

CHRISTMAS 2023

LETTER FROM THE MINISTER GENERAL

To all the Friars Minor of the Order
To the Contemplative Sisters of the Franciscan Family
To the TOR Sisters, and our sisters and brothers attached to the Order

*«This is the day the Lord has made: let us rejoice and be glad!
For the most holy beloved child was given to us,
and was born for us along the way,
and placed in a manger since there was no room in the inn»
(Office of the Passion XV, 6-7)*



These are the words used by St Francis when he prayed with his brothers on Christmas Day. During this Advent and Christmas 2023, I wish to do the same with you, dear Brothers and Sisters, in a world marred by darkness and the lightning flashes of war and violence. We think especially of the Holy Land where the Lord desired to be born poor and die poor, and where his agony still continues. The above psalm, composed by Francis, begins with an invitation to joy, something that seems more difficult than ever today. Indeed, how can we be happy in the midst of so many signs of death and in the face of such an uncertain future? Do we even have the right to joy when so many are deprived of peace, and of life itself? At this time, then, how can we experience and proclaim the joy of Advent and Christmas?

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

GENERAL CURIA AGENDA

- On the 3rd December Br Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, participated in the Holy Mass at the Basilica of St. Anthony (Rome) on the occasion of H.E.R. Cardinal Américo Manuel Alves Aguiar taking possession of his title as a Cardinal. On the 5th December he had an online meeting with the Poor Clare Monasteries in Italy. On the 8th December he will preside at the Mass of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM in the church of Our Lady Mediatrix at the General Curia. On the 9th at St. Peter's Square, he will participate in the Blessing of the Nativity Scene which this year comes from Greccio. On the 15th he will have an online meeting with the Definitory of the Province of St. Francis Solano (Peru); and on the evening of the same day he will meet the G.M. Fraternity for Christmas greetings.
- On the 18th December, at the General Curia, Br Massimo will meet the Guardians and Bursars of the Houses dependent on the Minister General.
- From the 1st to the 3rd December Br Daniel Rodriguez Blanco, Director General of JPIC, Br Darko Tepert, Secretary General for Formation and Studies, and Br Francisco Gómez Vargas, Secretary General for Missions and Evangelization, will visit the Province of the Immaculate Conception in Spain. On the 4th and 5th they will be in Portugal, in Braga, where they will meet the secretaries and provincial animators of JPIC, SGFS and SGME of CONFRES.
- From the 10th to the 16th December Br Taucen Girsang, Deputy Director of the JPIC Office, will participate in the Meeting of the JPIC Animation Committee in Istanbul (Turkey).
- From the 11th to the 16th December Br Ignacio Ceja Jiménez, Vicar General, will carry out the second stage of the Canonical Visit to the Custody of Albania.

FROM THE 8TH DECEMBER 2023 UNTIL THE 2ND FEBRUARY 2024 IN EVERY FRANCISCAN CHURCH
THE PLENARY INDULGENCE ON THE OCCASION OF THE 800TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE "NATIVITY SCENE AT GRECCIO" WILL BE GRANTED

From the 8th December 2023 until the 2nd February 2024 in every Franciscan church on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the "Nativity scene at Greccio", the Apostolic Penitentiary has granted a Plenary Indulgence to all the faithful who, from the 8th December 2023 (Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary) until the 2nd February 2024 (Feast of the Presentation in the Temple of Our Lord Jesus Christ) visit a Nativity scene in a church entrusted to Franciscan friars throughout the world.

The Franciscan Family had forwarded this request to the Holy Father on the 17th April 2023, "in order to promote the spiritual renewal of the faithful and increase the life of grace," as reads the petition sent to the Apostolic Penitentiary. "By pausing in prayer in front of the nativity scenes", the faithful may obtain the Plenary Indulgence under the usual conditions. "Likewise, those who are sick or unable to participate physically can equally benefit from the gift of the plenary indulgence, offering their sufferings to the Lord or carrying out practices of piety".



Read the full text of the Letter of the Conference of the Franciscan Family:

[Italiano](#) - [English](#) - [Español](#) - [Deutsch](#) - [Français](#) - [Hrvatski](#) - [Português](#) - [Polski](#) - [Arabic](#) - [Magyar](#) - [українська](#) - [Русский](#)

800 YEARS OF CHRISTMAS IN GRECCIO
TO SEE WITH 'OUR OWN EYES' THE POVERTY INTO WHICH JESUS WANTED TO BE BORN

Br. Cesare Vaiani, OFM, General Definitor and member of the Committee of the Franciscan Family for the VIII Franciscan Century, describes to us the peculiarity of Saint Francis' Christmas in Greccio 800 years ago.



After celebrating the Rule (1223-2023), this year we also celebrate the 800th Anniversary of Christmas in Greccio.

Francis wanted to celebrate that vigil on Christmas night, in which to see with 'his own eyes' (as he himself writes) the hardships and poverty in which Jesus wanted to be born and recon-

structs in whatever way he could the same environment where in Jesus' birth came to pass: the cave, the donkey, the ox and an altar placed on the manger filled with hay. What is interesting to note about that night is that the celebration of the Eucharist is at the very centre of it, because according to Francis every time the Eucharist is celebrated the mystery of the Incarnation is repeated, because God makes Himself present in a piece of bread, in a little wine, as was evident on the night in Bethlehem. For this reason, at Christmas in Greccio there are no statues, but there is in fact the celebration of the Eucharist. The other beautiful intuition of Greccio's Christmas is the joy and beauty that Francis recognizes and reconstructs of the poverty of Jesus: an aesthetic of poverty" is born that makes us admire that essential poverty as a place of manifestation of beauty. Not the beauty of the world, but a deeper and truer beauty.

Approval of the Rule and Christmas at Greccio: can you explain, in your opinion, what is the relationship between >>>

these two events?

I think first of all we must be cautious in asserting a temporal and historical relationship between the two events, because experts tell us that the Rule was certainly approved by the Pope on 29 November 1223, but months passed before the official Bull was finished and reached Francis (it is said in March 1224). In this case, there would not be an immediate connection between the 'material' arrival of the approved Rule and the Christ-

mas of Greccio. However, we can say that if the central insight of the Rule is to live the Gospel, the Christmas of Greccio is a reenactment, in the noble sense of the term, a dramatization of a central episode in the Gospel accounts. That passion for living the Gospel, for making it tangible, which animates the endorsed Rule, which animates all of Francis's life, is found in an exemplary manner in this episode of his life.

NATIVITY SCENES IN THE OFM WORLD

To celebrate the 800th anniversary of Christmas in Greccio, we ask OFM entities to send photos of the nativity scenes set up in churches or friaries to comgen@ofm.org by the 13th December 2023. They will be published in the Fraternitas 325 on the 20th December 2023.



29TH NOVEMBER 1223-2023, CELEBRATION IN THE BASILICA OF ST. JOHN IN LATERANO VIA VITAE: 800 YEARS OF THE RULE OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

On Wednesday the 29th November, in the Basilica of St. John in Laterano, in Rome, we of the Franciscan Family celebrated the 800 years of the approval by Pope Honorius III of the Rule drawn up by Saint Francis of Assisi.

In a physical and spiritual itinerary inside the Basilica, we retraced the path of the Rule in 12 steps, one for each chapter, lighting a lantern each time to symbolize the light of the Gospel, updated by Francis and by many Franciscans who in 800 over the years they have found ever new ways to experience it. A journey that has revealed, at every step, the center of the life of every Franciscan: Christ Crucified, who spoke to Francis more than 800 years ago and who still speaks to each of us today.

Br Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General of the OFM, commented on chapter III of the Rule ("On the Divine Office and fasting



and how the friars must go around the world"), recalling how Francis managed to combine prayer, fasting and meekness, addressing an itinerant fraternity: "How can you sustain an itinerant life? How can we not disperse, if not scatter internally?", asked Br Massimo. The answer is given by Francis himself in his Rule: with prayer and fasting. "Francis says to me, to us today: if you want to remain itinerant, lighten your burdens, learn not to depend on things, don't seek nourishment in food, in disordered affections, in what seems to fulfill you. For me today, they are for example, from many relationships, from always having to respond, from always being connected. What does it mean to rebalance these relationships? I am still learning it and I hold the Rule as a compass, because Francis then gives us the third key: to be meek, peaceful, modest, meek, and humble", shared the Minister General.



Although not physically present, Pope Francis participated with a message addressed to all of us members of the Franciscan



family, read by Cardinal Angelo De Donatis, Vicar of the Pope for the Diocese of Rome, who presided over the celebration: "For Saint Francis the Gospel it was at the center of his existence; and the Church approved its purpose, returning it to him and to all of you Franciscans as a text that no longer expresses only the spiritual intuition of a Founder, but a form of life". He reminded us that to live the Master's teachings it is necessary to remain in the Church. And at the end he invited us to go around the world: "For you Franciscan friars and sisters it means concretely realizing the itinerant vocation in a style of brotherhood and peaceful life, without quarrels or disputes either between yourselves or with others, demonstrating 'minority', with mildness and meekness, announcing the peace of the Lord and entrusting yourself to providence: it is a special programme of evangelization, possible for everyone".

Immediately afterwards, the same cardinal De Donatis wanted to leave a message and good wishes for the entire Franciscan family: "My wish for you is this: I wish and ask for you and for every single baptized person, young person rich in goods, relationships, life, and also for those who are poor that they may be seduced by the love of the Crucified and Risen Lord. [...] Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, receive again the Rule that your father Francis received from the hands of the Church. Receive the Rule again, you who live in the various Franciscan families and fraternities, renew your enthusiasm. Receive the Rule again, you who have experienced the sweetness but also the fatigue and disappointment of life; May he be for you

a source of renewed trust in the Lord who never stops carrying out his work in us even in moments of fatigue or darkness."

Also participating in the celebration was Br Cesare Vaiani OFM, President of the Committee of the Franciscan Family for the Franciscan Centenary, who promoted the event and is made up of the General Ministers of the Franciscan First Order (Br Massimo Fusarelli, OFM, Br Roberto Genuin, OFM Cap, Br Carlos Alberto Trovarelli, OFM Conv), by Sister Frances Marie Duncan, President of the International Franciscan Conference of Brothers and Sisters of the TOR, and by Tibor Kauser, Minister General of the OFS.

Watch the recording of the celebration on www.centenarifrancescani.org

Ordo Fratrum Minorum



**Communiqué of the
general Definitory of the
Tempo Forte - November**

Italiano - English
Español - Français

Secretarius Generalis

BR MASSIMO FUSARELLI TALKS ABOUT THE RELEVANCE OF THE RULE IN TODAY'S WORLD
FULL OF LIFE. THE RULE OF SAINT FRANCIS TODAY

The book "Piena di Vita. The Rule of Saint Francis today", written by Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General of the OFM.

Precisely in the year of the 800th anniversary of the Rule (1223 – 2023), Brother Massimo invites those who do not know it to read some parts of it, delve deeper into it, to discover a text that still today continues to provoke, to inspire, to instill inspiration for a choice of a full life.

The first two chapters narrate the process that led Francis to write down shared points that held together a movement that was growing dramatically in numbers: everyone was attracted by the radical life choice of the Poor Man of Assisi! And like all events that are not static, but dynamic, this too had its difficulties.

The third chapter enters the body of the Rule, trying «to read it as a possible "rule", that is, a life orientation for us

too, women and men of the 21st century. It's not easy, but we must at least try", writes Br Massimo.

Thus, we are able to retrace the 12 Chapters of the Rule, seeking in each one the "beating heart" to make it current in our times today: not a fixed security, but an "orientation" that can give "light and salt to life, directing it to the Gospel, in order to live in the ever-new situations that existence places before us, especially today."

**Piena di Vita
La Regola di
san Francesco oggi**
 Massimo Fusarelli OFM
 Edizioni San Paolo, 2023
 110 pagg.



ONGOING AND INITIAL FORMATION

MANUAL FOR THE TOPIC OF SAFEGUARDING OF MINORS AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The General Chapter of 2021 made clear and courageous decisions about introducing into the workings of the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) a true culture of respect for human dignity expressed concretely in safeguarding minors and vulnerable adults. Included in those decisions is offering to every friar and every lay person collaborating with our Order an adequate formation about safeguarding.

This manual, which has been worked on at different levels, sets out to be a useful tool in formation for safeguarding.

The longer first part offers a theoretical framework to explore the phenomenon of abuse and the prevention of abuse. In the second part, some examples are offered with a view to planning a training even in formation, whether at the level of Ongoing Formation or Initial Formation. Obviously, these outlines can be adapted to the concrete situation of a Province or Custody.

What is important is that the message being sent to friars and lay people in this regard is coherent, well informed, and constructive. Safeguarding is not merely a burdensome obligation that inspires fear, but it is first of all a great opportunity for conversion in how we relate to others with regard to the use of power. As is stated in the first part of the Manual: “As Friars

Minor, our commitment to safeguarding is an actualized form of living our charism of minority by renouncing any kind of abuse of power towards others.”

We hope that you may profit from reading this document, and in every entity of the Order we await formation events on safeguarding that inspire courage, clarity, and hope.

Peace and every blessing.

Br Darko Tepert, Secretary General for Formation and Studies
Br Albert Schmucki, President of the Permanent Commission for Safeguarding Minors and Vulnerable Adults

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GENERAL CURIA, NOVEMBER 13-21, 2023

MEETING OF THE NEW PROVINCIAL MINISTERS AND CUSTODES WITH THE MINISTER GENERAL AND THE DEFINITORY

From November 13-21, at the OFM General Curia, the new Provincial Ministers and Custodes of the Order met with the Minister General and his Definitory. The objective of this gathering (which included 21 Friars from 16 countries) was not only the formation of the Ministers and Custodes as they take on this new service, but also the personal growth of each Friar in an atmosphere of mutual listening (something we know to be of great importance in an Order so diverse with brothers from all over the world). This event also afforded each participant an opportunity for an individual encounter with the Minister General, to share with him the challenges, struggles, and joys of their entity.

On the first day, General Definitory, Br. John Wong, shared the results of a questionnaire that had been sent earlier to the participants with questions





about their expectations for the meeting, topics they'd like to see addressed, and their thoughts on collaboration with the Minister General, the Definitory, and the offices of the General Curia. From the responses submitted, it seemed that the Friars were most interested in discussing fraternal relationships and institutional realities, according to the diverse situations of their local entities. They were also interested in their personal formation, hoping to better understand what they need to do to offer this new service to the men of their entities.

In addition, many Friars wanted to discuss how to fraternally encourage and minister to the Friars under their care, especially during moments of crisis, how to accompany the larger community, and how to foster dialogue among the Friars facing the challenges of today.

The afternoon session was opened by [Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli](#), who spoke on the topic: "The service of authority as relationship: from the brothers of the *Conferences*." Beginning by reflecting on Acts 20:17-38, which finds Saint Paul at the end of his ministry, the Minister, Br. Massimo, showed how Paul exercised his authority in relationship. "His was an authority played out in relationship, sharing the truth was a necessary service he offered. We must learn how to foster this culture of presenting the truth in love," said Massimo, highlighting the importance of sharing in fraternal solidarity, seeking "together to live the will of God."

The following day, Br. Darko Tepert, General Secretary of Formation & Studies, and Br. Hieronimus Dei Rupa (Vicar General) presented on the topic: "The service of formation offered by the Minister through relationship." Using as their guide the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*, they reminded the participants of the importance of relationship with God, with the brothers, with the Order, and with the Church. Small group discussion followed.

Br. Francisco Gomez Vargas and Br. Dennis T. Tayo, respectively the General Secretary and General Animator of Missions and

Evangelization, spoke of "The service of the Minister of evangelization in relation to himself and others." Using as a point of departure Art. 51 of the General Statutes, these brothers spoke of new forms of missionary evangelization that emerge from a prophetic fraternity. Small group discussion followed.

In the afternoon, Br. Daniel Rodriguez and Br. Taucen Girsang, from the JPIC offices presented "An interconnected reality," between the Franciscan net of migrants and the Franciscan net of the Mediterranean. They focused attention on the future, for example from May 19-26, 2024, there will be an International Course for new JPIC animators at the Antonianum in Rome.

In the days that followed, projects for the upcoming Franciscan Centenaries were discussed, including what the Order, the Holy Land Commissariat, and Antonianum are planning. The Order's new database was also discussed, as well as the offices of the Curia and the economic situation of the entity.

Brothers shared about the pilgrimage of the Holy Valley of the Rieti Province, which takes brothers through the sanctuaries of Fonte Colombo and Greccio, visiting the sites where Saint Francis, 800 years ago, wrote the approved Rule and popularized the Christmas nativity scene. Br. Augustinus Kuwata, Minister of the Province of the Japanese Martyrs, was so grateful to God for his experience of this Rieti Valley pilgrimage.



"At Fonte Colombo, we received from Br. Massimo a pocket-sized copy of the Rule. I was able to read it and pray with it in the actual spot where Saint Francis wrote it! Chapter Two spoke profoundly to me. It simply says that those who wish to accept this life as Friars must renounce all things and follow the Holy Gospel. If they sincerely desire this life, they should show they love the teachings of the Church and the Sacraments. This was a moment of grace that brought me back to the beginnings of my vocation."

The meetings concluded on Tuesday, November 21 with Holy Mass presided over by the Minister General. Since it



OFM WORLD

Celebration of the 800th Anniversary of the Rule
(Province of Ireland)



The entry of 3 new postulants into Honduras
(Province Our Lady of Guadalupe) approved



OFS celebrating the day of St. Elizabeth
(Prov. Immaculate Conception BVM, Spain)



Vocational month
(Province of St. Peter Baptist, Philippines)



Brežje Nativity Scene Museum
(Province of the Holy Cross, Slovenia)



Coexistence of aspirants
(Province of the Holy Faith, Colombia)

was the liturgical feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Br. Massimo highlighted the message of joy that the Virgin gives to all. "We will live this call to service not as if it were a heavy burden but a great joy to the extent that we cultivate our relationship with the Lord, seeking to live, to think, to feel, and to act always in faith, with a love that is alive, calling us out of ourselves," he said in his [homily](#).

The following Provincial Ministers and Custodes participated:

Alard Krzysztof Maliszewski (P. S. Edvige, Poland);
Antonio José Reyes López (C. Immaculate Conception BVM, Venezuela);
Augustinus Takuji Kuwata (P. Ss. Martyrs of Japan, Japan);
Azeem Lawrence (C. S. John Baptist, Pakistan);
Benedykt Maria Świdorski (P. S. Michael Archangel, Ukraine);
Derrick Yap (C. S. Antony of Padua, Singapore);
Egidiusz Włodarczyk (P. Immaculate Conception BVM, Poland);
Fernando Valente da Silva Mota (P. Ss. Martyrs of Morocco, Portugal);
Jakub František Sadílek (P. S. Wenceslas, Czech Republic);
Jesús Barahona Vega (P. Saint Francis of Quito, Ecuador);

John of God Nguyen (P. S. Francis of Assisi, Vietnam);
Jozo Grbeš (P. Assumption BVM, Bosnia-Erzegovina);
Juraj Andrej Mihály (P. SS. Savior, Slovacchia);
Krzysztof Bobak (P. S. Mary of the Angels, Poland);
Leonard Bielecki (P. S. Francis of Assisi, Poland);
Marcos Iván Saravia Orellana (P. S. Francis Solanus, Perú);
Markus Fuhrmann (P. S. Elizabeth, Germany);
Rocha da Silva, Edilson (C. S. Benedict of Amazon, Brazil);
Witosław Szytk (P. Assumption of BVM, Poland);
Xavier Durai Raj (P. S. Thomas the Apostle, India);
Zdravko Dadič (P. S. Cross, Bosnia-Erzegovina).



BR DENNIS IN UBON RATCHATHANI DIOCESE

“REINVENTING” OUR FRANCISCAN PRESENCE IN THAILAND

The OFM presence in Thailand started around 36 years ago when in 1985 the Foundation of Our Lady of Angels in Bangkok was established, ensuing noteworthy contributions to the pastoral, spiritual, and health care of the diocese. In the following years the work of the Foundation was evaluated; the General Administration, on the recommendation of the Commission in charge, decided to close our presence in Bangkok in 2021 and possibly open a new Guardianate in the north of Thailand.



The Province of San Antonio de Padua, Philippines (PSAPP) in its 2021 Chapter, accepted the invitation to restart in northern Thailand.

The Minister General strongly exhorted them to live faithfully our charism, as lesser brothers, living simply in fraternity among and in dialogue with the poor and peoples of other religions, while responding to the needs of the diocese.

Hence, the Delegate of the Minister General to Thailand, Br. Lino Gregorio Redoblado, OFM along with the two future missionary friars from PSAPP, went last August 20-30, 2023 to visit Dioceses of Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, and Ubon Ratchathani in northern Thailand. After seeing the place and personally talking to the respective bishops, the team submitted an actual evaluation report and their discernment of this visit.

During the September 13, 2023, Tempo Forte meeting, it was decided to restart our presence in the Diocese of Ubon Ratchathani in the northeast of Thailand along the borders of Cambodia, near Laos. The Most Rev. Bishop Philip Banchong Chaiyara, CSSR, DD sent a formal letter of invitation to Br. Renee Dean, OFM Minister Provincial PSAPP, particularly asking the friars to minister the villages of Nong Din Dam and Charon Chai, Nong Sabeng belonging to the district of Nam Khun and St. Francis of Assisi in the district of Nam Yuen.

Particularly, the friars are to engage in the formation of Basic

Human Communities between Catholics and Buddhists (Dialogue program) and the formation of Basic Ecclesial Communities which are the present thrusts of the diocese. Entrusted also are the spiritual animation of the Franciscan (SFIC) Sisters, the Franciscan Secular Order, and Filipino migrant workers, among others.

From November 6 until November 11, 2023, Br Dennis T. Tayo as the General Animator for Missions, went to Ubon Ratchathani along with Br Renee C. Dean (Provincial, PSAPP), Br Errol Ortiz (PSAPP Secretary), and two incoming missionaries, Bros Christopher Villanueva and Crisologo Dragon.

The friars went to start the needed preparations for this new mission. On the eventful day of November 11, 2023, the friars met the Most Rev. Bishop Philip and members of his Pastoral Council to draw and eventually entered into a Contract of Agreement, laying down the terms of this collaboration.

The friars thereafter visited all the mission stations and did the other immediate preparations, including concerns for the visas and language studies of both missionaries as well as the transfer of some useful materials from Bangkok to Ubon Ratchathani.

We look forward to re-starting our mission in Thailand, as we aspire to “reinvent” our “new” presence.



GENERAL CURIA, 6 - 9 NOVEMBER

MEETING NEW FORMS OF LIFE AND EVANGELISATION

From 6 to 9 November the General Curia hosted the meeting on new forms of life and evangelisation in today's Europe, with the participation of 17 Friars from 11 countries.

The relaunch of these meetings, which resumed last year, was desired and encouraged by the Minister General and his Definitory, and made possible thanks to the work of the General Secretariat for Mission and Evangelisation. In addition to Europe, these meetings have also begun in South America and Asia.

The New Forms of Life and Mission, as stated in the subsidy dedicated to them, are born of the desire "to draw on the sources, always fresh and new, of the original charism of St. Francis, the "new man", the man of the future, in order to inspire new incarnations, new models and styles of evangelisation, new passions and new missionary strategies" (Ite nuntiate 23).

The two days of work were marked by many moments of sharing and three moments of listening. The question of how we live life in our fraternities opened the work on the morning of Tuesday, 7 November, which ended with the presentation by Br. Francisco G. Vargas on what is emerging from the Latin American and Asian Conferences in terms of the "movement" of new forms.

The afternoon continued with the Report of the Minister General, a speech that opened a dialogue on the situation of the new forms in the Order today. The Minister noted that he himself had wanted "to reopen the discourse on the new forms, to give space and expression to those Friars who feel a gift of grace to live the charism beyond the usual pattern to which we are ac-



customed", and invited us "to continue on the path of research and also to anticipate through concrete experiences, such as the itinerancy in Northern Italy this summer".

On the morning of Wednesday 8 November, Br. Alessandro Ciamei gave a talk on "Our fraternal relationships in relation to evangelisation", showing how the same relationships, lived from the sharing of the project of life inspired by the Rule, become the way of evangelising new realities.

It was then interesting to hear, in the sharing by language groups, the joys and difficulties in the relationship between the Friars who bring the desire for renewal and their own Provinces. The afternoon was devoted to sharing other "new" experiences and to planning next year's meeting.

May the Lord enable us to live our way of life ever more evangelically and passionately.

Br. Manuel Valenzisi, OFM

7 - 9 NOVEMBER

INTER-FRANCISCAN ONLINE COURSE ON THE NEW EVANGELIZATION IN EUROPE

Fr Massimo Fusarelli
Ministro Generale OFM

The inter-Franciscan online course entitled "Current Evangelization in Europe: a new evangelization? The Franciscan contribution", mandated by the General Ministers of the three Franciscan Orders and carried out by the Secretariats for Evangelization and Mission OFM, OFM Conv and OFM Cap, was held from 7 to 9 November.

The objective of the meeting, which was attended by 120 friars from 25 countries, was to revive, reflect, update, and animate Franciscan evangelization in Europe today.

Br Francisco Gomez Vargas OFM, General Secretary for Evangelization and Mission, in his speech un-



derlined the importance of the Franciscan charism in this service: "Like Saint Francis, our experience of the poor Christ, who reveals God as Emmanuel, "God-with-us", necessarily sends us into the world as brothers to be living and effective witnesses of the Kingdom of God. Because, again like Saint Francis, God does not call us for ourselves, but for the Gospel". "Evangelization today – he continued – propels us towards a new future if we live our vocation for others as an evangelizing fraternity. The challenge is to build new fraternities, with new presences, of life and evangelization, in order to favor the opportunity for a serious review, adaptation and reformulation of our form of consecrated life, understood as a pro-

cess of configuration to the person of Jesus Christ".

Br Massimo Fusarelli OFM, Minister General, focused on the importance of the new evangelization in the post-secular world: "post-secular means that the religious element is no longer taken into consideration. [...] We are aware that the mission is not simply something that is addressed, as in the past, to countries that have not yet heard the announcement of Jesus Christ. We know that the mission is aimed at everyone, even the lands of ancient Christianity which are experiencing such significant changes today. The evangelizing mission, therefore, is open to all and knows no boundaries." The objective,

therefore, must be to make known "a God who is not foreign to humanity, but who is profoundly present in the life of each individual". This course, concluded the Minister General, wants to "start a process so that we become aware of being called to live the Gospel and to announce it with our lives and words even in the post-secular world. How to do it? With what languages, with what new sensitivity, with what preparation? We can do it with renewed enthusiasm, aware of the challenges, the hardships, and our fragilities. We can begin confident in what Saint Francis calls the Holy operation of the Spirit of the Lord, who is always among us, even in the post-secular world."

NOVEMBER 2023

REFLECTIONS BY BR. MASSIMO

In recent visits I was able to meet several friars who live in situations of war and of various forms of socio-political tension. I think of the brothers of Ukraine, of Syria and Lebanon, of Israel and Palestine, of Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, and the rest of Central America; of Haiti and Cuba, of the Sudan and South Sudan, of northern Mozambique. I will soon visit the brothers in the Congo and above all in the east region, in Kivu, a very stormy region. I think of those brothers who live in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, south Philippines, Russia, and in different other parts of Latin America, as well as on the continents of Africa and Asia. It is not possible to name all of them.

A common characteristic is that the brothers remain close to their people, sharing with them the destiny, the difficulties, often the most just struggles for peace and justice. This also happens by exposing oneself personally. Remaining close to people, to Christians and others is a way of translating the word of our Rule: the brothers who by divine inspiration go

among the people... corresponds, in fact, to our vocation to go and remain among and with people, Christians and others. Our fraternal life is the first form of evangelization. It is also the opportunity to always return again to the center of our vocation. As the Constitutions remind us at art. 89 §1: "The witness of one's life, or the silent proclamation of the kingdom of God, is a kind of initial step and the first method of evangelization. It can and must be given by all the friars, clerics and lay, by those who preach, pray or 'work', by the young and the old, by the healthy and the sick, in such a way that, as they live their life as minors in fraternity, they make known the fact that they are Christians."

Here is the opportunity to return again and again to the center of our vocation. This is truly one of the signs of the times of this era in which we are living, amidst a restless and very tested humanity in this moment of history. This is also an invitation to all of us, friars minor scattered throughout the world, not to forget that we live our evangelical vocation as brothers



and minors in the concrete realities in which we live. Everywhere these realities are difficult, and the brothers living in more tense situations help us to remember this.

So we also have the precious opportunity to grow in the sense of belonging to the fraternity of the whole Order spread throughout the world. What the brothers experience on one continent or another affects us all and belongs to us. Therefore we make our own the anxieties and hopes, the joys and sufferings of the brothers living in the more tested areas of the world, also committing ourselves to get to know them better, to pray for them and to support them as much as possible.

NOVEMBER 20-23, 2023, SACROFANO (ROME – ITALY)

1ST CONFERENCE MISSIONS AND EVANGELIZATION – FORMATION AND STUDIES – JPIC OF COMPI

From November 20 to 23, the first conference of friars (brothers) responsible for Missions and Evangelization, Formation and Studies, and Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation of the Conference of Ministers Province of Italy and Albania (COMPI) was held at Sacrofano (Rome). More than 80 friars participated, to which were joined the Provincial Ministers responsible for the various sectors.

The conference began with the *Lectio* offered by Bishop Benoni Ambarus, auxiliary bishop of Rome, who proposed a reading of the sending of the 70 disciples from the Gospel of Luke, underlining the importance of the style, rather than of content.

The second day of the Congress was dedicated to the immersion in some realities of “periferia” of the city of Rome. The participants, divided into seven groups, visited different parts of Rome, where they met persons involved in the activities targeted to the periferia of different types, always guided by an expert witness.

The third day began with the return to the groups, in which the brothers had the opportunity to talk about their experiences, and continued with the report of Professor Stella Morra, theologian of the Gregorian University, on the theme “The signs of the times for a conversion of the pastoral care and of formation”. Work in the groups followed.

In the afternoon of the same day, during the meeting with the Minister General, br. Massimo Fusarelli, and the Secretary generals for the Missions and Evangelization, Formation and Studies, as well as with the Director of the General Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, the secretaries of the individual groups reported the summary of their discussions, posing also specific questions to the Minister and



the three officials of the General Curia. The Minister General, answering questions, encouraged the participants at the conference to dare, to think about changes, giving concrete impulses for group work the following day.

The day ended with the celebration of the Eucharist, presided over by the Minister General. The fourth day began with group work, in which concrete proposals for the future were formulated.

At the end, in the assembly, it was decided to continue with this type of joint conferences that involve all three major sectors of animation in the Order.

DECEASED FRIARS *

- 24th November: Br Wolfgang (Otto) Heiß, Prov. St. Leopold (Austria)
- 20th November: Br Vinko Kurevija, Prov. Assumption BVM (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- 19th November: Br Filip Sučić, Prov. Assumption BVM (Bosnia and Herzegovina)
- 12th November: Br Dorvalino Fassini, Prov. St. Francis of Assisi (Brazil)
- 3rd November: Br Florencio Mínguez Niño, Prov. Immaculate Conception BVM (Spain)
- 1st November: Br Gregory Bourke, Prov. Holy Spirit (Australia)

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

POLAND, NOVEMBER 6-9

INTERPROVINCIAL ONGOING FORMATION OF GUARDIANS AND THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR HOUSES OF THE POLISH PROVINCES

For years now, each autumn, the Secretariat for formation and studies of the Northslavic Conference of the Order of Friars Minor (SLAN) has organized courses of ongoing formation for Guardians and those responsible for houses in the SLAN territory. This year this course took place from November 6-9 at the Góra Świętej Anny Pilgrim House which saw around 120 Friars gathered from the five Polish Provinces.

It was a time of encounter and sharing of experiences, as well as listening to invited experts who addressed such topics as the service offered by Guardians (responsible Friars) and the challenges found in serving the Church of today. Among the first day speakers was Mons. Wojciech Ignasiak, who works with people in recovery from addiction and is director of the Franciszek Blachnicki Center of Prevention and Formation of Katowice. He spoke about the Fatherhood of God, human fatherhood, and shared ways to help those suffering from addiction.

Br.Piotr Różański SP, retreat leader and psychotherapist, explained the work he does with religious superiors at Jelenia Góra, as Director of the Calasanz Cultural Center. During the afternoon session, problems within priestly ministry and among community superiors were discussed.



The following day, Br.Tomasz Gaj OP, of the Dominican Center for formation and development in Tabgha, spoke about communication by superiors with the brothers they care for in his presentation: "Rational or Relational?". In the afternoon, Mons. Jacek Kicinski spoke about the ministry of presence as a challenge for those in consecrated life today.

These days of ongoing formation concluded Thursday when the Guardians (responsible Friars) met with their Provincial Ministers. Br.Konrad Cholewa, General Definator of the Northslavic Conference, greeted and thanked the organizers and participants of the event on behalf of Minister General Br.Massimo Fusarelli, and the General Definitorium. He expressed the Minister General's great joy and gratitude at such wonderful collaboration in this area of ongoing formation of the Polish Provinces.

The Guardians and those with similar responsibilities in our Franciscan fraternities are the primary animators of the community. It is a matter of great importance for the Provinces of the Order today to ensure that these men receive their own adequate ongoing formation and training.

FRANCISCAN BOOKMARK

Celebrando la vida.
La Regla y Greccio (1223-2023)

Martín Carbajo Núñez
Ediciones Franciscanas Arantzazu
2023

Piena di Vita.
La Regola di san Francesco oggi

Massimo Fusarelli OFM
Edizioni San Paolo 2023

St Francis of Assisi.
The Sanctification of a Wounded Humanity

Séamus Mulholland OFM
Franciscan Publishing 2023

19TH NOVEMBER, EL SALVADOR

14TH YOUTH MEETING OF FRANCISCAN PRESENCES (14 EJPF)

“I want to be a Franciscan”: with this motto the 14th Youth Meeting of Franciscan Presences in El Salvador was held. On Sunday the 19th November, all the young people from the various youth ministries of our presence made their way towards the city of San Miguel, to experience a day dedicated to strengthening fraternity starting from with the celebration of the Eucharist, praise, dynamics and encounter with Jesus before the Blessed Sacrament at the Holy Hour.



These meetings have taken place year after year starting from 2009, when the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the Order of Friars Minor was celebrated at the time. For this reason, the friars of this region of El Salvador, of the Franciscan Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe, in coordination with the vocational promoter of the region, organized a vigil for young people in the Holy Name of Mary Parish, in La Palma, Chalatenango. Since the initiative was well attended and welcomed by young people, the friars decided to hold this meeting every year, each time having a different Franciscan presence from the region as the venue for the event.

The main objective of the Meetings is to promote vocational concern and create bonds of brotherhood for a society capable of experiencing peace and justice.

This year the Oratorio San José parish, in the city of San Miguel, El Salvador, was the headquarters of the 14th EJPF, coordinated by the brotherhood of friars, Youth Ministry and Vocational Promotion, whom we sincerely thank for all their commitment and their dedication in organizing, to make the meeting a success.

Br Edison Zamora OFM, Vocations Animator of El Salvador

SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL, 5TH – 11TH NOVEMBER 2023

FIRST CONGRESS OF THE LAY BROTHERS OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE SOUTHERN CONE AND BRAZIL

With a fraternal welcome from Br. Paulo Roberto Pereira, Minister Provincial of the Province of the Immaculate Conception of Brazil, the friars of this Province and the Organizing Committee of the Congress, thirty Lay Brothers of the Entities (Provinces and Custody) of the Order of Friars Minor, who make up the Conference of the Southern Cone and Brazil (composed of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Chile), participated in the First Congress of the OFM Lay Brothers.

With a fraternal welcome from Br. Paulo Roberto Pereira, Minister Provincial of the Province of the Immaculate Conception of Brazil, the friars of this Province and the Organizing Committee of the Congress, thirty Lay Brothers of the Entities (Provinces and Custody) of the Order of Friars Minor, who make up the Conference of the Southern Cone and Brazil (composed of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Chile), participated in the First Congress of the OFM Lay Brothers. The theme of the Congress, “Renewing and rethinking our vocation as Lay Brothers, inserting ourselves into the reality of our Conference and embracing our future, dreaming of building bonds of fraternity with today’s minors”, and the motto “Convoking everyone, without exception, of the Brothers Minor... and wash one another’s feet” (RnB VI, 3 – 4), guided the reflection on the identity of the Lay Brother, synodality, the different ecclesial realities, as well as directing the steps of the Brothers in concreteness, in activities in the different realities carried out by SEFRAS – Franciscan Solidarity Service – developed by the Province of the Immaculate to serve the poor, the suffering and the vulnerable.

The theme of the Congress, “Renewing and rethinking our vo-

The Congress took place from 5th to 11th November, with the rich bilingual Portuguese/Spanish experience for communal living, studies, prayer and work practices. With the assistance of Br. Vanildo Luiz Zugno, OFM Cap, Master in Theology, the Brothers deepened their spirituality, identity and what it means to be a Brother in the different realities of each OFM Province/Custody.



Br. Ronildo Arruda, OFM

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES – PERAST (MONTENEGRO, NOVEMBER 6-11, 2023)
AN EXPERIENCE OF PRAYER AND FRATERNITY

We want to share with you, brothers and sisters of Fraternitas, what we experienced as Poor Sisters of Scutari, together with our brothers of the Custody of Albania-Montenegro.

From 6 to 11 November, we participated in the week of spiritual exercises organized by the Custody [“Most Holy Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary” of the brothers of Albania-Montenegro] at Perast, in Montenegro. For us sisters there was a doubly significant experience: for the first time we took part as a community in a formative and spiritual course shared with the brothers, and we were even able to experience it in a very special time for us, the twentieth anniversary of our presence in Albania.

Preaching the course of the exercises was Br Giuseppe Di Fatta, friar of the Sicilian province [Most Holy Name of Jesus], Franciscan music composer and currently engaged in a new experience of fraternal life shared with the Poor Sisters of Castelbuono (Palermo). With Br Giuseppe we went through some passages of the Gospel, such as chapter 12 of Mark and Jesus’ response to the scribe questioning him about the greatest commandment, or chapter 20 of Matthew and the bold request of the mother of Zebedee’s sons, and finally the Annunciation to Mary, interpreted with the key to understanding the three “Behold” that punctuate the text. Br Giuseppe also placed these passages side by side with the prayers of Francis, the Praises of the Most High God, and the Salutation to the Blessed Virgin Mary. And each meditation began and concluded with a song he composed and played. In particular the very first meditation started with the song “Dabar Jahve” which contains the text by the blessed Gabriel Allegra dedicated to the Word of God.

The background of our prayer together was the enchanting landscape of Perast and of the Montegrin coast, in particular of what



are known as the Bay (Boka) of Kotor, inlets of the Dalmatian coast, the southernmost fiord in Europe. We contemplated the splendor of nature and human creativity. Perast, as well as Kotor, Herceg Novi, Budva, are jewels of history, nestled between the black Dalmatian mountains and the Adriatic Sea, lands belonging to the most serene Republic of Venice until the Napoleonic era, and in fact always marked by the Lion of San Marco. The Venetian dominion acted as a bulwark against the expansionist aims of the Ottoman Empire, thus allowing the entire region to remain predominantly Christian. Ancient Catholic and Orthodox churches still bear witness to this. Thus, the Bay of Cattaro even today makes visible the historical and cultural aspects of the entire Balkan peninsula before the arrival of the Turks.

Among the various places, the one with which we became most familiar was Perast, where we were housed in an ancient convent of the Friars Minor, now managed by the local parish priest as a house of spirituality. But we also had the opportunity to dedicate a morning to a short pilgrimage on the nearby island of the Madonna dello Scarpello, where stands the sanctuary that houses an ancient Marian icon, miraculously found on a rock by two fishermen brothers in 1452. And it is here that Br Guiseppe, under the good gaze of the Virgin and Child, helped us to contemplate the mystery of the Annunciation.

The Word of the Lord and the writings of Francis, the liturgy prepared together, the moments of eucharistic adoration and the enchantment of the place allowed all of us, brothers and sisters, to be able to live these days in simplicity and fraternity, and to be able to rediscover on our journey the beauty of belonging to the Franciscan family and sharing the single charism.

Poor Clare Sisters – Scutari (Albania)



ROME, PUA, 7TH – 8TH NOVEMBER 2023

CONFERENCE FOR THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEATIFICATION OF DUNS SCOTUS



On the 7th and 8th November, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the beatification of John Duns Scotus, a conference was held in Rome, organized by the Pontifical University Antonianum, on the figure of “Doctor Sottile”, an illustrious mind of the past who still arouses interest and devotion in the Franciscan world and beyond.

On Wednesday the 8th November, the liturgical memorial of the Scottish Blessed, the Rector of the PUA, Br. Agustín Hernández Vidales OFM, addressed his greetings to those present, speaking about the history of the Scotist Commission, the Letter of the Minister General Br. Massimo Fusarelli, published on the 20th March, 2023 and dedicated precisely to the 30th anniversary of the confirmation of the cult ab immemorial paid to Duns Scotus.

Br. Ernesto Dezza OFM, professor of the PUA, focused his talk on the “Beatitude according to Duns Scotus”, making a philosophical and theological excursus on the meaning of “beat-

itude”: whether it consists in itself in an operation; whether it perfects the essence more immediately than the power of the blessed one himself; if it consists of several operations at the same time. For Scotus, the professor recalled, beatitude is a gift of the Divine Will and, as such, perpetual in the blessed because it is revealed to him by God Himself.

Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM Minister General, closed the conference by emphasizing the importance of the teachings of Duns Scotus in interpreting the contemporary reality in which we live in the light of the Franciscan charism: “May celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Church’s recognition of his holiness of life, help us to rediscover and cultivate his thought, in search of a principle, of a foundation that guides us at this time, to be faithful, in the living course of reality and history, to the evangelical charism that we have received and that from St. Francis onwards which lives in the world and in the Church in different ways.”

[Read the full text of the news on the website.](#)



MACEIÓ (BRAZIL) BISHOP CARLOS ALBERTO BREIS PEREIRA, OFM APPOINTED AS COADJUTOR ARCHBISHOP

The Holy Father has appointed Bishop Carlos Alberto Breis Pereira, O.F.M., as coadjutor archbishop of Maceió, Brazil, transferring him from the diocese of Juazeiro.

[From the bulletin of the Holy See Press Office – 8 November 2023](#)

OFM

ORDO FRATRUM MINORUM

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