

PADERBORN (GERMANY), 5TH FEBRUARY, 2024

THE FUNERAL OF BR HERMANN SCHALÜCK



The funeral of Br Hermann Schalück, Minister General of the Order from 1991 to 1997, was celebrated on the 5th February in St. Joseph's Chapel at the Franciscan Sisters' convent of Paderborn, Germany.

Also present, together with the friars of the Province of Saint Elizabeth, were the General Definitors Br Joaquin Echeverry and Br Jimmy Zammit, as Delegates of the Minister General, and some nuns and Religious Sisters from different congregations, as well as family members and the faithful.

The Requiem Mass was presided over by Msgr. Ludwig Schick. At the beginning of the Mass, Br Markus Fuhrmann, Minister Provincial of the Province of St. Elizabeth, said: "With Hermann Schalück we have lost a brother with a profound sense of the prophetic and visionary power of the Gospel. He was a man of dialogue, a builder of bridges between religions and cultures,

but also a link between very different ways of thinking and believing in the Universal Church. His thoughts and words gave birth to the breadth and depth of the Good News".

Br Heribert Arens, OFM, who gave the homily, spoke fondly of the figure of Br Hermann, saying how he was born in a small town, "too small for his mentality: everything was always too small for him!".

Br Heribert continued by recalling that Br Hermann was the youngest Minister Provincial of the Province of Saxony, that his formation was founded on St. Augustine and St. Bonaventure. "I met him in college, he was a man always searching and when he had a dream, he said to himself and to others: «Why can't I make it come true?»".

Br Hermann spent several years at the Curia General, first as Secretary General for Formation and Studies, then as General Definitor and finally, from 1991 to 1997, as Minister General. It was not possible to put his thoughts, his person, in a box – said Br Heribert – because he always tried to look beyond; inspired by Pope St. Paul VI, he had a vision of the mission of the Church on a global level, going beyond the Western point of view, looking instead at the growth of local Churches and encouraging dialogue between and with them.

The homily ended with a very evocative image: "For our Br Hermann, vocation was very important: he let himself be



GENERAL CURIA AGENDA

- Until the 22nd February 2024, the Minister General, Br Massimo Fusarelli, and the Definitor General for Africa, Br Victor Quematcha, are in Togo visiting the Province of the Incarnate Word. The visit will continue in the Ivory Coast until the 26th February.
- On the 27th February, Br Massimo will be at the Antonianum in Rome for the presentation of his book "Francis of Assisi: a restless life". From the

29th February till the 1st March, he will be in Florence (Italy) for the Assembly of the Province of St. Francis Stigmatised.

- From the 21st to 24th February Br John Wong, General Definitor for Asia and Oceania, will visit the Foundation in Hong Kong; from the 26th to the 28th he will be in Thu Duc, Vietnam, to participate at the meeting of the Lay Brothers of the East Asian Conference (EAC).



called by God towards new horizons, new ideas, new commitments. Now he has received the final call from God: the one into His very presence.”

Before burying him, a moment of prayer was held in the chapel of the city’s Eastern cemetery, where the friars and family said their final farewell.

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FROM THE 2ND TO THE 18TH OF FEBRUARY

BR MASSIMO VISITS THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

From the 2nd to the 18th of February, Minister General, Br Massimo Fusarelli and General Definitor, Br Victor Quematcha, were in the Democratic Republic of Congo for a fraternal visit.

ARRIVAL IN GOMA



On February 2nd, they were welcomed by the St. Benedict the African Province as they entered the city of Goma, east of Nairobi. They were warmly greeted by Friars, Secular Franciscans, Franciscan Sisters, and many young people. They travelled to a new house, opened there less than a year ago, in a city which has two million inhabitants and is the largest city in all of eastern Congo.

Signs of war and poverty were immediately evident in this region which has suffered much in the last thirty years. Their wars may have largely been forgotten, but the violence, abuse, and continual instability of the region has created for many a devastating reality and an uncertain future. The interests of the powerful and corruption from the north make it so things are unlikely to change. The land has been violated by the indiscriminate search for precious minerals, which the west demands, by deforestation, the polluting of water sources, and the abuse of the local people.

After sharing fraternal time with the various brothers and sisters of the Franciscan family, Br Massimo and Br Victor had an audience with the bishop of Goma who explained the details of this very difficult situation and also echoed the call of Christians of that territory to be people of hope.

On the morning of the 3rd, after Mass and Morning Prayer, the Friars visited 14 refugee camps where 75,000 foreigners (of the millions in Goma) currently reside. The Minister General and General Definitor walked through these camps and, rhetoric aside, found them to be a living hell. Thousands of people are crammed into tight spaces; 78 were counted living under one small plastic tent, while other larger tents had as many as 500 people. Many children, including new-born >>

- From the 24th February till the 1st March, Br Albert Schmucki, Director of the Office for the Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, will participate at the meeting of the International Commission for Safeguarding in Assisi.
- From the 25th February till the 1st March, Br César Kùlkamp will be in Quito (Ecuador) for the Meeting of the Franciscan Lay Brothers of the Bolivarian Franciscan Conference.

- From the 26th February till the 2nd March Br Ignacio Ceja, the Vicar General, will be in Albania to preside over the Chapter of the Custody of the “Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary”.
- From the 28th February till the 1st March, Br Cesare Vaiani, General Definitor, will participate in the COMPI Assembly in Assisi; on the 2nd March he will hold a conference on “The Stigmata in the light of the Franciscan sources” at the OFM friary in Casacalenda (Italy).



babies, were huddled together for the daily distribution of food by the Franciscan Sisters of Our Lord of the Mountain. Many elderly women, as well as young girls and boys, must work hard daily just to survive.

The Friars listened to them as the refugees described the daily horrors of violence and insecurity they face in these camps. They saw the remains of a grammar school that had been destroyed by a bomb just the day before they arrived by rebels at the gate of the city.

After being confronted with such a harsh reality, Br Massimo said: “No one is speaking about this humanitarian crisis except in an episodic way. The war that plagues this land is never mentioned in the media. We mustn’t forget the courageous and tenacious people here and must find ways to offer hope to them and their children. The work of the Church and of us Religious is great, but it is only a drop in the bucket as long as the international powers at be refused to confront the problems of this

land and begin to care for its people. Let us pray for peace, which is always achieved by working for justice, and accept nothing less.”

ARRIVAL IN LUBUMBASHI

Br Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, and the Definitor General for Africa, Br Victor Quematcha, accompanied by Br José Nzau Nzau, Vicar of the Province of St. Benedict the African, arrived in Lubumbashi on Wednesday, the 7th February 2024. They were welcomed on the runway of Luano International Airport by Br Bernard Kabila, Provincial Secretary, and some members of the Franciscan Family. A word of welcome was addressed to him by the young friends of St. Francis of Assisi of the Franciscan Youth.

At the exit of the airport, the OFM friars, the Brothers and Sisters of the Franciscan Family welcomed their guests with affection and fraternal greetings. Then the procession headed to the Provincial Curia where some Brothers and Sisters of the Franciscan Family gave a most worthy welcome to the daughters and sons of the “Poor man of Assisi” – “Poverello d’Assisi”.

Br Massimo immediately turned to the family asking them to pray for peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo, especially in the Eastern part. Subsequently, a word of welcome, on behalf of the Minister Provincial, Br André Murhabale, was addressed to him by the Vicar Provincial.

The novices sang a welcome hymn, thereafter, the Minister General imparted his blessing to the large Franciscan family who had come to welcome him.

Composed with the contribution of Br Bernard Kabila, OFM Secretary of the Province of St. Benedict the African



STATUS AND PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE

THE TRAINING COURSE ON SAFEGUARDING IN NAIROBI HAS CONCLUDED

The training course organized by the Office for the Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Adults of the General Curia was held from the 1st till the 15th February in Nairobi, Kenya, involving over 50 friars from the African Conference.



In the two weeks of meetings, pedagogy and didactics were used as crucial elements for the success of the course. Initially the participants analyzed the real situation in the various Entities, and then spoke about safeguarding as a form of evangelization and expression of the Franciscan charism in the African continent.

The dignity of each person was placed at the centre of each meeting. The participants listened to the testimonies of some victims of abuse and prayed for all the victims; they examined the consequences of abuse on people and the accompaniment of primary and secondary victims. They have seen how to offer aggressors professional therapeutic support for their personality.

After these introductory topics, the course focused on the principles of safeguarding: prevention, intervention and education. To this end, the organizers have presented guidelines for the drafting of a policy and procedures for safeguarding. An entire day was dedicated to legal issues, thanks to the intervention of a canonist Religious Sister who teaches in Nairobi.

In the last part of the course the focus was on the theme of Safeguarding in ongoing and initial formation and on the systemic aspects involved in abuse at various levels of the Church and the Order.

Some questions were put to Br Albert Schmucki, the Director of the Office for the Safeguarding of the General Curia, in order to take stock and find out the prospects for the future.

What were the expectations? Were they respected?

The Safeguarding Office wanted to offer a training course within the African context, in which local cultures play a key role.

It is no coincidence that we invited a large number of African speakers to be able to delve deeper, together with the participating friars, into the principles of abuse prevention in dialogue with the various cultures of the continent. During these 14 days we traveled together on a journey of awareness and perception regarding the issue of violence against minors and vulnerable adults in all its forms, in a climate of solidarity amongst the friars coming from very different cultures on the African continent. It seems to me that the contacts that were created during this meeting will also have an impact on the future development of the Conference.

What prospects and plans for the future?

In the last days of the course we asked the participants, grouped according to regions, to develop an action plan on Safeguarding in their Entities, in collaboration with other Entities. We asked some friars if they were available to be coordinators of the delegates for Safeguarding in their various Entities. We are evaluating the possibility of offering some friars more in-depth formation in collaboration with some Study Centres. Currently there are few entities that have real Safeguarding Commissions. We will have to work in this direction.

We also asked some questions to some course participants.

Br Santana Cafunda, of the “Immaculate Mother of God” Foundation of Angola, responded to us as follows: “I wanted to better understand the scope of the topic and the preventive elements for a fruitful development of the fraternal pastoral mission.

It is a topic that I was aware of to a lesser extent: with this course it was possible to broaden our horizons, we were challenged to share and reflect more with the friars in this changing world. We friars minor are called to care for the poor and the marginalized, to put at the centre the dignity of every man and every woman and, in a broad sense, the dignity of creation, as the work of God.

This course has certainly taught me to look at the topic with a more mature and attentive gaze than before. Many speakers spoke about the issue with great urgency and concern, we must therefore start a global dialogue with the pastoral groups, in stages, forming the community on this aspect of human dignity, based on three characteristics: listening, verifying, helping.

For the future, at least two annual online meetings on the topic could be held at regional level: it could form an integral part of the annual regional initial and ongoing training programme”.



Br Fanuel Magwidi, of the Dependent Custody of the “Good Shepherd” of Zimbabwe, was also very satisfied with his participation in the course: “There is a lot of talk about Safeguarding, and I wanted to know not only the numbers and the impact of this wave that has hit the Church and the Order, but above all I wanted to delve deeper into the topic of the implementation of the Protocols and what we must pay attention to.

The different methodologies with which this problem was addressed opened my eyes, there were many new things for me, I realized that, as friars of the African Conference, we come from different contexts and experiences.

Africa is so complex and diverse! Some friars seemed very defensive about what was presented as facts and figures, but in general the arguments were accepted.

As Friars Minor, having realized the reality of the abuse of minors and vulnerable adults, I now understand our duty to adapt new styles of evangelization to make people aware of their role

in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults by preventing, intervening, and educating people”.

[Read the full article on www.ofm.org](http://www.ofm.org)



GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR THE FORMATION AND STUDIES
WORKSHEETS FOR THE CENTENARY OF THE STIGMATA



In preparation for the Franciscan Centenary 2023-26, on the mandate of our Minister General, every year the General Secretariat for the Formation and Studies prepares the Worksheets for the entire Order.

They are designed as a useful tool both for individual work and for that in the Fraternities. In fact, they could be used in local Chapters, in on-going formation meetings, in initial formation and on many other occasions.

The richness of the texts of the last General Chapter, of the Franciscan Sources and of the Bible allow the Worksheets to be used several times in different ways, for example for meditation, study or discussion.

The Worksheets for the Centenary of the Stigmata were prepared with the collaboration of the “Spirit of Prayer and Devotion” Commission of our Order and the Executive Committee for Formation and Studies of the Order.

The Worksheets remain on a general level to allow the Entities, Fraternities and individual friars to make them compatible with their own context. This great Centenary continues to be a fruitful opportunity for growth in our common charismatic identity for our entire Order, with the Franciscan Family.

[Download the Worksheet for the Centenary of the Stigmata](#)

[Download the Worksheet on the Pontiffs at the Sanctuary of La Verna](#)



OFM WORLD

Vocational discernment in Brazil
(Province of the Immaculate Conception)



Evangelization day at Ravenna, Italy
(Province of St. James of the Marca)



Holy Mass for St Philip of Jesus,
Patron Saint of that Province (Mexico)



Priestly and Diaconal Ordinations in Ecuador
(Province of St. Francis of Quito)



Friars were made Readers and Acolytes in
Poland (Province of the Immaculate Conception)



Ash Wednesday celebration in Jerusalem
(Custody of the Holy Land)

THE DOCUMENT ON THE CONFERENCES OF THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR HAS BEEN PUBLISHED CONFERENCES IN THE OFM

The document “The Conferences in the OFM: historical-legal development and new challenges towards the future” has been published in digital version. It offers an overview of the Conferences of the Ministers Provincial of the Order.

The General Chapter of 2021 formulated a mandate (No. 31) that goes like this: “The Minister General and his Definitory must undertake a complete review of the current structure of the Conferences and, where necessary, make the appropriate adjustments in the configuration of the Conference structure, favoring dialogue and exchange between the General Definitory and the Entities and Conferences.”

To carry out this mandate, the General Definitory at the end of 2022, appointed a Commission to carry out a study on the Conferences of the Order. The Commission comprises Br Claudio Durighetto, Br Francisco Gomez Vargas, Br César Kulkamp, and Br Cesare Vaiani.

The Commission drafted a text which aims to offers some elements to understand better the past history and current reality

of the Conferences of Ministers Provincial in the Order of Friars Minor. The text is composed of four chapters, which are more or less brief: the first proposes a brief “institutional” history of the Conferences and the second, the evolution of the Order’s legal norms that have regulated them; the third chapter offers the qualitative assessment of the Order’s governance structures that emerged from the 2021 General Chapter, and the fourth attempts to elaborate some germinal reflections looking to the future.

[Download the document](#)



COLLABORATION OF THE LOCAL FRANCISCAN FAMILY FRANCISCAN CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS IN RUSSIA



The celebrations of the first two phases of the “Great Franciscan Jubilee” of 2023, the Papal approval of the “Rule” and the crib of Greccio, brought a change in collaboration that already exists at the local level among the members of the Franciscan family in Russia.

For many years the fraternity of the Annunciation (OFM) of Saint Petersburg has been collaborating with our conventual brothers: organizing together the days of spiritual retreats; our (OFM) parish of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is undergoing repairs, has been hosted in the convent of St. Anthony (OFM Conv), for liturgical celebrations and parish meetings. One of our OFM brothers translates the legal documents of the conventual friars for their custody; feasts and other celebrations many times are celebrated together; reciprocally we make substitutes in case of necessity; our OFM brother carries out spiritual guidance for the girls of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary.

Almost a year ago, the preparations for “the Great Franciscan Jubilee” made the leaders of the various communities of the Franciscan family present in Russia meet regularly (online because of big distance): a letter was written to the Episcopal Conference of Russia because in the Diocese particular pastoral attention concerning the celebrations of the “Franciscan Jubilee” was needed – the request was accepted.

A marvelous conference was organized in May 2023 at Saint Petersburg to celebrate the centenary of the approval of the “Rule”; a commission was instituted to study and adapt the Franciscan liturgical calendar to the breviary and the missal.

A competition of the crib involving all the faithful of the Russian Diocese was organized and it was concluded by an online meeting on 3rd February 2024. During the meeting, the bishop his Excellency, Mons. Nikolaj Dubinin (OFM Conv, the Auxiliary

Bishop of the Archdiocese of Moscow) announced the winners and commented on the initiatives of the Franciscan Family.

A Christmas recitation scheme for children in catechism has been sent to all the parish priests of Russian parishes. A Franciscan Calendar of 2024 has been printed and distributed among the faithful, that goes through the life of St. Francis month per month until the time he received the holy stigmata;

online prayer meetings for peace were held between members of the Franciscan Family; a video on the “Rule” was published in collaboration with the Antonianum of Bologna and also a video on Christmas in Greccio in collaboration with a Catholic television studio.

Many important initiatives have been realized together. The friendship among us Franciscan men and women has to be underlined or better to call it, “the fraternity” which has empowered that which already exists. That is probably one of the best and important fruits of the first level of 2023 of the Franciscan centenary. We understand that the charism and the vocation of St. Francis to sanctity which was attained through the observance of the “Rule” is a gift that God has given to all of us Franciscan men and women. We in turn are to offer it to the Church and the world.

The Order of the Friars Minor is present in Russia with the Foundation dependent on the Minister General “St. Francis of Assisi” with three fraternities of Saint Petersburg in Novosibirsk and Ussurijsk; and the fraternity of “the Foundation of the stigmata of St. Francis” at Smolensk, dependent on the Province of the Assumption of Katowice- Poland.

*Br Stefano Invernizzi, OFM
Foundation of “Saint Francis of Assisi”, Russia*



INITIATIVE OF THE YOUTH-VOCATIONAL MINISTRY OF THE OFM CHILE
FRANCISCAN ITINERANCY 2024

From Monday, January 15 to Friday, January 20, we lived the experience of the "Franciscan Itinerancy 2024" in the Colchagua Valley in the VI Region, Diocese of Rancagua; pilgrimage from the Commune of Santa Cruz to the town of St Peter of Alcántara. It was approximately 85 km of walking through these lands, which 7 itinerants traveled (2 friars and 5 young people: Carolina León, Yazmin Sáez, Cristopher Díaz, Emerson Orellana, Vicente Abarca, Br Ronald Villalobos and Br Luis Cisternas).

Franciscan Itinerancy is an experience that evokes the origin of the Franciscan charism with Brother Francis of Assisi and his first companions developing as a fraternity on "the way".

We traveled the road, making a young and joyful ecclesial presence, greeting those who traveled in their cars on the way and praying at the rhythm of each step for the intentions of those who asked us for prayer. Our presence on the road for five days was that of silent and testimonial preaching, remembering that Jesus Christ is present in the journey of every man and woman as brother, sister, companion, teacher and Lord.

As pilgrims every day we arrived at a place to spend the night, this time always a Chapel or Parish, and then we continued on our way. For this reason, I would like to take this opportunity to thank on behalf of our Itinerant fraternity the parish priests of Peralillo, Pumanque and St Peter Alcántara (Br René Gaete, Br Martín Medel and our brother Br Fermín Castro, respectively) for their willingness to welcome us and provide us with all manner of good things. We are also grateful for the welcome and prayers of Msgr. Guillermo Vera Soto, Bishop of the Diocese of Rancagua.

The fraternal dimension was also another important aspect of this experience, as we did not walk alone but always with

brothers and sisters by our side. The journey presented us with challenges as an itinerant fraternity, just as life itself does, and there we had to dialogue, reach a consensus and discern together. The path allowed us to grow in bonds through the trust that slowly began to take shape amongst us.

Each day we began our journey before the Lord in silence and listening to the Word of God, and in the evening, we gathered as a fraternity to recognize the Lord in the breaking of the Bread, like the pilgrims to Emmaus.

Sometimes along the way we had to wait, walk slower, share water and collaborate in the preparation of food. We were able to experience minimally what the seasonal workers we meet along the way working under the sun and so many migrant brothers and sisters who must walk riskily along the paths, spending days and nights without a safe roof over their heads. On our prayerful journey they were in our hearts.

Our pilgrimage ended on Friday, but our hearts continued to be moved, asking ourselves like Brother Francis Assisi: "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

*Br Luis Andrés Cisternas Aguirre, OFM
 Animator of Youth-Vocational Ministry, OFM Chile*



CHILE, 19TH NOVEMBER, 2023 – 21ST JANUARY, 2024
JPIC MISSIONARY INITIATIVE IN THE PROVINCE OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

As a Franciscan Family we are living in a time of grace, a time in which we are celebrating 800 years of various historical events in the life of our brother St. Francis of Assisi, and which have been the compass of our being in the world.

From this event we have accepted the invitation to inhabit the margins of our community to walk and share with those with whom the Gospel confronts us, it is the experience of mission that we have called Mission among the people. Poverty is not

only a social problem; it is also a from a religious perspective, a theological question and therefore a central issue in the Christian message.

From a sociological sense, a poor person is a "non-person", an invisible and unentitled, someone who manifests himself/herself in an insignificant way because of various prejudices: from reasons of race, sex, culture or economic status among others. >>



Greccio, from the sociological dimension, invites us to do just that, to walk with the marginalized. For this reason, echoing this call, from the JPIC office of our province we proposed to inhabit for a time a space of social vulnerability, in such a way as to be witnesses again of the birth of Jesus in the midst of the simplicity and poverty of a manger.

This mission began on Sunday, the 19th November, the day Pope Francis invited us to celebrate the World Day of the Poor. That Sunday afternoon we met at the headquarters of the Neighbourhood Council of Poblacion on the 21st November (Municipality of Tuxpan, State of Jalisco); at that time, the

population did not have a Board, there was no neighbourhood project, the headquarters was inhabited and cared for by a Haitian mother and her two-year-old daughter, with the commitment to pay for water and electricity and take care of the building. A headquarters in a state of abandonment by the community.

The people welcomed us with affection and joy. From that date on, during the week in the afternoons, we visited each house in the town together with the brothers and the Legion of Mary of our parish of St Francis of Parral, a community that accepted the invitation to carry out the mission amongst the people.

On this walk we had the opportunity to walk through the streets of the town, some families received us with affection, others with a certain indifference, and others rejected us. We were able to talk with Catholics and non-Catholics, since the purpose of the mission was not to proselytize, but to live a pastoral of friendship, based on dialogue and fraternity.

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DECEASED BROTHERS *

- 12th February: Mons. Paul-Siméon Ahouanan Djro, Metropolitan Archbishop of Bouaké in Ivory Coast (belonging to the Province of Blessed Duns Scotus)
- 10th February: Br Felix Ploner, Province of St Leopold (Italy)
- 7th February: Br Agapito M. Diez, Province of the Immaculate Conception BVM (Spain)
- 3rd February: Br Albert Jacomy, Province of Blessed Duns Scotus (France)
- 29th January: Br Anđelko Rakhel, Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius (Croatia)
- 24th January: Br Luis Gómez Rodríguez, Province of St James of Compostela (Spain)
- 12th January: Br Benedykt Kolaniak, Province of Our Lady of the Angels (Poland)

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

“THE TRUE MIRACLE IS BEING CLOSE TO THE PEOPLE WHO SUFFER”
THE FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY IN LA SPEZIA, ITALY

La Spezia is an Italian city located between Pisa and Genoa, four hundred and twenty kilometers from Rome. It was built in the narrow valley that connects the mountains with the Ligurian Sea, belonging to the Mediterranean.

According to Br Almiro Modonesi, OFM, responsible for the Franciscan project, before the Second World War, the current Sanctuary was named after Saint Francis of Assisi. The city was bombed at the beginning of 1941; the only thing left standing from said sanctuary was the carved wooden image of Saint Anthony. For that reason, from the reconstruction, the sanctuary was renamed St. Anthony of Padua. There is a fraternity of Franciscan friars present at the Sanctuary.

In this Sanctuary and in this city, Saint Anthony continues to work miracles of love. The Franciscan presence administers the Sacrament to the faithful and also provides care services for the homeless people, migrants, refugees and the poor. Almiro says that shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic, the facilities as in the kitchen and dining room were renovated. Every day lunch is offered to an average of forty to sixty people, most of them are migrants and refugees from Africa and Latin America. The menu could very well resemble that of any local restaurant.

The beneficiaries value and appreciate the food, but above all the fraternal treatment and the daily presence of the friars. In addition, the structure has bathrooms and showers for the din-

ers. The project provides them with clothing for each season of the year, basic medications, minor medical treatments, etc. Br Emanuele Alberio, OFM, receives them every day with a smile full of serenity and peace. Likewise, about twenty-five families benefit each month with a basic food products.

Next to the dining room, there is another cozy space called “The Listening Centre.” This Project began in April 2017. In this project those who wish can share their life stories and difficulties with professional volunteers who establish a deeper relationship with them from listening and helping.

All this is possible thanks to an association responsible for managing funds with local businesses, families and individuals. The feast of St. Anthony is a timely moment for the collection of aid, also Christmas is a good time to raise funds. [Continue reading on the site >>>](#)

Br Daniel Rodríguez Blanco, OFM - JPIC-Rome



DIOCESE OF DAVID, PANAMA

BR LUIS ENRIQUE SALDAÑA GUERRA, OFM APPOINTED BISHOP



On the 15th February 2024, the Holy Father appointed Br Luis Enrique Saldaña Guerra, OFM Bishop of the Diocese of David, Panama.

Br Luis Enrique was born on the 24th February, 1966 in Chiriquí, Panama. He entered the Franciscan Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe of Central America and the Caribbean on the 1st

January, 1994. He studied Philosophy at the Rafael Landívar University of Guatemala and Theology at the José Simeón

Cañas Central American University of El Salvador. He made his Solemn Profession on the 23rd February 2002 and was ordained a priest on the 29th April 2006.

He has carried out the following services: Provincial Definitor, Guardian of various Fraternities, Parochial Vicar in various parishes, Director of the Pius XII Colleges of Boquete and Saint Francis of Assisi of David Chiriquí of Panama, deputy director of “Obras Sociales del Santo Hermano Pedro” in Antigua Guatemala, Vice President of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Conference of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. Since the 27th January, 2021, he has been Minister Provincial of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

We extend our best wishes to our brother Luis Enrique in his ministry serving the people of God.

“OUR LADY OF THE SEVEN JOYS” CUSTODY, BRAZIL BR ROGÉRIO VITERBO DE SOUSA HAS BEEN NAMED CUSTOS



The Franciscan Custody of Our Lady of the Seven Joys, gathered in Chapter at the friary of St. Francis in Campo Grande, Brazil, has received the appointment of the new Custodial Government, elected by the General Definitory on the 9th January, 2024.

Br Rogério Viterbo de Sousa OFM has been elected Custos, Br Roberto Miguel do Nascimento OFM Vicar, with the following Councillors: Br Arcides Luís Favaretto OFM, Br Aluísio Alves Pereira Júnior OFM, Br Neuzimar Santana Campos e Silva OFM and Br Pedro Renato Pereira da Silva OFM.

The Custody celebrated its Custodial Chapter from the 5th to 9th February 2024, with the theme “Fraternity, our vocation” and the motto “Reviewing and reinvigorating our mission”. The

Chapter was presided over by the Visitor General, Br Walter Schreiber; The Definitor General, Br César Kulkamp, was also present as envoy of the Minister General, Br Massimo Fusarelli.

In his message to the Chapter, Br Massimo said: “The Custos, the Vicar and the four Councillors were elected by the General Definitory for a period of three years. The decision to appoint the Custodial Government respected the choices made by the friars and guided by the Visitor General. We would like this act to be a sign that you are not alone. Together we will find a way to better respond to our times and our realities. As your humble servant, I ask you to open your minds and hearts to live fully in this time of accompaniment and mediation.”

Br Rogério Viterbo de Souza thanked God, the Minister General and the General Definitory for the trust in appointing him as Custos: “I also thank the brothers and sisters who have prayed for the good fruits of our Chapter and who pray for us friars. My heart is filled with gratitude at this time, and I ask the good Lord to grant us the graces to continue this service with dedication for the good of our Custody.

May God help us to live to love in the measure of Christ’s love, serving the poorest and neediest. This is my wish for this new moment in the historical journey of our Custody, counting on the help of all our brothers and sisters.”

PROVINCES OF THE “MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS” OF SICILY AND “ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE” OF MALTA MEETING OF THE GUARDIANS OF SICILY AND MALTA

From the 29th to the 31st January 2024, the Guardians/Delegates of the Provinces of the “Most Holy Name of Jesus” in Sicily and “St. Paul the Apostle” of Malta, gathered in Ispica (Ragusa, Italy), at the friary of Our Lady of Jesus, to experience times of formation and discussion on the service entrusted to them.

The formation period was led by Br Paolo Fantaccini of the Province of Tuscany, who dealt with the theme of authority according to Franciscan tradition, and was also led by Br Gianni Notari SJ, who spoke about the importance of taking care of the contexts in which the fraternities are inserted, in order to help people grasp the dimension of its meaning.

In addition to the various moments of formation and discussion, the friars also experienced moments of fraternal sharing and a cultural visit to the city of Syracuse.

On the last day, the Guardians/Delegates divided into two groups met with their respective Ministers Provincial, in order to share what they had experienced in these recent days and to think about the path of their own provincial reality.

This experience was an opportunity to create relationships and enhance collaboration in some areas of our life and mission.



"THROUGH THE DESERT GOD LEADS US TO FREEDOM"
MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS FOR LENT 2024

Dear brothers and sisters!
 When our God reveals himself, his message is always one of freedom: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Ex 20:2). These are the first words of the Decalogue given to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Those who heard them were quite familiar with the exodus of which God spoke: the experience of their bondage still weighed heavily upon them. In the desert, they received the "Ten Words" as a thoroughfare to freedom. We call them "commandments", in order to emphasize the strength of the love by which God shapes his people. The call to freedom is a demanding one. It is not answered straightaway; it has to mature as part of a journey. Just as Israel in the desert still clung to Egypt – often longing for the past and grumbling against the Lord and Moses – today too, God's people can cling to an oppressive bondage that it is called to leave behind.

We realize how true this is at those moments when we feel hopeless, wandering through life like a desert and lacking a promised land as our destination. Lent is the season of grace in which the desert can become once more – in the words of the prophet Hosea – the place of our first love (cf. Hos 2:16-

17). God shapes his people, he enables us to leave our slavery behind and experience a Passover from death to life. Like a bridegroom, the Lord draws us once more to himself, whispering words of love to our hearts.

The exodus from slavery to freedom is no abstract journey. If our celebration of Lent is to be concrete, the first step is to desire to open our eyes to reality. When the Lord calls out to Moses from the burning bush, he immediately shows that he is a God who sees and, above all, hears: "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex 3:7-8).

Today too, the cry of so many of our oppressed brothers and sisters rises to heaven. Let us ask ourselves: Do we hear that cry? Does it trouble us? Does it move us? All too many things keep us apart from each other, denying the fraternity that, from the beginning, binds us to one another.

[Read the full text](#)



OFM

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