br. Massimo, Br. Cesare Vaiani, Br. Cesar Kulkamp, and Br. Konrad Cholewa, General Definitors, will be actively involved in the second session of the "Discerning Leadership" course.
- On November 29th, Br. Massimo and Br. Cesare will participate in the celebration of the 800th anniversary of the Rule at the Basilica of St. John Lateran.
- Br. Cesare, Br. Daniel, Br. Francisco Gómez Vargas, General Secretary for Missions and Evangelization, and Br. Darko Tepert, General Secretary for Formation and Studies, will participate in a meeting with the Provincial Secretaries for Missions and Evangelization, Formation and Studies, as well as the Provincial JPIC animators of CONFRES.



the Gospel stands for. I believe that this is the most important meaning of the Centenary for us Franciscans.

The path that led Francis to the Rule was not without internal tensions within the fraternity. Can you tell us about it?

The Regula Bullata was preceded by historical shaping of many years, starting in 1209, when Francis with his friars went to the Pope to have his way of life approved: on that occasion he received only an oral approval, verbally. Then every year, that brief text that Francis had brought was submitted to the Chapter of Pentecost, to a revision by the assembled friars in which affirmations, phrases, "new articles" were added, we would say today, the result of the verification that took place in each Chapter. And so those few simple words became the 24 Chapters that we possess in the so-called Regula non Bullata of 1221. We do not know why that text was not proposed for Papal approval: probably the Roman Curia itself made it known that it was too long and unconventional for a Rule. There was probably a demand for a shorter and somewhat more legal text. Francis himself was in charge of the drafting of this new text, not least because no one could think that anyone other than he could put his hand to it. In this redaction, which took place in Fonte Colombo [The Province of Rieti, Italy].

According to tradition he was helped by Brother Leo, his secretary and friend in his last years, and also by a certain Friar Bonizzo of Bologna, of whom we know almost nothing, and certainly also by Cardinal Ugolino, because he himself, after he became Pope [Gregory IX, ed.], approved it in the Bull Quo elongati which he wrote a few years after the death of St. Francis. There were other consultations, as the biographical sources recount, which also tell of the friars' objection to Francis and the Rule he was writing.

After all these events, certainly accompanied by a certain tension, in 1223 - probably at Pentecost 1223 - Francis' text was presented, revised once again, approved by the Chapter and

presented to the Roman Curia. The Pope approved it on the 29th November, 1223.

The Committee of the Franciscan Family has been working for a year on these Centenary Celebrations: Can you give us an initial assessment of this experience of collaboration? And what are the future developments?

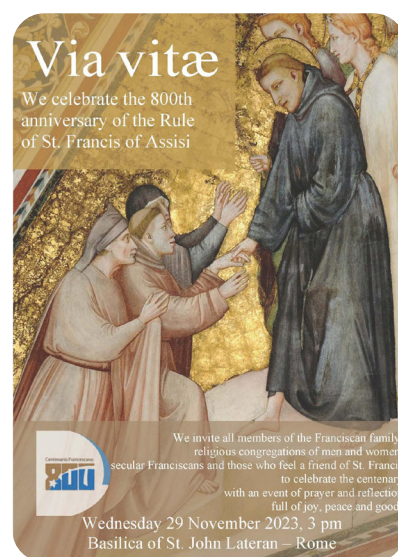
The Committee, of which I am also a member, began by sending a text that was designed to support the entire Franciscan Family in the celebration, entitled: A Centenary articulated and celebrated in several centenaries. It offers guidelines, contents of the celebration of each of the four years that we will celebrate from 2023 until 2026. If there is one thing we have in common as a Franciscan Family, it is St. Francis and the Centenary Celebrations. In this sense they are not exclusive to the Friars Minor, the Capuchins, the Conventuals, the Third Order Regular, the Secular Franciscan Order or the various female and male institutes of the Third Order Regular; that is, it is not exclusive to a single member of the Franciscan Family.

The Centenary of St. Francis is something that unites us naturally. Celebrating it together will be a sign of collaboration, of unity, and we believe that if one of the results of these Centenaries is to increase the capacity for collaboration amongst the different components of the Franciscan Family, then great! we will have already achieved a great result. We hope it will be an opportunity to rediscover our collaboration.

Are there any initiatives planned for the near future?

On the 29th November, 2023, there will be a celebration for the entire Franciscan Family for the 800th anniversary of the Rule, organized in the Basilica of St. John Lateran, in Rome. A celebration at which the Ministers General of the Franciscan Family will be present, and which is intended to commemorate the approval of the Rule that took place

at St. John Lateran, where the Pope resided at that time. The celebration will also be streamed live on the www.centenarifrancescani.org.



ON THE DAY OF THE 800TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REGULA BULLATA
29TH NOVEMBER, FEAST OF ALL SAINTS OF THE SERAPHIC ORDER

This year the Feast of All Saints of the Franciscan Family falls on the day of the 800th anniversary of the approval, by Honorius III, of the Order's Regula Bullata. "His holy sons," we read in the Seraphic Missal, "of the First, Second and Third Orders, belong to every social condition and to every people. There are martyrs, doctors, priests, religious brothers, lay people, virgins, holy women... An immense multitude gathered around the great Poverello-the poor man, 'bearing the sign of the living God'."

It is 800 years in which so many women and men have shared and lived Francis' project, welcoming God without reservations, observing the Gospel in obedience, without anything of their own and in chastity, becoming people capable of loving their neighbour with generosity.



St. Bonaventure writes in his "Apologia pauperum," after a brief explanation of the Beatitudes: "[...] Francis, Patriarch of the Poor, who at the beginning of his Rule proposes the three cornerstones of religious life: "The Rule of the Friars Minor consists in putting into practice the Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ, living in obedience, poverty and chastity." Thereafter he then recommends three other things, which integrate and in a certain way complete the previous ones: "Let the friars reflect that they must desire more than anything else to possess the Spirit of the Lord and to act according to His Holy Will; that they must know how to pray to God with a pure heart and possess humility and patience in tribulations and sicknesses; who must have a special predilection for those who persecute us, despise us and insult us." With this admonition,

Francis proposes, in the first place, the elevation of all action through God; He then recommends the joyful acceptance of all tribulations and effective and exquisite charity towards our neighbour. In this way the perfect man or woman is crucified to the world by the three vows, and by the three successive recommendations he is conformed to God, so that with the six seraphic wings he may detach himself forever from the things of this world and penetrate the divine.

It was a worthy thing that Christ, in the seraphic apparition, imprinted His stigmata, as a seal of confirmation and authenticity, on the sacred flesh of this Poverello, who observed and taught evangelical perfection in the most genuine form, so that, in the dangerous gloom of the end times, we might be offered a clear sign that would illuminate the path of perfection.

It is by conditioning, however, that we learn not to desire what gives honour and prestige, but to prefer humble and hidden things." By virtue of our baptism, we are all called to holiness, as Pope Francis reminds us in his Apostolic Exhortation "Gaudete et Exsultate".

In the footsteps of Francis, Clare and all the Franciscan Saints, let us allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in our day and transform everything that seems ordinary, even that which may be discarded, into something extraordinary and precious in the eyes of God and our neighbour.

Happy Feast Day to one and all!



XXXIII SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 19TH NOVEMBER, 2023

LETTER FROM THE GENERAL MINISTER FOR THE VII WORLD DAY OF THE POOR

Dear Brothers,
May the Lord give you His peace!

The World Day of the Poor is again before us, the seventh so desired by Pope Francis and I would like to bring to our attention the [Message that the Pope wrote for the occasion on the 13th June on the feast of Saint Anthony of Padua](#), brother and friend of the poor. The invitation is to read it personally and in fraternity, with our lay people and collaborators, "to discover ever anew the heart of the Gospel" (Message #1).

FRANCIS SAID IN GRECCIO: I WANT TO SEE THE POVERTY OF JESUS!

We are living the Centenary of the Nativity of Greccio (1223-2023), in which Francis wanted to see with his own eyes the "lowly" life of Jesus of Nazareth (see Phil 2.6-8), which struck and wounded him forever. At La Verna he sang "You are Humility", because the humble life of Jesus reveals the Father. The Sunday of the Poor precedes that dedicated to Christ King of the Universe: the Gospel presents us with Jesus who reigns from the wood of the Cross and not from thrones of presumed human glory.

Francis recognized as a gift from the Lord the fact that in the lepers' school that which was bitter for him was changed into sweetness. It is natural to feel a lot of difficulty in approaching the poor and their condition. It is not enough to appeal to human capacities for empathy and solidarity. We need that passage which is the fruit of the Spirit. For this reason the Pope writes in his Message that on this Sunday "we gather around his Table to receive from him once more the gift and strength to live lives of poverty and to serve the poor" (Message #1).

Keeping to the path to learn second-handedly how to live sine proprio according to our profession and serve the poor is the fruit of the holy working within us of the Spirit of the Lord (see *Regula Bullata* 10,8). Constant listening to the Holy Scriptures, participation at the Eucharist, a virtuous life in charity opens us to this. Without this dimension of faith we remain deaf to the cry of the poor or we make it one of our activities, which may sometimes even allow us just to show off.

I invite myself and all of us to verify the forms of service to the poor from this theological root of our life. Insensitivity to the appeal of the poor indicates a kind of deafness to that of God and vice versa.



FRANCIS: YES! "THE RULE" WITH THE GOSPEL: AND THIS IS THE RULE AND THE LIFE OF THE FRIARS MINOR!

We are living the Centenary of the Rule (1223-2023), intended to jealously guard our possibility of living the Gospel, which is the "uncomfortable" word that opened Francis to God, to himself, to his brothers, to the little ones and to the poor. These

are not an appendix to the Gospel, but are at the very centre of it: let us think of the Beatitudes, of the poor life of Jesus and His Mother, of the little ones who approached him. The Gospel encourages us and reminds us, as Pope Francis writes, that "We are living in times that are not particularly sensitive

«WE ARE LIVING IN TIMES THAT ARE NOT PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE POOR. THE PRESSURE TO ADOPT AN AFFLUENT LIFESTYLE INCREASES, WHILE THE VOICES OF THOSE DWELLING IN POVERTY TEND TO GO UNHEARD»
 (POPE FRANCIS)

to the needs of the poor. The pressure to adopt an affluent lifestyle increases, while the voices of those dwelling in poverty tend to go unheard. We are inclined to neglect anything that varies from the model of life set before the younger generation, those who are most vulnerable to the cultural changes now taking place. We disregard anything that is unpleasant or causes suffering, and exalt physical qualities as if they were the primary goal in life. Virtual reality is overtaking real life, and increasingly the two worlds blend into one. The >>

poor become a film clip that can affect us for a moment, yet when we encounter them in flesh and blood on our streets, we are annoyed and look the other way. Haste, by now the daily companion of our lives, prevents us from stopping to help care for others" (Message #4).

It is true that meeting people who live in different situations of need gives us a new light in listening to the Gospel and allows us to persevere on that path of continuous conversion which is at the heart of our vocation. I recognize with gratitude that there are many amongst our brothers and fraternities involved in meeting and sharing with the "lepers" of our time. At the same time we need to verify how much we know and understand of the situations and the places in which we live and which affect many people, generating inequalities, poverty and misery.

Without this contact with the reality that surrounds us, we close ourselves in environments that distance us from the real condition of people. From here we risk taking for granted amongst ourselves, lifestyles that are so guaranteed and autonomous in the management of time and goods that they hurt those who have to fight for daily sustenance. The choice to live *sine proprio* requires from us a profound conversion today.

A GESTURE TOWARDS THE POOR

For this reason, on the occasion of this Day of the poor, I ask the fraternities to verify their knowledge of the environment and the people amongst whom we live. Along with this, I ask you to make a gesture of service and sharing with disadvantaged people and situations as a brotherhood. It may be challenging, but it is possible. Let us dare more, so as to see the poverty of Jesus and taste the joy of the Gospel. I, the General Minister and servant of the Order never tire of asking for you the Spirit of the Lord to rekindle the passion and joy of our vocation as brothers and minors, so as to illuminate the lack of hope that often threatens us. **Whoever wants, please tell me about the gesture performed, in writing, even with photos** (mingen@ofm.org), as a testimony of good things to be spread.

Dear brothers, "We are called to discover Christ in the poor, to lend them our voice in their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to understand them and to welcome the mysterious wisdom that God wants to communicate to us through them" (*Evangelii gaudium*, 198). With the Blessing of Saint Francis and my own fraternal and affectionate greeting.

Br. Massimo Fusarelli, ofm, Minister general and servant

OFM WORLD

Commemoration of the Dead, Prov. St. Mary of the Angels (Poland)



Br. Taucen Girsang, deputy director general JPIC, visits St. Anthony Custody (Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei)



The Via Crucis in the Holy Land invoking Peace



PRAY FOR VOCATIONS

New postulants, Prov. of Our Lady of Guadalupe (USA)



Reception of 3 young people in the novitiate in Zimbabwe



Interreligious prayer at the Shrine of Christ the Redeemer (Brazil)

CENTRAL AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN

THE VISIT OF THE MINISTER GENERAL IN THE PROVINCE OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

From 22nd to 31st October Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM visited the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe. He was accompanied by Br. Joaquín Echeverry, OFM General Definitor.

The visit began in the region of Guatemala, in the Provincial Curia where he met the Definitory so as to get acquainted with the reality of the Province. He met the Guardians encouraging them to animate fraternal life with charity and diligence despite the difficulty that come along with that service. The Minister General met the Poor Clares Sisters of the Monastery of Saint Clare at Puerta Parada.

In the Chapel of Hermano Pedro de Monte San Franciscano during the Eucharistic celebration Br. Massimo in his homily said that “We Franciscans are called to recognize the mercy that flows on our weakness, fragility and sins”. Infront of the reality that is taking place in Central America the Minister General invited the brothers and sisters (OFS) and all Christian faithful united together to be instruments of peace, not to have fear but continue becoming men and women of mercy.

On 24th October he met the formators and formees: he encouraged the formators to continue with the ministry of accompanying the young friars and he explained to them about the necessity of self-formation if they are to accompany others in various processes. He later invited the friars in Temporary Profession and the novices to become authentic, human and brothers so as to walk with liberty and dedication in life they have chosen.

Furthermore, he met the novices through video conference, inviting them to live according to the Gospel with joy and dedica-



tion in order to give testimony; he reminded them that they are Friars Minor in this time and therefore they need to respond to the call of God in this reality.

On 25th he visited the rehabilitation centre which serves the people with dependence at “Renacer”, which is situated in Sumpango, Sacatepéquez. He thanked the fraternity for the noble work of accompanying the residents of that centre and encouraged them to make a good process of rehabilitation in order to have adequate intergration in society, bringing into fruition the process of rehabilitation which many do not have at their disposal and die because of the consequence of their dependence.

The Minister General visited the hospital, Obras Sociales del Santo Hermano Pedro in Antigua Guatemala which has 25 clinics (General Medicine and Specialization), and an annual surgical programme in which Surgeons volunteer to be at the service of the poor. Br. Massimo received the “the system of Hermano Pedro”. He also visited the “Hogar Virgen of help”, where they take care of 250 persons with disability; in the fraternity he shared with the friars of the Provincial infirmary thanking them for their dedication and he encouraged them always to have confidence in God.

The Minister General at the temple of st. Francis el Grande said, “Hermano Pedro, the disciple of Francis in his time repaired the temple for the poor, even today he continues repairing the temple of life for the poor so that the Lord may respond through charity”. El Grande is where is found the ruins of an ancient convent, the grave of Saint Hermano Pedro and the Servant of God Br. Augusto Rafael Ramirez Monastero, OFM.





On 26th Br. Massimo visited the friars of Panama region who were found amidst the protest of mineral contract; for that reason the meeting took place through video conference because the friars could not go to the capital city. The Minister General said that "the particular situation which Central America is passing through has motivated the friars to remain always as pilgrims and strangers, living in evangelical liberty". It will enable us to put away all the material good and remain what we

are: friars minor, this is our authentic possession". In an open dialogue during the meeting the friars shared with him the life of the fraternity and the activities of JPICI: the battle against mineral extraction, commitment of Franciscan network for immigrants and the journey in initial formation.

From 27th to 31st October Br. Massimo visited the friars of the Dominican Republic in the fraternity of Villa Duarte and Bonao; at the moment of minority and fraternity, he encouraged the friars who were recently integrated in the provincial fraternity. He visited also the ancient ruins of the first franciscan convent in America and the Chapel of Our Lady of the Rosary where the moment of prayer for peace took place. The morning of 30th he had a meeting through video conference with the friars of the foundation of "La Santa Cruz" (Holy Cross) of Haiti, because of social political problems of that country he did not manage to visit them in person; through video conference that meeting shared their impression on the reality of living as friars minor in that part of an Island.

PROVINCE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

WEEK OF ONGOING FORMATION OF THE FRANCISCAN FRIARS OF CHILE

In the last week of October, from the 23rd till the 27th October, the Franciscan Friars of the Province of the Holy Trinity of Chile spent their traditional Week of Ongoing Formation at the Alvernia Retreat House of St. Francis of Mostazal (VI Region of the country). As every year, about 45 friars gathered to spend time during those days, a time of grace and renewal of their Franciscan religious life.

At the beginning of the meeting, Br Carlos Paz, OFM, the Provincial Minister, welcomed the confreres and reminded them "that the time of ongoing formation is a vital time and space to let ourselves be formed by the Lord meditating upon His Word."

"Recovering the humanity of Jesus to rethink religious life" was the theme that the friars studied and reflected upon with the help of Br Michael Moore, OFM, a friar of the Province of St. Francis Solano (Argentina). He holds a Doctorate in Theology (2010), with a specialization in Fundamental Theology, from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He is currently a professor at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Cordoba (UCC).

During the week of formation, the friars were accompanied by Br Ignacio Ceja Jimenez, OFM, Vicar General, and Br César Kùlkam, OFM, General Definitor for the Brazil, Southern Zone and the Bolivarian Conference.

The presence of the confreres of the General Government is part of the process of accompaniment in the Province during the time of the Provincial Moratorium.

During the celebration of the Mass in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in La Alameda, Santiago, presided over by the Vicar General, the Day of Ongoing Formation came to its conclusion. On this occasion, the Franciscan Friars of Chile raised their hearts to God in thanksgiving for the 400th anniversary of the friary of St. Francis of Assisi at la Alameda.

By: Br Ronald Villalobos, OFM

[Watch the video](#)



10TH – 25TH OCTOBER, POLAND AND UKRAINE

VISIT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY FOR FORMATION AND STUDIES IN THE HOUSES OF FORMATION

From 10th to 25th October 2023 during his visit in Poland and Ukraine, Br. Darko Tepert, General Secretary for Formation and Studies, together with the General Definitor who is responsible for the area, Br. Konrad Cholewa, and the Vice Secretary for Formation and Studies, Br. Hieronimus Yoseph Dei Rupa, visited all the houses of initial formation in Poland and the novitiate of the Foundation of all Franciscan Saints of Byzantine rite in Ukraine.

The visit included the inter-Provincial postulancy of the five Polish Provinces in Borki Wielkie and the inter-Provincial novitiate of the three Polish Provinces in Leżajsk to which from next year the two remaining Polish Provinces will join. Furthermore, Br. Konrad, Br. Darko and Br. Hieronimus visited the novitiate of the Province of Saint Mary of the Angels in Zkliczynie.

There was a meeting with all the Temporary Professed and Solemnly Professed friars who are studying Theology in Wrocław, Kraków, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Katowice and Poznań. They got the opportunity of discussing about the organization of the next meeting of all the Temporary Professed Friars from Europe programmed for the month of July 2024 at La Verna. They reflected on the possibility of the themes to be discussed, the format and appointment.

In Ukraine the General Secretary for Formation and Studies visited the novitiate of the Foundation of all Franciscan Saints which was established this year with the Decree of the Minister General and is now hosting three novices.



16 – 19 OCTOBER , COMPI - SOUTH

10TH WEEK OF GUARDIAN FORMATION

From the 16th to 19th October the 10th week of Guardian Formation for COMPI-South was held at San Giovanni Rotondo (FG), at the Centro di spiritualità Padre Pio, with the subject being: “Deviance and dependency in the use of media”. The attendance was numerous, about 70 Guardians being present.

In the opening talk of the conference entitled “Entangled in the Web? Social Media and Ethics in Religious Life” given by Prof. Don Roberto Massaro, Moral Theology teacher at the Theological Faculty of Puglia, attention was immediately focused on the problem of the so-called Internet Addiction, or rather that tendency to use the web in conformity with our status with

evident consequences in the relational, social and vocational ambits.

Ample space was given to the psychological and physical modifications that the continual use of social media inevitably comports and it was highlighted how these modifications can lead to an overexposure on the media which is not in synchronization with our vocation. On this subject, the intervention of Prof. Michele Sardella OFM Dean of the Faculty of Canon Law at the Antonianum, who placed the emphasis on the canonical consequences connected to an improper use of the internet in the private, intimate and emotional ambits of social media.

The second contribution given by Prof. Massimo Vasale, psychologist and lecturer at the Salesian Pontifical University, entitled “Deviances and addiction in media use in consecrated life”, allowed us to reflect on the link be- >>



tween deviance and digital media from a psychological standpoint. Developing further the concept of addiction, we evaluated some clinical and behavioral evidence in order to identify useful criteria to recognize the symptoms: untrustworthiness in roles and tasks, compromised control, social compromise, risky use, mood changes that are always present in manifesting a dependency and can be valid indications of a dangerous situation in being.

The lecture then helped those present to identify the possible old wounds at the base of addictive behavior and the risk factors linked to consecrated life for those who, although already consecrated, find themselves in difficulty: perfectionism, repressed anger, solitude, lack of awareness, minimalizing, denial of emotional damage, stress, narcissism, lack of formation, and spiritual aridity...

The third and last contribution was given by Prof. Massimiliano Padula, sociologist and lecturer of communicational science at the Redemptor Hominis Pastoral Institute of the Lateran Pontifical University, centred his talk on the definition of a social and cultural framework in which to give a context to the “social life” phenomenon which has grown exponentially since the beginning of the year 2000.

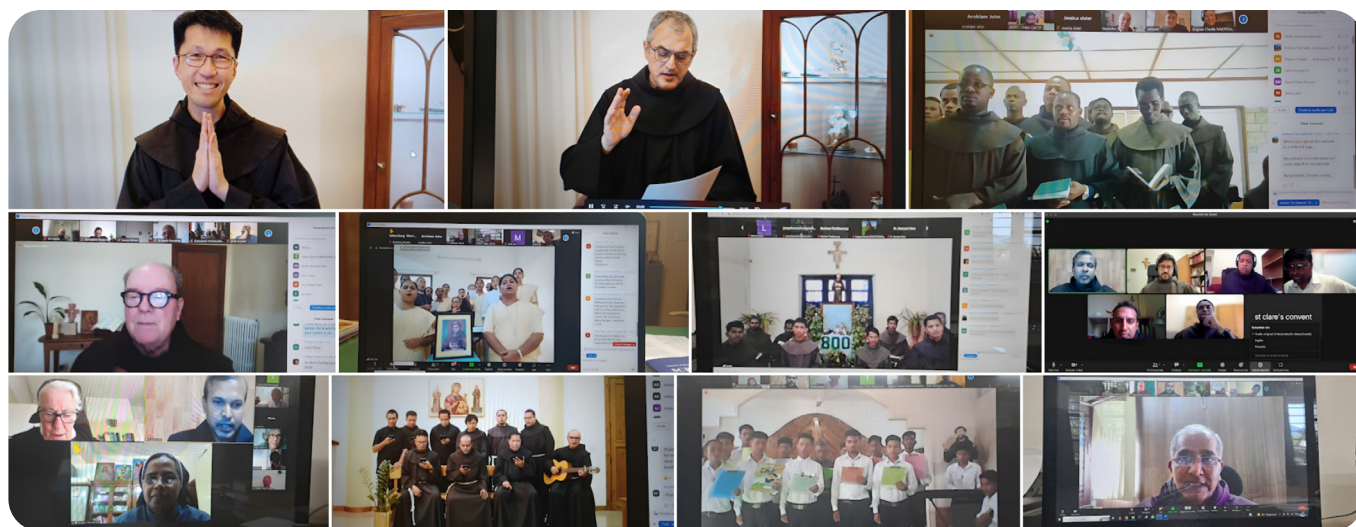
Prof. Padula wished to present to the audience of Guardian how as, Friars Minor, we cannot limit the use of digital media to spread the Gospel: the challenge consists in succeeding in “integrating” the good news in “the new (communication) culture”, which prefers narration and communication to be mediated through sounds and pictures. We are therefore called to exercise a service to culture, overcoming the temptation to self-centredness, and projecting ourselves in a charitable dimension.

In conclusion, the conference contributed in clarifying and giving a new insight into the relationship of social media and possible deviance, while at the same time giving the go-ahead to a process of discernment which, it is hoped, will help to take into account of the difficulties that are emerging presently in our religious life, enabling us to push forward towards new models of evaluation for our initial formation curriculum and good discernment for that of permanent formation as well in our lives as brothers and minors.

Particular thanks to Br. Nicola Gildi of the Province of the Sacred Heart of Naples, for his choice of venue and his organization.

A YEAR WITH THE LATER RULE FRANCISCAN VISION GLOBAL SUMMIT 2023

The Franciscan Vision Global Summit (FVGS) 2023 held its 10th session on October 28 and with two more editions to go, it will mark the completion of a year-long online monthly symposium on the Later Rule of St. Francis. The online Summit inaugural session was held on 22 January 2023 with Br Massimo Fusarelli (Minster General of OFM) accompanied by Br John Wong OFM (Definitor General for Asia-Oceania Conference) gave his blessings and a brief introduction to the Franciscan Centenaries 2023-2026, as well as the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of TAU (1976 – 2026) – a Franciscan International Journal published in India. >>





The Conference of the Franciscan Family has invited all its members to celebrate together the Franciscan Centenary, living in the spirit and to the letter of Pope Francis' invitation to embrace synodal pathway.

The Summit, held on the last Saturday of each month, has featured on January 21, Br Gerald Lobo OFM discussing how the Rule serves as an "antidote" to contemporary philosophy. Brother William J. Short OFM shared reflections on February 25, 2023 on how this Rule presents us with St. Francis of Assisi's Prayer - personal, fraternal, common, and liturgical vision for today.

On March 25 Br Noel Muscat OFM delivered an insightful explanation of the Spirit of the Rule of 1223. He explored its relevance within the context of the grace of work and the responsible use of money and goods to further the cause of caring for our shared environment today. On April 29, Br Ignacio Ceja OFM, the Vicar General, underscored the pressing needs of our times and highlighted how Franciscans can play a pivotal role as peace builders today, echoing the principles outlined in the Rule of 1223.

On May 27, Br Gabriel Mathias OFM highlighted the Anthropological dimension of the Rule, aware that while the text of the Rule remained unchanged even to the present day, Franciscans are living in different institutional framework and human reality.

On June 24, 2023, Brother Benedict Vadekkekara OFM Cap extended an invitation to all, encouraging a full embrace of the Rule of 1223 by actively participating in the unique Franciscan Mission of standing in solidarity with the impoverished across the world. As Pope Francis, in his ways, is leading the Church in the Franciscan Spirit, Br Dolphy Pias OFM Cap delivered a comprehensive analysis on July 19, highlighting the Pope's synodal pathway and his steadfast dedication to the Gospel and His Church.

Sister Frances Teresa Downing OSC, on August 26, illuminated the significant contributions of St. Clare in preserving the heritage of the Rule of 1223.

On September 30, Br Arokiam John's presented an intriguing topic, "The Absence of the Expression, 'to follow Christ and His Mother' in the Rule of 1223." During his presentation, he vividly elaborated on the meaning and contemporary significance of this theme.

On October 28, Br Paul Kallan OFM not only showed the relevance of the message of *Laudato si'* of Pope Francis but reiterated that "the instructions of the Rule of 1223 (LR, VI, 7-9) were meant for the friars, but now they prove to be the Rule of life of all creation".

On November 25, 2023, Br. John Sekar OFM and Br. Matthew Beckman OFM will engage in discussions about the future of Franciscan Charism, Life, and Rule in Asia and Oceania, respectively.

The final session, taking place on December 2, 2023, will feature Franciscans representing five different continents – Br Lorenzo Turchi OFM (Europe), Br Gilberto Cavazos-González OFM (Americas), Br Valentine Eboh (Africa), Sr. Stella Balthazar FMM (Asia) and Sr. Francisco Nirmala Gnanapragasam FMM (Oceania) – who will reflect on the 8th centenary of the Greccio nativity scene and the rediscovery of the Incarnation of Jesus, with a focus on the future of the spirit of Greccio in the aforesaid continents.

Br. Massimo Fusarelli OFM said: "I ask everyone not to let the Centenary pass with that certain distraction or sloth that can grip us in this time, which seems to numb every passion and enthusiasm".

It's evident that the Franciscan Vision Global Summit 2023, with more than 1500 registered participants from about 60 countries and around 70 Congregations belonging to the Franciscan Family and even friends from different non-Franciscan family and non-Christian faiths, genuinely addresses the heartfelt longing expressed by Br. Massimo. Furthermore, this Summit will continue to commemorate the Franciscan Centenaries in the years leading up to 2026.

Embracing the call of the Church and the Franciscan Minister Generals, Br Arokiam John OFM (Professor in the faculty of Theology at the Pontifical Antonianum University in Rome and the Editor of TAU) proposed The Franciscan Vision Global Summit 2023-2026 (online) to Br. Xavier Durairaj OFM, the Minister Provincial of St. Thomas the Apostle, India. So the FVGS Team was formed and it is co-ordinated by Br Arokiam John.

The monthly Virtual meeting is hosted on behalf of OFM-India by Br John Sekar OFM, the Secretary of the Province of St Thomas the Apostle, India, and by Br Mathew Joseph OFM, the Director of Franciscan Communication Centre (TAALA).

BR DENNIS VISITED ST FRANCIS FOUNDATION

A RAY OF HOPE FOR FRANCISCAN PRESENCE IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Last November 28, 2022, we released an article on the seventy-five years of Franciscan presence in Papua New Guinea. It recalled with celebration, the harvests our missionary forerunners have sown in this part of the world. After its long, bumpy, and winding journey, the entity was suppressed on April 13, 2019, into a Foundation dependent under the care of the Minister General.

Faced with a major setback, it continues today to struggle in administration, running its own formation program, and keeping with its financial viability. During this trying time, the present General Administration is exhausting all means to help. The Minister General asked the Franciscan Conference in Asia and Oceania (FCAO) for more missionaries to assist local friars as they face difficulties in self-determination to live the Franciscan charism in the Melanesian context.

From October 24 to November 3, the General Animator for Missions, Br Dennis Tayo, was sent to Port Moresby for an important strategic gathering to finalize a “Master” Plan of assistance to the foundation. It was joined by 14 friars: two new missionaries from Vietnam, two friars from the Provinces of the Philippines tasked to assist in the formation, and local representatives from different communities headed by the Foundation President. A missionary Pakistani friar, due to a visa problem, was not able to come.

In a nutshell, the friars were asked to study the responses crystallized during the last Foundation Assembly of May 1 to 7, 2023 evaluating the status of the foundation by answering: “Where are we now, why are we here, and where do we want to go?”. The friars were further asked in this gathering, the ultimate question: “How do we get there?”.

To address priority problems of administration, formation, and finance, the friars strategically set their objectives and planned associated activities, identifying indicators of success, and tasking persons to implement each activity to achieve set goals given a targeted date.



A framework of the “Planning – Implementation - Monitoring–Evaluation (PIME) Cycle” will be utilized in implementing the approved plan. The General Animator for Mission was mandated “to see the implementation of this plan, in collaboration with the Foundation President and the rest of the friars involved, within a grace period.”

Hence, a definitive decision regarding our continued presence in PNG will be made just before the next General Chapter. Despite uncertainties of the future, the brothers are highly spirited and hopeful of the set directions this gathering has realized, reinvigorated by witnessing the heartening solemn professions of vows of two additional local friars in the foundation, after a long wait.

Hope builds more upon the Catholic Bishop Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands’ strong manifestation during the Annual Conference (April 27, 2023) for the need and the relevance of our continued Franciscan presence in PNG; on the ready support of Franciscan family and the local faithful; and on the commitment given by the present general administration and FCAO to help the foundation, as it aspire for a renewed presence, and to continue to make a difference to the local church in this part of the world.

We appeal to all entities especially in Asia and Oceania for more missionaries in PNG. We are all into this together. Alone we can only do so little. But together with so much hope, we can make a big difference!

*Br Dennis Tayo, OFM
General Animator of Missions*



FRANCISCAN YOUTH MEET - 2023, HYDERABAD-INDIA

FRANCISCAN YOUTH IN INDIA: BECOMING JOYFUL WITNESSES OF THE GOSPEL

The youth are the lifeline of the Church today! This is not just a cliché but a resounding truth, as exemplified by the convergence of approximately 350 young individuals, along with 30 Friars from Franciscan Parishes and nine Postulants from across India. Under the guidance of the Province Secretariat of Mission and Evangelization, the Fraternity of Shalom Friary, together with the Parish Youth of St. Francis of Assisi Church, Hyderabad, India, hosted the Second Edition of the

Franciscan Youth Meet (FRAYME 2023) from October 21 to October 23, 2023, with the theme: "Imitate Christ and Rebuild the Church."

Br. Praveen Henry D'Souza, the Host Parish Priest, spoke about the importance of FRAYME 2023: "The youth, exuding vibrancy and confident energy in their faith in Christ and the Church, play a significant role in imitating Christ and rebuilding the Church. The limitless enthusiasm of the youth needs to be channelled within the Church, providing them with formation and mission opportunities so they can excel in sustaining a youthful and attractive Church."

The Parish Campus was bustling with activities throughout these three days, and the youth carried home unforgettable memories of well-spent days. Commemorating the 800th anniversary of the Rule and Greccio, the display of related images conveyed the message that the year 2023 held special significance for all the admirers of St. Francis.

Invoking the presence of God in their midst, the gathering commenced with a Praise and Worship Service. Br. Saji Mathew, the Vicar Provincial, encouraged the youth to make Jesus Christ their role model and to actively participate in the crucial task of rebuilding the Church, a pressing need of our times.

The participants were divided into different groups, with the friars serving as facilitators, guiding them through personal



sharing sessions. The friars also shared their own stories of vocation. Ms. Rita, a youth from Bengaluru, Karnataka, shared her thoughts, saying, "I was deeply moved by the vocation stories of the Friars and found inspiration in how God can shape people's lives and call them to a particular way of life."

Mr. Harris, a youth hailing from Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, remarked, "The sessions, especially the creative activities, were incredibly engaging. They weren't just competitions; they were moments of joy and togetherness with youths from various parishes. It's an experience I'll always cherish."

A deeply touching moment during the gathering occurred on the evening of October 22, 2023, with a prayer session. The Rosary Procession, accompanied by the glow of candles and the presence of sacred images of Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Clare of Assisi, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Anthony of Padua, provided a profoundly spiritual experience of God's presence and the companionship of the saints.

Br. Ralbin, who was present for FRAYME, shared his sentiment, stating, "I was genuinely moved by the heartfelt gesture of the youth extending their hands to bless all the friars, and in turn, we had the privilege of blessing them."

The fact that October 23rd coincided with Mission Sunday added a significant layer of meaning to the event. Br. Dominic, Secretary for Mission and Evangelization, pas- >>



sionately called upon the youth to step forward and consider becoming missionaries within the contexts of their own lives. More than a dozen young individuals came to the altar, offering themselves to the mission of God and the mission of the Church. Through prayers and blessings, they were sent forth as individuals “called to be missionaries” in this world.

Br. Dominic’s closing words were a compelling call to action: “Say yes to God’s calling. God is calling, and we must respond positively to herald a new era for the Church. St. Francis set

the example, becoming a joyful witness of the Gospel in response to his calling. In the same way, God is calling, right here and right now.”

Br. Chinna, the Guardian of Shalom Friary and Fraternity, along with Br. Praveen D’Souza, the Parish Priest, and the Pastoral Team, as well as the Parish Youth of St. Francis of Assisi Church, deserve our utmost appreciation and praise for their meticulous planning and efficient execution of FRAYME 2023.

MOROCCO

MEETING OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY IN MOROCCO

On Saturday the 16th September around sixty Sisters, Poor Clares and Franciscans, and friars from all over Morocco, met in Casablanca for a day of sharing, reflection, prayer and celebration.

The Moroccan Franciscan Family, which does not yet have lay people, is not very numerous in this mission land so special and so dear to Francis and Clare. It is made up of 11 apostolic communities, a monastery of Poor Clares and 5 fraternities of friars, but over a territory of over 600 kilometers in length!

The opportunities for us all to meet, to listen together to the experience of our father Saint Francis and to bear witness to our charism in the multiplicity of its forms are therefore not very frequent. The idea, however, is to meet every year, on the occasion of the Feast of the Stigmata, to start the year together.

For this first meeting it was the Abbess of the Poor Clares,

Mother Cristiana, who shared with us her experience of La Ver-na in Morocco.

On the occasion of the Franciscan Centenaries and in view of the Chapter of the Mats of 2025, which calls us to rediscover and renew our charism together, friars and Religious Sisters will meet in each region for a day of community reflection during Advent.

The final sign of this journey of renewal is the diaconal ordination of one of our friars in the Cathedral of Tangier on Sunday the 22nd October. br. Marco, of the Croatian Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius, wanted to experience this grace amongst us, which makes him even more of a servant of this multicultural Church of Christians on the move and of the Muslim people who surround us.

Br. Stéphane Delavelle, OFM



CLOSING OF THE SYNOD OF BISHOPS A SYNODAL CHURCH IN MISSION

On Sunday the 29th October, with the celebration of the Holy Mass presided over by Pope Francis, the first session of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which opened on the 4th October, came to an end.

“By the common grace of Baptism,” reads the Synthesis Report, “we have been able to live together with one heart and one soul, despite the diversity of origins, languages and cultures. As a choir we tried to sing in the variety of voices and in the unity of souls. The Holy Spirit has given us to experience the harmony that He alone knows how to generate: it is a gift and a testimony in a world torn and divided.”

“For four weeks, bishops, priests, deacons, religious and laity dialogued and discussed the many issues of to-day, walking together as baptized persons, in the diversity of charisms, vocations, ministries.” The final document, which is intended not to be a point of arrival, but rather a starting point towards the final



phase of the Synod (scheduled for October 2024), is structured in three parts: The face of the synodal Church; All disciples, all missionaries; Weave bonds, build communities.

[Download the Synthesis Report](#)

KOINONIA N° 119 - 2023: YEAR 30

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NATIVITY SCENE IN TODAY'S WORLD

If we want to meet the God who appeared as a child, we must get off the horse of our 'enlightened' reason. We must lay down our false certainties and intellectual arrogance, preventing us from perceiving God's closeness. We must follow the inner path of St. Francis: the path to that extreme outer and inner simplicity that makes the heart capable of seeing. We must get off, walk spiritually on foot, so to speak, to enter through the portal of faith and meet God, who is different from our prejudices and opinions: the God who is hidden in the humility of a newborn child. Let us celebrate the liturgy in this way [...] and give up our obsession with what is material, measurable, and tangible. Let us allow ourselves to be made simple by that God who manifests himself to the heart made simple. And we also pray at this hour especially for all those who have to live [...] in poverty, in pain, in the condition of migrants, that a ray of God's goodness

may appear before them; that the goodness which God, by the birth of his Son in the stable, wished to bring into the world, may reach them and us”.

Faith in Jesus, who died and rose again



for us and for our salvation, finds its most vivid expression in the celebration of the mystery of Christ throughout the year. Although the centre of the celebration revolves around the high solemnity of Easter, it leans first and foremost on the weekly rhythm marked by Sunday. This day is crucial because it commemorates

the Lord's resurrection and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

If from the very beginning of the Church, the weekly celebration of Sunday and the annual Easter was common to the various communities, gradually, other liturgical feasts appeared. To this first Easter cycle, celebrated from the beginning, was later added the cycle of the Lord's birth or manifestation.

The feasts of Christmas and Epiphany appeared in the Christian calendar in the early fourth century, although in different places. Christmas began to be celebrated in the Church of Rome and Epiphany in the East, almost certainly in Egypt. Both celebrations quickly spread throughout the Church.

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SANTA CLARA CONFEDERATION OF THE POOR CLARE SISTERS OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL **XX CONFEDERAL AND VIII ELECTIVE ASSEMBLY**

On October 24 and 25 the Santa Clara Confederation of the Poor Clares of Spain and Portugal held its 20th Confederal and 8th Elective Assembly. The Santa Clara Confederation is comprised of 9 Spanish and 1 Portuguese federations. During these days the confederal questions regarding formation were discussed. The Confederal Council and the Confederal Economa were elected. There were days of dialogue and of fraternal encounter.

THE NEW CONFEDERAL COUNCIL OF THE POOR CLARES OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL:

Coordinator: M. Isabel Cobo Jiménez, the Betica Federation of Our Lady of Loreto;

Vice-Coordinator: M. M^a Javier Soto García, the Cantabria Federation of Our Lady of Arantzazu;

Councillor: M. M^a José López de Maya, the Cartagena-Murcia Federation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Also elected in this assembly was the *Confederal Economa*: M. M^a Teresa Domínguez Blanco, the Betica Federation of Our Lady of Loreto.

Let us accompany with our prayers these sisters chosen to carry out these services for the good of the Church and our Order.

Source: [Betica Federation of the Poor Clares](#)

For more information: [The Santa Clara Confederation](#)

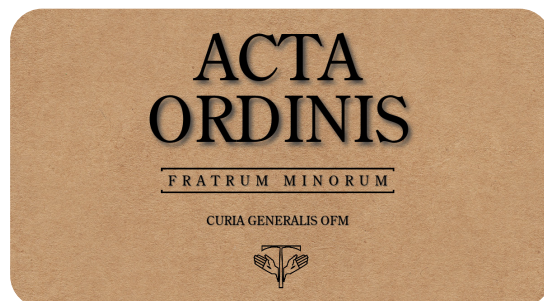


AN. CXLII, MAII-AUGUSTI 2023 – N. 2

ACTA ORDINIS FRATRUM MINORUM 2023/02

Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum is available online:

[An. CXLII, MAII-AUGUSTI 2023 – N. 2](#)



Let us pray for peace!



Photo: vatican.va

OFM

ORDO FRATRUM MINORUM

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