

MANILA (PHILIPPINES), 7 – 13 APRIL

## MEETING WITH THE FRIARS OF ASIA AND OCEANIA (FCAO)

History is taking place in Manila, Philippines. In an unprecedented moment for the Franciscans in Asia and Oceania, the General Definitory led by our Minister General, Br Massimo Fusarelli, OFM, and the Officials General of Formation and Studies, Missions and Evangelization, and Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) meet the friars of the Entities of the Franciscan Conferences of Asia and Oceania (FCAO).

The FCAO is a group conference for the East Asia Conference (EAC) and the South Asia, Australia, and Oceania Conference (SAAOC). Representatives of the general animation offices actively participate in the meetings with their corresponding provincial and confederal counterparts within FCAO. The Philippine Province of San Pedro Bautista, with support from the EAC and SAAOC Entities, is hosting this gathering from April 7 to 13, 2024. The purpose of the week-long event is to encourage collaboration and joint discovery of the Order's strengths in administration, formation, mission, and justice in this part of the world. To achieve this objective, the assembly will feature a range of activities and meetings, both formal and cultural.

On April 7th, the fraternal occasion opened with a glimpse of the exciting days to come, staying true to its world-famous brand of Filipino hospitality. The Minister Provincial of the host Province, Br Gregorio Lino Redoblado, OFM, presided over the opening Mass, which fell on the 2nd Sunday of Easter, designated as Divine Mercy Sunday by the Church. In his homily, Br Gregorio emphasized the dynamic relationship between our missionary activity and the



peace-making effort in the context of Asia and Oceania, saying, "...as Franciscans and especially here in Asia, where there are obvious cultural and religious differences, divisions, conflicts, and violence due to economic inequality and ecological exploitation, our mission is one of peacemaking (shalom) and reconciliation (hesed)." After the Mass, the participants were provided with a program and orientation to inform them about the activities that would take place in the coming days and to give them an idea of the comfort that comes with Filipino hospitality. The best way to experience this hospitality was through a fraternal dinner, a blend of Filipino and Western cuisine. The food tasted even better with the friars' smiles, endless conversations, and laughter. They made the event enjoyable, fostered camaraderie, and created fraternal connections.

This gathering has been witnessing the magnificent power of fraternity, unity, and collaboration, which can pave the way for a brighter future for our Order in this part of the globe.

*With the contribution of [Franciscan Communications Philippines](#)*

## GENERAL CURIA AGENDA

- From the 15th to 20th of April the Minister General, Br Massimo Fusarelli, and the Vicar General, Br Ignacio Ceja Jiménez, will visit the Custody of the Holy Land.
- On the 21st of April, Br Massimo will participate at the chapter of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Child Jesus at Mary of the Angels.
- From the 23rd to 27th April the Minister General together with the General Definitory Br Konrad Cholewa, will visit the

Province of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Poland and from the 27 April to the 2nd of May they will visit the Province of St. Edwig in Poland.

- From the 15th to the 19th of April Br Francisco Gómez Vargas and Br Dennis Tayo, the General Secretary and Animator for missionary evangelisation will visit the missions in Vietnam; and from 20th to 22nd will be in Laos and from 22nd to 25th will be in Thailand. >>

THE VISIT OF THE MINISTER GENERAL AND DEFINITOR GENERAL OF THE AREA  
**THE VALUE OF FAMILY AND FAITH IN HONG KONG**



The Minister General, Br Massimo Fusarelli, and Definitor General for Asia-Oceania, Br John Wong, visited the Franciscan Foundation of Blessed Gabriele Allegra in Hong Kong from Good Friday 29 March until Easter Monday 1 April 2024.

As part of this visit, Br Massimo and Br John met with the Foundation President Br Henry Woo and the Foundation Council, Bishop of Hong Kong Cardinal Stephen Chow SJ, members of the OFM *Studium Biblicum* in Hong Kong, Foundation members, and members of the Franciscan family in Hong Kong.

The Minister General and Definitor General also participated in the Cantonese-language Good Friday Service of the Lord’s Passion at the Franciscan parish church of St Bonaventure in Kowloon that features inspirational and devotional artwork by the late Br Pierangelo Pagani, OFM.

On Holy Saturday evening, Br Massimo presided at the Easter Vigil for members of the Italian expatriate community at the

Sacred Heart Chapel of the Canossian Mission on Hong Kong Island, together with Br John and Hong Kong Italian Community Chaplain Br Vincenzo Soffia. The celebration of the Holy Mass of Easter Sunday Morning by the Minister General and Definitor General was on Lamma Island with the renewal of religious vows of Sr Mary Fides of Our Lady of Fatima on the occasion of her Golden Jubilee in the Order of St Clare. Attended by the OSC community of the Portiuncula Monastery of the Blessed Sacrament, Franciscan friars, migrant workers and residents of Lamma Island.

The sense of family within the fraternity of the Order and the faithful is very apparent. The 14 friars in Hong Kong run 1 parish and 5 schools, where there are 52 parishes and where more than half of the schools are Christian. This Easter alone, around 1400 adults were baptised in Hong Kong, including over 30 in our Franciscan parish.

It was clear throughout the visit that despite the many diverse challenges facing the friars and people of God in Hong Kong, the life and mission of the Order and the Church continues to be alive and active.



- On the 21st of April Br Fabio César Gomes, the General Delegate, *Pro Monialibus*, will participate at the Solemn Profession of Sr. Chiara Luce del Volto Santo at the Monastery of the Holy Trinity in Gubbio (Italy); on the 22nd will participate through online on the opening of the Clarian Congress of the Federation of St. Clare of the Poor Clares of Mexico.
- From the 22nd to the 24th of April Br Cesare Vaiani, the Genera Definitor, will participate at the Conference of the lay

- friars of COMPI at La Verna, where he will give a reflection entitled: “Lay and Cleric Brothers: A Complementary Product of the Franciscan Charism.
- On the 3rd to the 4th of May the Chapter of Mats of the Houses Dependent on the Minister General will take place at Sacrofano (Rome-Italy).
- From the 6th to the 10th of May the Tempo Forte will take place at the General Curia.

PROVINCE OF OUR LADY QUEEN OF CHINA

**AN INVITATION TO RENEW FRATERNAL LIFE AND MISSION IN TAIWAN**

The existing Province of Our Lady Queen of China in Taiwan traces its beginnings to Franciscan missionaries coming out of China in 1951. It was founded as a Vicariate in 1971 and was established as a Province in 1989.

Currently, there are 23 friars in Taiwan, comprising local friars and missionary friars from Italy, Korea and Vietnam, serving in a total of 20 parishes, including pastoral work with indigenous communities and migrant workers. In addition, the friars run 2 schools, provide spiritual assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order, and are also engaged in JPIC and preaching ministries.

The Province also includes the Foundation of Blessed Gabriele Allegra in Hong Kong, where there are an additional 14 friars. The brothers of the Province are very much a Fraternity-in-Mission that upholds the values of Minority and Prayer.

The Minister General Br Massimo Fusarelli and Definitor General for Asia-Oceania Br John Wong visited the brothers in Taiwan during Holy Week, from 26-28 March 2024.

During this visit, Br Massimo and Br John met with the Minister Provincial Br Michael Woo and the Provincial Definitor, the Secretary of Mission and Evangelisation and team of Formators, the brothers in Taiwan, and the Franciscan family. They also met with the novice and three of the four aspirants preparing for the formative journey, gathering from them wishes and dreams for the future of

the Franciscan presence on this island and beyond. During this visit, the friars also celebrated the 70th Anniversary of Ordination of the oldest member of the Province, Br Bonaventure Tung.

In addition, the Minister General and Definitor General visited Daxi Franciscan Spirituality Centre and the Franciscan Cemetery, where they paid respects to the deceased members of our Order who have served in Taiwan.

On Holy Thursday, Br Massimo and Br John also joined in the Archdiocesan celebrations of the Chrism Mass in Taipei, and Br Massimo presided at the Mass of the Lord's Supper at the Franciscan parish church of St Francis in Taishan.

During this visit, the Minister General exhorted to friars of the Province to go beyond merely maintaining the Franciscan presence on the island of Taiwan to improving our Gospel life and mission as brothers. Br Massimo also reiterated two invitations that formed the theme of the General Chapter 2021, to renew our vision and to embrace our future as Franciscan with an active and creative passion for the Gospel.

The Minister General invited the brothers to continue imagining a new way of living and announcing the Good News.

To the Franciscan Family in Taiwan, the Minister General spoke of the Franciscan Centenary and the need to continually deepen our Franciscan Charism, to announce Francis and his charism in the local context.

ON THE CENTENARY OF THE STIGMATA OF ST. FRANCIS

## THE BROTHERS OF THE TUSCANY PROVINCE IN AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE

On Friday, April 5, Pope Francis received in audience, in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace, the Friars Minor of the Tuscan Province [St Francis Stigmatized], on the occasion of the Centenary of the Stigmata of St. Francis. Also present was the bishop of Arezzo-Cortona-Sansepolcro, Bishop Andrea Migliavacca.

In the discourse addressed to the brothers, Pope Francis emphasized the meaning of the stigmata in the life of the Christian and in the life of the Franciscan. The Stigmata “remember the pain suffered for our love and for our salvation by Jesus in his flesh; they are also a sign of the Paschal victory.” The Christian “is called to address in a special way the stigmatized one encounters: those marked by life, who carry the scars of suffering and injustices undergone or of mistakes made.”

Pope Francis highlighted the poverty of spirit of the Poverello of Assisi, inviting the brothers to do likewise, thus becoming witnesses of the aggrieved Christ.

The Pope then recalled the role of friar priests as confessors and apostles of God’s mercy, inviting them to pardon all and to pardon always: “The intimacy with Christ always makes

you more humble, more united, more joyful, and more essential, lovers of the Cross and attentive to the poor, witnesses of peace and prophets of hope.”

Pope Francis also stressed the sign of the Franciscan habit, which is respected because “it makes you think of St. Francis and of the grace received.”

**“The intimacy with Christ always makes you more humble, more united, more joyful, and more essential, lovers of the Cross and attentive to the poor, witnesses of peace and prophets of hope.”**

The discourse was ended with a new prayer to St. Francis Stigmatized, which the Pope delivered, and with blessing of the major relic of the blood of St. Francis, brought especially from La Verna.

The Minister Provincial, Br Livio Crisci, gave the Pope a reproduction of the bas-relief of the Stigmata, together with other gifts brought by the brothers from La Verna.

After the audience the brothers visited the Basilica of St. Peter and celebrated the Eucharist at the Altar of the Chair, presided by Cardinal Mauro Gambetti.

[Read Pope Francis' discourse](#)

Source: [www.ofmtoscana.org](http://www.ofmtoscana.org)



GERMANY, 18 – 21 MARCH

**MEETING WITH THE MINISTERS PROVINCIAL OF COTAF**

**F**rom the 18th to 21st March 2024 the General Definitory met with the Ministers Provincial of COTAF at the retreat house in Ohrbeck in Germany. The Definitory thus continues the series of meetings with the Provincial Ministers of the various Conferences of the Order.

On the 18th March in Düsseldorf there was a meeting with the local fraternity and with the Firminus Haus solidarity work, accompanied by Br Jürgen and the other friars of the house. During the meeting with the conference, the General Definitory was able to learn about the reality of each Province and the prospects for the future. Br Cornelius Bohl presented the social and religious reality of Germany in particular, with elements common to the rest of Central and Northern Europe. The process of post-secularization is greatly accelerated and propels the Churches and religious life to a profound revision of its life and mission. We recognized this as a providential way to continue to live the Gospel in these realities.

There was also talk of the possible future prospects of Provinces that are aging rapidly and that must think of new ways to continue the life of the Order in these lands. It was recognized that for this reason boldness is needed to open new paths, beyond the simple maintenance of what exists.

In his homily on Wednesday morning to the Provincial Ministers, the Minister General recalled how the heart of the animation and governance to which we are called remains the Gospel and the charism of St. Francis: this is the centre that helps to discern the choices to live today as Friars Minor in their respective realities.

During our visit to the city and the Archdiocese of Hamburg, we were able to deepen this thought and also share the mission of a Church that wants to continue to look to the future that the Spirit inspires. The path of dialogue and collaboration between the Conference and the General Government of the Order continues with these steps towards the future.

[Download the Minister General's speech](#)

**DECEASED FRIARS\***

- 9th April: Br Agostino Martini, Prov. St. Anthony of the Friars Minor (Italy)
- 8th April: Br Stefano Mazzero, Prov. St. Anthony of the Friars Minor (Italy)
- 8th April: Br Vilmar Alves da Silva, Prov. Immaculate Conception (Brazil)
- 7th April: Br Bartholomäus Frech, Prov. St. Elisabeth (Germany)
- 7th April: Br Olimar Geraldo Kehrwald, Prov. St. Francis of Assisi (Brazil)
- 4th April: Br Giulio Rossetti, Prov. BVM Assumption (Italy)
- 31st March: Br Tadeusz Kusy, bishop of Kaga-Bandoro (Central African Republic), Prov. St. Francis of Assisi (Poland)
- 16th March: Br Giovanni Bissoli, Prov. St. Anthony of the Friars Minor (Italy)
- March 13th: Br Luis Gerardo Maldonado Maldonado, Prov. Saint Francis of Quito (Ecuador)
- March 1st: Br Enrique González Arango, Prov. St Paul the Apostle (Colombia)
- 25th February: Br Daniele Brusa, Prov. St. Anthony of the Friars Minor (Italy)
- 24th February: Br Charles Tshibuayi Kayembe, Prov. St. Benedict the African (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- February 23rd: Br Mario Dolores Ara, Prov. St Philip of Jesus (Mexico)

\* Information received from the General Secretariat [secgen@ofm.org](mailto:secgen@ofm.org)

# OFM WORLD

The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord was celebrated at Nazareth (Holy Land)



The Chapter of Mats in the Province of St. Phillip of Jesus (Mexico)



The Greeting of Peace from Manila (Philippines) at the meeting with FCAO



The Friars in Initial Formation at the Feast of Our Lady of Penha, in the Province of the Immaculate Conception (Brazil)



The Celebration of the Divine Mercy Sunday in Zimbabwe (Good Shepherd Custody)



The pilgrimage on the "Footsteps of St Francis," in the Province of Cyril and Method (Croatia)

## 1ST - 3RD APRIL, THE PROVINCE OF THE HOLY NAME OF JESUS THE CHAPTER OF MATS IN BRAZIL

The brothers of the Province of the Holy Name of Jesus in Brazil – currently present in the state of Goiás, Tocantins and in the Federal District – from the 1st to the 3rd April, celebrated the Chapter of Mats.

The Provincial Fraternity met at the Little Queen Seminary Anápolis. On that occasion the brothers were able to celebrate: The Memory, Mission and Fraternity. All the levels of Initial formation: Aspirants, Postulants, Novices and brothers in Temporal profession were present.

For three days the celebrations were characterised by sharing of experiences on the lights and shadows present in the Missionary and Fraternal life of the Province. Time was dedicated listening to the friars.

There was also an occasion of meetings with the Franciscan Family and the Laity; the closing celebration took place at the Monastery of St. Clare of the Poor Clares Sisters.

The fraternal witnesses of friars of different ages as well as of the Lay brothers and brother Priests enriched much the whole sharing.

The Liturgical, Eucharistic celebrations reflections with workers of the Schools, Radio and Parishes enlightened the missionary journey of the friars. The chapter of mats was a simple and important moment of prayer for the Province.



MARCH 2024

## REFLECTIONS BY BR MASSIMO



Last February 3 I visited the Goma refugee camp, a place of life and of sorrow, full of children screaming and at the same time of many hardships.

The brothers and the religious sisters who are present and working in this place took us to one

of the many tents where the people live in very little space.

In one of these we found four women with very young children, aged from three days to one month. The space is tight, very poor, yet two of these mothers gave us their very best smile and offered us their children to hold in our arms and welcome a moment of tenderness in such a dark place.

I truly saw Easter present in that place, I held in my arms the Easter of life stronger than death and it is this sign of hope which helped to continue to walk through the dust of that refugee camp, as well as other places marked by many hardships during the rest of the time I spent in the Congo and in other African countries. Easter is already in our midst, it flourishes in our arms, it is present in the hardship and

also in the various deaths we experience. Easter is not the miracle that will come after, it is the newness that explodes in our life now.

In this spirit I think of our brothers living in Haiti in a context of violence and of very great insecurity. Likewise, I also think of our brothers who in Cuba remain alongside a people who are quite tired and who seem to have no hope.

The same goes for the brothers who share the incomprehensible drama of the war in Ukraine, as in Israel and Palestine, without forgetting Syria and Lebanon.

My thoughts go to the brothers in Sri Lanka, where over a third of the population suffers from food shortages, while struggling to get back on their feet after the war years. Our brothers are there. I think of the challenge of reconstruction after the earthquake in Morocco, especially in Marrakesh, and there too the smile of Easter emerges among the rubble.

I cannot forget the countries of Asia which I am visiting these days as we celebrate Easter, as well as many other places in the world.

Easter is already present, Easter is here and now in our world pierced also by the suffering of creation, our common home. A new look, fruit of Easter faith, helps to recognize it.

*Ordo Fratrum Minorum*



*Secretarius Generalis*

Communiqué of  
the General Definitory  
on the March 2024  
Tempo Forte

ISTANBUL (TURKEY), 13 – 26 OCTOBER 2024

## INVITATION TO THE 18TH COURSE ON INTERRELIGIOUS AND ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE



**D**ear Brothers and Sisters,  
In the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Franciscan family, wherever they are and wherever they serve God's people, continue to be instruments of peace and harmony among members of all religious traditions, cultures, and nations.

With this vision since the 13th century, the Franciscan brothers came to live and serve in Turkey, a land which is known for its rich religious and cultural heritage. It gives a great opportunity to learn about other faith traditions and other Christian denominations and to work together as a human family for the good of the whole of humanity.

Above all, this is the land where the Church was born and Christian doctrines and dogmas were developed in the early phase of the history of the Church. In this perspective, the universal Church commemorates that about 1,700 years ago the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea was held in this part of the world.

The International Franciscan Community in Turkey every year organises a formation course on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue for members of the Franciscan Family to seize this great opportunity for renewal and deepening of

their faith. As well as learning about other faith traditions through dialogue and mutual sharing of experiences. We are pleased to invite you to the 18th Formation Course on Interreligious and Ecumenical Dialogue, which will take place from 13th to 26th October 2024 at the Friary of Santa Maria Draperis, Istanbul, Turkey.

This course consists of presentation, sharing of experiences, dialogue, and encounters with the members of other religions and Christian denominations, visits to various places of worship and pilgrimage to biblical places.

As only a limited number of participants can avail of this opportunity, your prompt response will be highly appreciated. We would be pleased to assist you in this process of formation for dialogue. Those who are interested and wish to attend this course must contact us as soon as possible so that we can ensure your participation.

*Fraternally,*

*Br Eleuthère Makuta, OFM*

*Guardian of the Franciscan International Community of Istanbul, Turkey*

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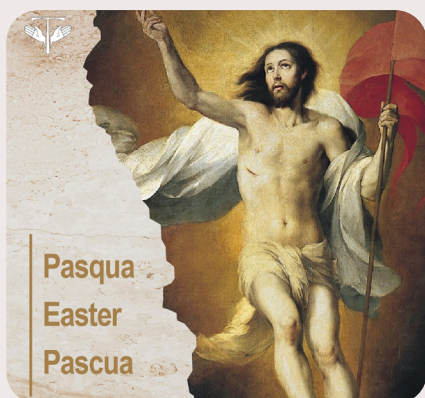
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**W**e thank the Poor Clare Sisters of the Federation of Puglia, who accompanied us with their reflections on the Word on the Sundays of Lent and during Holy Week, published on the pages of Facebook and Instagram of the OFM.

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GENERAL CURIA, MARCH 21 AND 22

**MEETING OF THE CEME ON THE RATIO EVANGELIZATIONIS**

**T**he Executive Council for the Missions and Evangelization (CEME), involved in the development of the *Ratio Evangelizationis* of the Order (REO), met at the General Curia on March 21 and 22.

We put some questions to the members of CEME: Br Francisco Gómez Vargas and Br Dennis Tayo, respectively General Secretary and Animator for the Missions and Evangelization, Br Johannes Freyer and Br José Rodríguez.

*What was the objective of this meeting?*

Br Johannes: We are continuing the work on Mandate n. 20 of the last General Chapter, that is, to develop the text of the Ratio Evangelizationis of the Order. We've already had other meetings that focused on the first part of the REO, the most inspirational part, based on the Franciscan sources, on the documents of the Church and of the Order. We are now preparing for the meeting which will take place in Turkey, in Istanbul [from May 26 to June 2], with representatives of the Conferences and which will deal with the second part of the document, the more "practical" part, which takes into consideration the concrete substance of cultures, local situations, how to be evangelizers and missionaries in different areas of the world.

*Has the General Definitory already approved the structure of the Ratio Evangelizationis of the Order (REO)?*

Br Francisco: Yes, we are working on that structure in a synodal way, listening to all the friars. It is a process which will lead to a document that is easy to consult, inspirational, while, at the same time, giving practical indications, speaking in the language of today in the various areas of the world.

*Where is the Lord sending us to evangelize today?*

Br Jose: I believe that everything starts from us, we must start with ourselves. As members of the Order, we are called to go out, towards the abandoned, the poor, the needy, wherever we find ourselves. Obviously we have a special focus on the poor, but in the world today we have various "poverties", I live on the border between the USA and Mexico and there are thousands of people in need, but we must also address young people, in schools and universities. In the Western world we often live in a post-Christian culture, it has happened that some North American missionaries sent to different parts of the world have returned to the United States to evangelize. We must evangelize wherever we are and always together with people.

Br Francisco: Evangelization starts from the charismatic identity, sometimes it is evangelized only through the ministry that is

covered or the vestments that we wear, while instead, wherever we are in the world, we must always remember the value of our Franciscan charism.

Br Dennis: We must respond to the realities of today's world. Today we bring our charism with us as a gift to the reality around us. And the "New Forms" of evangelization respond precisely to the different realities in which we live, this is the contribution of us Franciscans to the local Churches and to the universal Church.

*How does St Francis speak to us today about living the Gospel?*

Br Francisco: Listening to your heart and listening to today's reality. We cannot bring Jesus' proposal if we do not know and listen to the world in which we live. There are many lay people who work and do good without being incardinated in the Church, we must not wait for them to approach us, but we must be the ones to approach them. There are many people who do good, who live a Christian humanity in a secularized world. We must listen, we must use the heart, not just reason, in relationships with others, as Jesus did. There are many lay people who work and do good without being incardinated in the Church, we must not wait for them to approach us, but we must be the ones to approach them. There are many people who do good, who live a Christian humanity in a secularized world. We must listen, we must use the heart, not just reason, in relationships with others, as Jesus did.

[Download the REO Structure approved by the General Definitory \(Italian\)](#)



## THE STORY OF BR FRANCISCO GEARÓID O' CONAIRE, OFM MISSIONARY AND PASTORAL EXPERIENCE IN CUBA

In 2018, four missionary friars arrived in Cuba; This year we will complete six years of life and ministry in the Municipality of Playa, Havana.

We are currently six solemnly professed friars: one Cuban, one Mexican, one American, two Italians who recently arrived and one Irishman. Furthermore, there are a Cuban friar simply professed in theology, two postulants and two in our vocational programme. If all goes well, two more missionary friars will arrive during the next year.

### INSERTION INTO CUBAN LIFE

In the first two years we dedicated most of our time to learning about the Cuban reality, both locally and nationally, from the ecclesial point of view, as well as the political, economic and cultural aspects. We visited eight of the eleven dioceses during the first year and found that the inculturation week organized by the Conference of Male and Female Religious very useful.

The hospitality offered to us by Bishops, priests, religious and lay people was edifying. We were struck by the depth of affection expressed by many for our Franciscan brothers who served the Church in various places, during particularly difficult years.

We missionary friars came from various provinces of the Order, following the call of the General Curia to ensure a continuous presence of the OFM in Cuba. We assumed responsibility for the only parish remaining in the hands of the Order, with two friaries.

### COVID AND THE LOCKDOWN

During the COVID pandemic we did our best to provide basic human and religious activities, including keeping churches open and providing the bare-bones of sacramental services, right down to visiting the sick, taking all necessary precautions. I am sure that some seeds have been sown, for example keeping our church open in the afternoon, with volunteers, in prayer at exposition of the Blessed Sacrament exposed. We decided to repair and restore our

church, abandoned for decades, and it was inaugurated on the 13th August, 2022. We are considering promoting popular missions, together with other members of the Franciscan Family, in places with little pastoral support.

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL TRAINING FOR THE PEOPLE

Following an agreement made at our Pastoral Council at the beginning of last year, we decided to provide biblical and theological support to people, organizing several courses in 2023: one on the Gospel of Matthew, then a liturgy course; we continued to reflect on the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of St. John, as well as a course on the Sacraments. We were able to organize a four-day retreat for 19 women, especially those most involved in parish initiatives. This year we started a course on Christology and Introduction to the Bible, followed by a course on the Gospel of Saint Mark.

Reaching children, young people and their families Our neighbours belong to the Focolare Movement. They are lay missionaries. Twenty years ago they decided to take care of our friary, at a time when the presence of the friars was decreasing. Last year they organized a series of workshops for children and teenagers: dance, crafts, making and

using puppets, painting, acting and singing, painting and photography. The workshops focus on technical and human aspects, as well as including ethical content. Permission to promote these courses requires government approval, which prohibits charging fees or including religious content. This year, thanks to a Cuban friar and our two Italian friars, we have started a group dedicated to football: the whole sport, with good teachers, is ideal for supporting families in teaching children the vision of working together for the common good.

### SOCIAL ASSISTANCE: CLOTHES, MEDICINES AND FOOD

As a parish we have a Caritas office. Historically it distributes second-hand clothes, donated by families in the parish. More recently, we have organized the >>



distribution of medicines, which are also donated by local and foreign benefactors. We also try to provide some essential foodstuffs to the neediest families. Our Social Pastoral group often visits individuals and families to assess their situation. We try to coordinate with State Social Workers when we discover people with serious needs.

**PROJECT FOR THE ELDERLY**

Most recently, we have created a comfortable space for seniors to spend time together. We hope to offer a range of services, including games, talks, conversations and exercises, as well as refreshments. We are also doing our best to reach young people and recognize the need to look for more creative ways to respond to their needs. We believe that God's providence is opening doors and creating

opportunities for us to serve. We see and experience the concrete results of the impulse of the Spirit, in his desire to heal and make our people whole again. There are many reasons to remain hopeful!

*Br Francisco Gearóid O' Conaire, OFM*



**CUSTODY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION  
CHAPTER OF MATS IN VENEZUELA**

**F**rom April 1 to 4 in Caracas, in Venezuela, the Chapter of Mats of the Custody of the Immaculate Conception of Venezuela was held.

The Chapter was presided over by the Custos, Br Antonio Reyes, with the participation of all the brothers of the Custody.

Also present were Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, brothers of the Secular Franciscan Order and YouFra, lay brothers who live in the places of mission and evangelization, such as, for example, parishes and schools. "It has been a moment of grace to be able to reunite in fraternity, and in the light of the Spirit to open ourselves to let ourselves see and listen, in order to discern the path we must follow as Friars Minor in Venezuela."

*Br Antonio Reyes, OFM*



**FRANCISCAN BOOKMARK**

Isabella di Francia sorella di san Luigi

«Voi chi dite che io sia?» In cammino con Pietro sulle orme di Gesù

Prayers, Talks and Meditations

Marco Bartoli, Jacques Dalarun, Sean L. Field  
Editrici Francescane

Francesco Patton, OFM  
Prefazione del card. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, OFM

of Eric Doyle, OFM  
Franciscan Publishing

POLAND, 12 – 13 MARCH

## MEETING OF THE LAY BROTHERS OF THE NORTH SLAVIC CONFERENCE



**O**n March 12 and 13, in the Marian sanctuary of Kalwaria, near Krakow (Poland), the meeting of Lay Brothers of the North Slavic Conference (SLAN) was held, in which almost 100 brothers from 7 provinces participated. Also present were Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, and Fr. Konrad Cholewa, Area Definitor.

An intense moment of prayer, of fraternity and of interaction on how to be brothers and minors in the modern world. During the meeting we also talked about the Centenary of the Stigmata of St. Francis, very current in Poland, thanks to the presence of

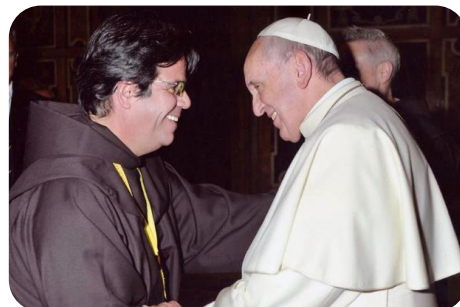
the sanctuary of Alwernia, about 36 km [or about 22 miles] from Krakow, which the Franciscan friars built in the 17th century dedicating it to the Stigmata of the Poverello.

By going as pilgrims to the sanctuary from March 29 (Good Friday) to December 31, 2024, it will be possible to gain a plenary indulgence from the Holy See on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the Stigmata. Br. Massimo, in a video recorded at La Verna during the retreat with the friars of the General Curia, he told the Polish brothers: "I invite you to go as pilgrims to Alwernia and, ideally, to be pilgrims to La Verna, in Tuscany, even going through temptations, hardships, what life holds in store for us, in order to open ourselves to the "new song" of faith and love which the Holy Spirit wants to grow within each of us. In this spirit, may the Lord bless you, move you toward the experience of the Stigmata of Francis and be present in your families, in each of you, with all the Franciscan joy. Peace and all good – Pokój i Dobro!"

MACEIÓ, BRAZIL

## BISHOP CARLOS ALBERTO BREIS PEREIRA, OFM NEW ARCHBISHOP

**O**n 3 April the Holy Father accepted the resignation from the pastoral governance of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Maceió (Brazil) presented by H.E. Mons. Antônio Muniz Fernandes, O.Carm. He is succeeded by H.E. Bishop Carlos Alberto Breis Pereira, OFM, currently Coadjutor Archbishop of the same Archdiocese.



PROVINCES OF ST FRANCIS AND ST JAMES AND ST JUNIPER SERRA

## MEETING OF FRIARS IN FORMATION AND FORMATORS IN MEXICO



**F**rom April 2nd to 5th, at the Franciscan House of Prayer in the Valley of Mercy in Tlaquepaque, Jalisco (Mexico), the meeting of Formation Houses of two Mexican Franciscan Provinces took place. Around 160 Friar students and formators from all stages of formation gathered to share, train, live together, grow in the charisma and continue creating ties of fraternity

between their Provincial Entities of the Order in this Jubilee year of the 800 years of the Impression of the Wounds on Our Father Saint Francis of Assisi.

The friars, under the motto "I carry the marks of the Lord on my body", reflected on the identity and sense of belonging to the Order in light of the experience of St Francis on Mount La Verna and within the framework of celebration of the 500 years of the arrival of the Gospel and the first twelve Franciscans in Mexico. Study, reflection, sport, coexistence, prayer and devotion were experienced in this historic meeting which culminated at the Franciscan Sanctuary and friary of Our Lady of St Anne, under the loving gaze of Mary.

*Luis Javier Román Moya, OFM*

## ASSISI AND LA VERNA, 2ND – 5TH APRIL 2024 COMPI UNDER 7 FRIARS MEETING

“We go from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that never have an end” (Gregory of Nazianzus, Hom. Cant. PG 44, 1043 B). Thus Francis of Assisi with his will of 1226 restarts and relaunches his proposal for an evangelical life in minority. For a possible restart - also contained in the title Let's Begin Brothers (FF 500) - seventy Under Seven friars from the various COMPI entities, together with the provincial representatives of the Ongoing and Under 7 Formation, met from the 2nd to 5th April 2024 in Assisi and La Verna in the VIII centenary of the Stigmata, for a Conference that almost had the flavour of a Chapter of the Mats.

It began with the reading and commentary of the Testament of Saint Francis by Prof. Stefano Brufani, professor of Franciscan studies at the University of Perugia. Setting the subtitle "for a possible minority," he concluded that one can dare to live like this to make the latest writing of the native of Assisi, contemporary. Divided into seven experiential groups (1. He led me amongst the lepers - Casoria Institute; 2. I prayed and said - Hermitage of the Prisons; 3. Faith in priests and theologians - Bishop of Assisi; 4. He gave me brothers - inter-obedience house New Church; 5. Living the holy Gospel in brotherhood - Rivotorto; 6. All the friars work - Bose monastery; 7. May the Lord give you His peace - Cittadella



Assisi) we experienced the cornerstones of that proposal and then found ourselves telling ourselves how much the Lord had donated in the place where he had led us. The day in La Verna began with a proposal from the Guardian Br Guido Fineschi on the divine inspiration that leads from vocation to mission, to become a day shared with the fraternity of the sacred mountain.

Finally, after celebrating the Eucharist around the tomb of our founder, the final assembly, gathering all the considerations of these short days, proposed the experiential method which starts from the knowledge of the different realities present in our territory, giving us an appointment next year to tell of the wonders that God performs. This too is a beginning that we hope will never end.

*Br Michele Carriero, OFM*

## ASSISI, 15 – 17 MARCH THE ASSEMBLY OF OFS IN ITALY



From 15th to 17th March in Assisi took place the Assembly of Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) of Italy, the third and final journey towards the election of the New International Council which will take place during the chapter from 2nd to 5th May in 2024.

It is a journey which under the theme “The courage of dreaming together: A fruitful fraternity” which in these last meeting affirmed itself over the capacity of taking care of oneself: an attitude, the posture of certain life that is familiar to the franciscans of all the

time. Lucas Piras the President of OFS in Italy explained that, «It is a behavior which we need to underline not only as taking care of others but also taking care of ourselves in the whole process.»

On 16th March the assembly received Andrea Gollini, the Diocesan Director for Caritas in Reggio Emilia-Guastalla. He is in charge of the school and catechetical office in the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone. Thereafter, followed a workshop on possible criteria for constructing a future project and in the evening the moment of “restitution” was carried out by the national councilors who are completing their mandate. Finally, on Sunday morning the assembly looked at the chapter dimension of election in may by working on the useful criteria of discernment so as to identify the persons who will be able to be elected at the service of animation the national fraternity for the next three years.

*Photo © Gianluca Garbuglia*

14 E 15 MARZO, PROV. IMMACOLATA CONCEZIONE  
**MEETING OF THE BROTHERS UNDER TEN IN BRAZIL**



“Don’t let your dreams die. Don’t let this space for continuing formation end. The initiatives of the retreat in this meeting are very welcome and I am happy that they are happening. These are living spaces. We speak of our sorrow, our anxiety, our hopes.” With this intervention, the Minister Provincial of the Province of the Immaculate Conception of Brazil, Br Paulo Roberto Pereira, motivated the brothers participating in the Under Ten meeting, aimed at those who have up to 10 years of profession of religious vows in the Order: they are those who have recently completed Initial Formation and are already engaged on the front lines of evangelization in the province.

The activities took place in the Convent of St Bonaventure, in the city of Campo Largo (PR), on March 14 and 15.

In view of/ahead of the 2024 provincial chapter, “we want to prepare a text based on our experience of fraternal life and of service on the fronts of evangelization, with the objective of contributing to the reflections of our province,” affirmed Br

Junior Mendes, coordinator of the brothers Under Ten. “We need to share our anxieties, challenges, dreams, joys, hopes, in sum to share what pertains to us as friars minor,” he added. “It is normal that the young provoke institutions more, above all because they carry vigour and creativity. Many expect that young brothers, when they arrive in the fraternities, to join in the work. Soon they are tasked with activities, including those which no one wants to do. But the young brother, when he arrives in a fraternity, is not just an extra person for the job, but a necessary brother,” Br Paulo highlighted.

“Bound by love, pilgrims of hope” is the motto of this year’s provincial chapter. Motivated by this prospective, the brothers, in the presence of the Minister Provincial, were able to offer a contribution to the preparatory commission of the Provincial Chapter, which will be held in the month of November.

In the internal chapel of the Convent the brothers celebrated the Eucharist. Br Leandro Costa Santos, who presided at the celebration, reflected in his homily on the invitation that Jesus makes to every person. He emphasized, “We are invited to review our projects, our journey. Let there be clarity in our life, let there be the conviction to fulfill the will of God starting from the vocation that we intend to live.”

*Br Augusto Luiz Gabriel Brazil  
 Prov. Immacolata Concezione – Brasile*

Fonte: [www.franciscanos.org.br](http://www.franciscanos.org.br)

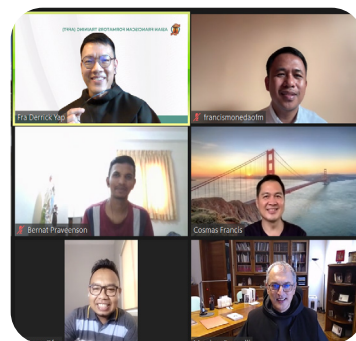
LAUNCH OF THE PROGRAMME ENDORSED BY FCAO  
**ASIAN FRANCISCAN FORMATORS TRAINING (AFFT)**

On 11 Mar 2024, AFFT programme was launched with the release of the introductory video of the first front loading module. This formators course was proposed and endorsed by the Ministers of FCAO (Franciscan Conference of Asia-Oceania) in May 2023.

Br Derrick Yap, Custos of Singapore-Malaysia, was tasked to craft the programme together with a team comprising Secretaries of Formation of EAC (Br Joel Sulse) and SAAOC (Br Charles Bernard) and Br Azeem Lawrence, Custos of Pakistan. Co-ordinating this programme with Br Derrick is Dr Josephine Chin, together with Patrick Tan providing the digital support for the online platform @franciscanstudies.asia.

This programme is primarily conducted online with 2 in-person residency programmes in June and November, book-ending the programme with adequate time for group interaction and practicum. There are 16 modules in total, modelled heavily on Master in Formation programme at the Antonianum.

AFFT is the perfect acronym for the programme as it sounds like affect (Latin: affectus), indicating its strong >>



affective emphasis and not merely intellectually downloading information. The main pedagogic vehicles are video lessons, facilitated forum discussions in small circle groups, personal accompaniment and zoom tutorials.

For this pilot cohort, there are 8 OFMs participants hailing from Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka

and Vietnam. In future, the hope is to welcome potential formators from the entire Franciscan Family to participate in this programme.

Minister General Br Massimo Fusarelli, and Asian Definitor Br John Wong both popped into the first Zoom Tutorial to meet and encourage the participants.

RETIRED PROFESSOR AT THE *STUDIUM BIBLICUM FRANCISCANUM* IN JERUSALEM  
**BR GIOVANNI BISSOLI HAS GONE TO THE FATHER'S HOUSE**



With sorrow we announce that Br Giovanni Bissoli has gone to the father's house.

Due to health complications, he was hospitalized at the infirmary and the Italian hospital of Haifa (Israel),

where he met sister death on that night between Friday 15th and Saturday of 16th march. He was a member of the fraternity of St. John the Baptist of Ein Karem and retired Professor of the

Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, where he taught 1979-1980 and 2013-2014.

The Minister General Br Massimo Fusarelli, OFM in his condolences letter wrote that, "In the history of the Order his living memories of research will continue to remain. He will always be for us the source of inspiration so that we may belong to the Lord and dedicate ourselves tirelessly. I offer my prayer together with the General Definitory so that the Almighty, the giver of all benefits, may receive him in the communion of Saints and increase the fruits of his generous response to his call."

[Download the condolence letter from Br Massimo Fusarelli, OFM](#)

BANGORO, CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC  
**MSGR. ZBIGNIEW TADEUSZ KUSY, OFM, HAS RETURNED TO THE FATHER'S HOUSE**



On the 31st March, 2024, on the Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord, in Bangoro, Central African Republic, our brother, Bishop Zbigniew Tadeusz Kusy OFM, died. He was of Polish origin, he lived as a missionary in Africa. He

was 72 years old, 54 years in the Order, 47 years of priesthood, 9 years in the Diocese. Monsignor Tadeusz made his first religious profession in the Order of Friars Minor on the 30th August 1970. Having completed his philosophical and theological studies in the Seminary of Friars Minor in Katowice, he was ordained a priest on the 15th April 1975. In 1979 he was sent as a missionary in Zaire. During the years 1986-1989 he studied at the Institute of Religions

and Theology in Paris. In 1989 he returned to Africa, to the Central African Republic. In addition to his pastoral work, he was a formator of young friars in Bimbo in the Archdiocese of Bangui.

On the 31st May 2014 he was appointed coadjutor Bishop of Kaga-Bandoro by Pope Francis, receiving episcopal ordination on the following 15th August from the hands of the Archbishop and future Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Metropolitan Archbishop of Bangui, co-consecrators Albert Vanbuel, Bishop of Kaga-Bandoro and Stanislas Lukumwena Lumbala, Bishop Emeritus of Kole.

On the 27th September 2015, following the acceptance of the resignation of Bishop Albert Vanbuel, he succeeded him in that position. On the 31st March, 2024 he died in Africa due to malaria.



Director: Fr. Byron A. Chamann Anléu OFM  
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