

FROM 15TH TO 20TH OF APRIL

## THE VISIT OF THE MINISTER GENERAL AND THE VICAR TO THE HOLY LAND



From the 15th to 20th April 2024, the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, Br Massimo Fusarelli, and the Vicar General, Br Ignacio Ceja Jiménez, visited the Custody of the Holy Land. A visit that had been planned for some time and that was supposed to involve the entire General Definitory, but the circumstances (the war in Gaza and the risk of an expansion of the conflict throughout the Middle East region) did not allow it. This, however, did not prevent the presence of the Minister and the Vicar of the Order in the Holy Places: "Many advised us not to come because of the great danger. But considering that the friars, the Christians, who live here in danger every day, I thought that for a few days I could be there too. I came precisely in this spirit of closeness and listening," said Br Massimo in an interview with the Custody's website.

### THE LIGHT THAT CONQUERS THE DARKNESS

On the 16th April after visiting the fraternities of Magdala, Tabga and Capernaum, on the Lake of Galilee, Brother Massimo and Brother Ignacio met all the friars of the region on Mount Tabor: a hymn to the light of God that overcomes the darkness of evil is the message that comes from this place where, according to tradition, Jesus experienced the Transfiguration. The Minister General recalled the many fraternities of the Order "present in the wounded places of today's humanity", inviting the friars of the Custody to "remain in this land that bears so many stigmas to be responded to by our charism".

Subsequently, Br Massimo presided at the Mass in the Basilica of the Transfiguration. In his homily he underlined the tension

between light and darkness, experienced by Francis of Assisi himself, who found his solution in the Risen Christ: "O high and glorious God, illuminate the darkness of my heart" was the prayer of Saint Francis before the crucifix at San Damiano.

After the Mass, in the presence of the Custos of the Holy Land, Br Francesco Patton, the "*LuxTenebra*" exhibition was inaugurated for the centenary of the dedication of the Basilica of the Transfiguration. Br Alessandro Coniglio, President of the scientific committee for the centenary celebrations, together with the architect Mr Vincenzo Zuppardo, curator of the exhibition, illustrated the project.

On the 17th April the Minister and the Vicar moved to Judea and arrived in Jerusalem, where they visited the fraternities of the Holy Sepulcher and the Flagellation.

At the Holy Sepulcher Br Massimo presided over the morning Mass; afterwards, he went to the friray of the Flagellation to visit the Terra Sancta Museum, home of the *Studium Biblicum Franciscanum*, where he called to mind its 100th anniversary.

The Museum today preserves and enhances a rare archaeological and artistic heritage of Christianity: a treasure guarded by the Franciscans of the Custody of the Holy Land for more than 800 years. At the end of the visit, which also covered the extraordinary archaeological section of the museum, Mass was celebrated in the Church of the Flagellation. Br Rosario Pierri, Dean of the SBF, welcomed the Minister with these words: "In your person we see not only the successor of Saint Francis, we also feel the closeness and solidarity of our beloved Order. With you today we commemorate the centenary of the foundation which makes us reflect on our history and our identity: the friars, since they landed here in the Holy Land, have never stopped searching for evangelical memories to acquire and preserve."

"Thank you for your mission," said Br Massimo at the end of his homily. "On behalf of the Order I thank the Custody for all the support it has always given to the *Studium Biblicum*, which is the living custodianship of the Holy Places. I extend all my support for your presence in these places, to you >>

who are here and continue to remain alongside the peoples who have always inhabited this land, to indicate where God has placed His tent amongst humanity. We ask the Lord that there is always a presence that can perpetrate this mission and that adheres to this vocation, which is the vocation of the Friars Minor: to welcome the Word of the Gospel, live it, give it flesh with our lives and make it loved”.

“LET US NOT BE OVERWHELMED BY SUFFERING”



In Bethlehem, accompanied by the Custos of the Holy Land, Br Francesco Patton, the Vicar Br Ibrahim Faltas, the Visitor General, Br Alojzy Warot, and the Assistant Visitor, Br Marcello Ghirlando, Br Massimo and Br Ignacio went to the Children's House, which for 17 years has welcomed Christian children (currently 26) from families in difficulty. The group then paused at the Shepherds' Field, where they remember the announcement of the birth of Jesus given by the angel to the shepherds of Bethlehem. Amongst other things, it was possible

to visit two chapels under construction financed with donations from institutions, associations and faithful from Croatia and Spain. This was followed by a visit to the Terra Sancta School in Bethlehem, the oldest of the Custody's schools, founded in 1598. They were met by the Director, Br George Haddad, the Minister General and the Vicar General were able to learn more about the difficulties that the inhabitants of Bethlehem are experiencing.

The group then moved to the Michele Piccirillo Centre, which employs disabled children in the creation of handicrafts and artistic artifacts, on sale at the Center itself. Afterwards, everyone participated in the daily procession of the friars to the Grotto of the Nativity, where the friars paused and prayed at the place where Jesus was born. A statue of the Child Jesus was blessed at the place of the manger to be donated to the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Child Jesus in Assisi, gathered in Chapter form the 21st April.

Br Massimo then presided over the Mass celebrated in the Basilica of the Agony, in Gethsemane; During the homily, he recalled how, from the arid earth, flowers can grow: “In trial, the attitude that Jesus indicates is not to resist against feelings of fear and anguish, but vigilance, to stay awake, not to let ourselves be overwhelmed by suffering”, encouraging those who live in the Holy Land and are going through a period of obvious difficulties. At the end of the Mass, the exhibition "LuxTenebra" on the Basilica of the Agony was inaugurated, a twin to the one inaugurated on the 16th April on Mt Tabor, which celebrates the centenary of the dedication of the basilica, recently restored. The Minister General was given the honour of "cutting the ribbon". The exhibition will remain open to the public inside the basilica until the end of the year.

*With the contribution of Marinella Bandini of [www.custodia.org](http://www.custodia.org)*

## GENERAL CURIA AGENDA

- From the 6th to 10th May 2024 in the Tempo Forte will take place at the Curia General.
- From the 8th to 12th May, Br Daniel N. Rodríguez Blanco, Director of the JPIC Office, and Br Francisco Gómez Vargas, Secretary General for Missions and Evangelization, will be in Marrakesh, Morocco: on the 8th and 9th May they will participate in the Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the Franciscan Network of the Mediterranean; from the 10th to the 12th they will speak at the first meeting of Franciscans working with migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean.
- From 10th to 18th May in the General Curia, the Definitory will meet with the new Provincial Ministers and Custodes.
- From the 20th to 28th May, the Minister General, Br Massimo Fusarelli, will visit the Province of the Holy Gospel in Mexico.
- From the 20th to 26th May, Br Daniel and Br Taucen Girsang, Vice- Director of the JPIC Office, will participate in the 2024 JPIC International Course, entitled "Greccio and La Verna. Sources of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation", which will be held at the Pontifical University Antonianum in Rome.
- From the 21st to 23rd May, Br César Kulkamp will participate remotely in the meeting of the Conference of Brazil and the Southern Cone to be held in São Paulo (Brazil).

23 – 27 APRIL, POLAND

## THE VISIT OF THE MINISTER GENERAL TO THE PROVINCE OF ASSUMPTION OF THE BVM

From the 23rd to the 27th April the Minister General Br Massimo Fusarelli together with the General Definitor, Br Konrad Cholewa visited the Province of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Katowice-Panewniki, in Poland.



It was an occasion for presenting to the brothers the necessity and urgent challenges which our Order needs to deal with today, and inviting them to the work of missionary evangelization (*Ad Gentes*).

The principle theme that characterised the visit of the Minister General was based on the words of Prophet Samuel: “Speak Lord, your servant is listening” (1 Sm 3,9). It was a moment of listening in order to respond to the challenges of the Lord God towards the friars of our Province, in collaboration with the Secular Franciscan Order which continues to be a living vehicle of the franciscan charism among the lay people of every situation immersed in the universality of the franciscan spirituality.

Br Massimo and Br Konrad met the friars of the Polish Province in Chorzów, Borki Wielkie and Katowice-Panewniki, the Chair of the Province of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Poland.

*Br Euzebiusz Skorupa, OFM*

MANILA (PHILIPPINES), APRIL 7-13

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

From April 7 to 13, the General Definitorium and the General Offices of Formation and Studies, Missions and Evangelization, and Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation met with the brothers of the entities of the Franciscan Conference of Asia and Oceania (FCAO). The event was hosted by the Province of San Pedro Bautista at Manila (Philippines).

After the first day, the meeting proceeded, alternating plenary moments, thematic meetings, formal and cultural visits to Manila and its surroundings.

In his message entitled, “Living and Bearing Witness to the Gospel in Pluralism”, addressed to the representatives of the Conference, the Minister General, Br Massimo Fusarelli, underlined how Christians are a minority in those places, and the Franciscans even more so. “We have the opportunity of being pilgrims and foreigners in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility (RB 6, 2). Following the Lord Jesus in his abasement as brothers and minors today, I believe, can mean becoming capable of remaining open, listening and communicating with many, without pretensions,” the Minister said, recalling also how the life of the Friars Minor in Asia and Oceania is characterized by a vast range of realities. Many brothers, in fact, are engaged in ordinary pastoral work, as well as in works

of charity, education and social assistance, trying to respond to the needs of the population. And all this invites the Order to respond as brothers and minors in a synodal manner, just as Pope Francis invites us to do in his encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.

Br Nikola Kozina e Br Baptist D’Souza, respectively Director and Vice Director of the Development Office, presented the objectives and the services which the office offers, providing practical advice on project proposals. The presentation of Br Albert Schmucki, Director of the Office for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, aroused much interest among the assembled brothers, given the priority that the Order is giving to this topic.

The representative of the General Secretariats of Formation and Studies and of Mission and Evangelization met with their counterparts, sharing lights and shadows, challenges and strengths, various proposals to discuss, enrich and incorporate into the listing of resolutions which the FCAO will have to take into consideration. The same occurred for the JPIC offices.

The General Definitors had discussions with the Asiatic entities, addressing their concerns and recognizing the salient points raised by their ministers. In the meet- >>

ing they also saw important documents such as resolutions, recommendations, and declarations. These documents were based on in-depth discussions during the secretaries' and facilitators' breakout sessions.

The brothers of the General Curia had the opportunity to visit some places of the cultural heritage of the Philippines, such as the historic Intramuros enclave of Manila, the cathedral of the city, the sanctuary of the parish of S. Antonio in Forbes Park, the recently built parish of Santa Chiara d'Assisi in Navotas-Malabon, the sanctuary of *Nostra Signora degli Abbandonati*. The group also visited a so-called "insertion community", a new concept of formation in which the brothers live and work with the poor while pursuing their theological studies.

[Read the complete text of the Minister General's intervention](#)

[Read the Final Document of the Meeting](#)



APRIL 2024

## REFLECTIONS BY BR MASSIMO



I was struck by Pope Francis' decision to declare 2024 the Year of Prayer, in preparation for the Jubilee of 2025 with the theme, "Pilgrims of Hope". To hope it is necessary to pray: it is certainly not something vague or abstract. Praying is an act of the whole person, body, soul and spirit. Christian spirituality is concrete. I offer some points:

*To pray is to recover the relationship with God and to revive faith.* Truly, prayer is the discovery of the simple truth that God loves and seeks each of us, gives us his very life. We can respond. How is prayer for me the nourishment of the life of faith?

*As disciples we ask Jesus to teach us to pray.*

The subject of prayer is "the holy operation of the Spirit of the Lord" in us. We need to start from here and also ask for the help of the Virgin Mary who according to St. Francis is profoundly united with the Holy Spirit. Do I still ask for the daily bread of prayer?

*Prayer also remains a struggle, against our idolatrous "ego" that wants to remain at the center of everything.* Do I rec-

ognize that the exodus from my "ego" is necessary for me to truly live?

*Prayer needs space and particular times.*

We cannot simply say that our work and service are prayer. This is true, but on condition that there are constant times for listening to the word of God and dialogue with Him. What do I think regarding this?

*Prayer is a deeply personal and therefore communal reality.*

Prayer helps us to believe and we can only believe by praying. If prayer dies, faith languishes, communion crumbles. What is there really inside our conflicts and lack of charity?

Prayer and faith are simply at the heart of our evangelical option as brothers and minors. I continually see how urgent it is among us to rediscover and to faithfully practice prayer, the source of our life and our joy.

I'm not talking about religious habits and rituals that have often become asphyxiated and formal. I speak of that desire which touches the deepest dimension of our being and therefore the relationship with the God of life.

We often pray little and pray badly, and therefore we believe little and badly. Consequently, we succeed little and badly to recognize what the Spirit asks of us today. Let's not fool ourselves. There is no rediscovery and reform of our life that does not start from here. Let's try to rediscover the centrality of prayer and we will be surprised at how we will live and act as a brotherhood. Let's dare more.

# OFM WORLD

Provincial Meeting for Missions and Evangelization, Prov. St. Philip of Jesus (Mexico)



Meeting of the Lay Brothers in Jerusalem, Custody of the Holy Land



Franciscan Youth Chapter, Prov. Of the Holy Name of Jesus (Italy)



First workshop of the new Franciscans International Europe Programme in Assisi



"Come and see 2024", Prov. St Peter Baptist (Philippines)



Invitation to the "Weekend with Francis of Assisi", 1st -2nd June in Marseilles, Prov. Blessed Duns Scotus (France)

## THE STIGMATA: FOLLOWING AND CONFORMING TO CHRIST KOINONIA N° 121 – 2024.1: YEAR 31

The Stigmata (from the Latin stigma, derived from the Greek στίγμα), are first and foremost marks or wounds that appear spontaneously on the body of some people, almost always ecstatic mystics and often preceded or accompanied by physical and moral torments. These wounds are similar to those that, according to traditional Christian iconography, were inflicted on Jesus of Nazareth at his crucifixion. The wounds generally appear on the hands, feet, and the right side, and sometimes also on the head and back, recalling the crowning with thorns and scourging of Jesus of Nazareth.

St Francis of Assisi, the most famous of the Church's stigmatised saints, had one and only one desire: to live in Christ and to be 'configured' to Him.

*"As we know, in that year the Lord gave him the mystical answer he was waiting for, even though he was tormented by so much anguish and uncertainty. On the morning of 17 September 1224, after he had reached the top of the mountain*

*of La Verna, in the amazement of a beautiful day filled with birdsong, and after his prayer had become for days and days more ardent, resembling an agony of love, suddenly, before his eyes, enraptured in the dazzle of Love, a Seraphim had appeared, beating the air with his six wings and bearing in his supernatural being the image of the Crucified One. Coming out of ecstasy, Francis felt himself penetrated by a multiple, piercing, and sweet pain: the wounds of the Passion were visible and bleeding on his hands, his feet, and his side. The witness of Christ bore in his flesh the stigmata of his God".*

Francis had received the stigmata of Christ's Passion on Mount La Verna, but they had remained hidden from the vast majority of people. Only two years later, on the day of St Francis's death, were "more than fifty friars and countless lay people" able to see and venerate his Stigmata . Celano writes In the eyes of all he appeared "as if he had just been taken down from the cross". In the dead Francis, they believed they were contemplating the dead Christ himself. In >>

this way, the example of St Francis shows us that the Christian way consists in the "imitation of Christ," who lived through love and died out of love, on the cross. The disciple "must, so to speak, enter into Christ with his whole being, he must 'appropriate' and assimilate the entire reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself".

As St John Paul II taught us: the cross, a sign of love and total self-giving, is the emblem of the disciple called to be configured to the glorious Christ.



## 1000 YOUNG PEOPLE TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE WITH THE EYES OF THE "POVERELLO" FRANCESCO LIVE IN FLORENCE (ITALY)

From the 11th to 14th April 2024, the city of Florence hosted 1000 young people from all over Italy involved in the "Francesco Live" event, organized in a particular way by the youth ministry of the Friars Minor of Tuscany (Province of St. Francis of the Stigmata), in collaboration with the Tuscan Committee for the 800th anniversary of the stigmata of Saint Francis, the Franciscan Youth of Italy, the *Opera di Santa Croce*, the community of the Conventual Friars Minor, the Municipality of Florence.

Four days of looking to the future in the name of Saint Francis of Assisi, in the year of the eighth centenary of the stigmata that the entire Franciscan family is celebrating: not just an event of the past to be celebrated, but a precious opportunity to question ourselves today on the theme of wounds that can become new life.

"We are really happy with the response that has arrived from all over Italy for this event," commented Br. Alessandro Martelli, head of the youth pastoral service of the Tuscan Friars Minor. "When we started organizing *Francesco Live* we felt the headiness of a great dream, which was trying to walk on fragile legs. The days were designed to encourage dialogue and the development of ideas as much as possible; all the initiatives brought young people into contact with university professors, economists, entertainment personalities and young entrepreneurs to discover the vision of Francis of Assisi on the challenges of our time: integral ecology, the economy of the future, the need for peace".



The event was inaugurated on Thursday the 11th April in the *Salone dei Cinquecento of Palazzo Vecchio* with the evening entitled "To dare: a verb for the future". Amongst the guests, Roberto Vecchioni, Italian singer-songwriter, writer and poet, in dialogue with Davide Scavolini (young singer-songwriter and counselor) and two students from *Rondine Cittadella della Pace*.

On Friday the 12th April in the Basilica of the Holy Cross, a plenary meeting on integral ecology was held, where young people were able to delve deeper into the topic thanks to the presence of professor Stefano Mancuso, professor at the Uni-

versity of Florence, founder of plant neurobiology, member of the Georgofili Academy and scientific director of the *Pianeta Terra Festival*; by Prof. Chiara Giaccardi, professor of sociology at the Catholic University of Milan who deals with communication processes and cultural transformations; of the young activist Giorgio Brizio, 22 years old,

who has been dealing with the climate crisis and migration for four years, carrying out political battles and raising awareness.

Pope Francis wrote a telegram to young people where he made a specific request: "Do not be overwhelmed by the difficulties and challenges of life... with a greater commitment to building a society founded on respect for human dignity and the defense of creation, to service of the most fragile and vulnerable".

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

FROM 15TH TO 26TH OF APRIL

## VISITS OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL FOR FORMATION AND STUDIES IN ASIA

## PROVINCE OF SAN MICHELE ARCANGELO – INDONESIA



From April 15 to 21, the Secretary General and Vice-Secretary for Formation and Studies, Br Darko Tepert and Br Hieronimus Yoseph Dei Rupa, completed a fraternal visit to the Province of San Michele Arcangelo in Indonesia.

During their visit, they first went to the island of Flores and to the postulancy house in Pagal, where they met the postulants, their formators and the brothers, members of the guardianate of Labuan Bajo. Then, at Labuan Bajo they visited the works in progress toward the construction of the new pre-postulancy house, and participated in the celebration of the renewal of vows of the Franciscan Family, presided by the bishop emeritus, Michael Cosmas Angkur.

In the ancient city of Yogyakarta they met another group of postulants and a group of temporary professed brothers with their formators.

At Depok they were welcomed into the novitiate house. The novices took advantage of the occasion to present their life in the novitiate, their commitments, and their artistic skills.

Finally, Br Darko and Br Hieronimus had the opportunity to visit the three houses of formation and the Philosophy Faculty "Driyarkara", where the students are trained. Together with the Minister Provincial, Br Mikhael Peruhe, they celebrated the holy mass with the temporary professed brothers. After the mass, during the meeting, as in the previous meetings in the formation houses, there ensued a dialogue on formation and on diverse aspects of the Franciscan life in the Province and in the whole world.

In the last meeting, with the Minister Provincial, the Provincial Secretary for Formation and Studies, the guardians of the houses of formation and the formators, Br Mikhael Peruhe

presented the situation of formation in the province, with its bright aspects and the challenges; afterwards, the Secretary for Formation and Studies, Br Titus Angga Restuaji, offered his report, followed by the other participants of the meeting. In the open dialogue, Br Darko and Br Hieronimus shared their impressions on proposed themes, offering information on the activities of the Secretariat and the General Curia.

The visit in Indonesia was a great opportunity for them to get to know the country, the cultures and above all the life of the brothers, who, for their part, welcomed their guests through traditional ceremonies.

## PROVINCE OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI (VIETNAM)



From the 21st to 26th April, the Secretary General for Formation and Studies, Br Darko Tepert, and the Deputy Secretary, Br Hieronimus Yoseph Dei Rupa, made a fraternal visit to the Province of St. Francis of Assisi in Vietnam.

On the 22nd April they went to the Postulancy House, where they met the postulants of the Province who live in a friary located in a rural area in southern Vietnam, where they take care of a small farm.

On the 23rd April, Br Darko and Br Hieronimus visited the Novitiate in the city of Đà Lạt. Together with the 13 novices and their formators, they celebrated Holy Mass in the friary chapel; thereafter, the novices shared the story of their vocation and the reason why they decided to enter the Order of Friars Minor. The Franciscan vocation and identity were then discussed. In the afternoon, the Master of Novices showed the guests the 4 hectares of land, mostly covered with woodland, where each generation of novices tries to leave an imprint, preparing small places for meditation.

On the 24th April, in the city of Ho Chi Minh, also >>

known by the ancient name of Sài Gòn, in the district of Thu Đức, a meeting was held with the numerous temporary professed friars, with whom it was possible to discuss again the issues concerning Franciscan identity. In the afternoon, Br Darko and Br Hieronimus met the Poor Clares, whose convent is located across the street from the friary. Br Hieronimus presided over the Mass, and then stayed in order to have a family meeting with the Sisters, sharing the experiences of their common vocation.

In the evening, also in the friary of Thu Đức, the temporary professed and aspirants prepared a cultural programme.

On the 25th April, after the celebration of Holy Mass with the temporarily professed, aspirants and their formators, presided over by Br Darko, a meeting was organized with the aspirants, who spend two years in the friary of Thu Đức before deciding whether or not to enter the Postulancy. On the same day, the guests of the General Curia visited the premises of the Philosophical-Theological Institute that has begun the process of affiliation to the Pontifical University of the *Antonianum*, whilst in

the afternoon they met all the formators of the Province, together with the Vicar Provincial.

In the evening they met with the Minister Provincial, Br Gioan Thiên Chúa Nguyen Phuroc, who had just returned from his visit to Laos and Cambodia, where he accompanied the friars of the General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization, Br Francisco Gómez Vargas and Br Dennis Tayo.

On the last day of their visit, the 26th April, accompanied by some friars of the Province, Br Darko and Br Hieronimus were able to visit the city of Sài Gòn, in particular its rich historical museum.

The visit was an excellent opportunity to learn about the reality of the Franciscan presence in Vietnam and above all the formation process that in recent decades has seen a great growth in vocations, but which, at the same time, must begin to think about how to deal with the changed social circumstances, linked to economic growth in the country.

POLAND, APRIL 8-11

## MEETING OF THE FORMATORS FROM THE NORTH-SLAVIC CONFERENCE



From the 8th to the 11th of April, at Góra Św Anny (Poland), 21 Friars from Poland, Slovakia, and the Ukraine, responsible for initial and ongoing formation, gathered together for their yearly Formators Workshop, organized by Br Samuel Cegłowski OFM, Secretary of Formation and Studies for the North-Slavic OFM Conference.

The meeting gave the brothers the opportunity to reflect on the Order's Formation process and to discuss ways that they might collaborate in the areas of initial and ongoing formation for Franciscan life. In addition to gathering for prayer and Eucharist, the Friars listened to this year's wonderful presentations by Sister Dolores Zok SSpS who spoke about, *"Discernment as a Journey to Interior Freedom"* and by Br Sergiusz Baldyga OFM whose talk, *"Omnes vocenter fratres minores"* reflected

on the many voices of the Friars Minor. Addressing some of the current and future challenges that we may face in Franciscan formation, Don Tomasz Knop offered his reflections in a talk entitled, *"Pathology in spirituality and formation: Challenges found in the attitude of today's candidates for religious life and priesthood."* A full day was dedicated to meetings with the Provincial Ministers, Br Alard Maliszewski and Br Witosław Szytk, as Friars shared with these servant brothers their experiences, their joys and the difficulties they have encountered working at the various levels of formation.

The gathering concluded with a Eucharistic celebration at the Basilica of Saint Anne, presided over by Br Alard Maliszewski, who offered some encouraging words in a brief homily that was also geared towards the Friars.



SAMOBOR, 19TH - 21ST APRIL

## MEETING OF STUDENT FRIARS OF ALL OBEДИENCES IN CROATIA

On the occasion of the Franciscan Centenaries, for the first time a meeting of the student friars of all obediences (OFM, OFM conv, OFM cap, TOR) belonging to the Croatian-speaking Franciscan Provinces in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was organized.

The meeting, organized by the Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius, took place from 19th -21st April in Samobor (Croatia), in the Tabor Shelter. A total of about 70 friars participated, including friars from various OFM Provinces, in addition to the host one: "The Most Holy Redeemer" based in Split, "St. Jerome" (Dalmatia and Istria) based in Zadar, "The Exaltation of the Holy Cross" /Bosnia Argentina (Bosnia and Herzegovina, based in Sarajevo), "The Assumption of the BVM" (Bosnia and Herzegovina, based in Mostar). The friars of the Croatian Province of the Conventual Franciscans "St. Jerome", the Croatian Province of the Capuchin Friars Minor "St. Leopold Bogdan Mandić", as well as the Province of the Franciscans of the Third Order Regular also participated. The meeting was organized so that the Franciscan communities of the Croatian-speaking area could get to know each other better and develop even

more fraternal relations, one of the fundamental elements of our charism. At the centre of the programme was common prayer, that is, the Liturgy of the Hours, which was celebrated together over the three days, and Holy Mass, celebrated on Saturday and Sunday together with the faithful.

For more information: [www.ofm.org](http://www.ofm.org)

*With the contribution of Br Franjo Vuk, OFM.*

*Coordinator of the South Slavic Conference for Education and Studies*



## VISIT TO THE PROVINCE OF SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL GSME AND JPIC OFFICE IN INDONESIA



The General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization (SGME), in the persons of the Secretary, Br Francisco Gómez, and the Animator, Br Dennis Tayo, together with the General Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), composed of the Director, Br Daniel Rodríguez Blanco, and his deputy, Br Taucen Girsang, visited the Franciscan Province of St Michael the Archangel in Indonesia from 1 to 6 April.

The activities within the program were set up by the host Province including meetings with brothers and learning about some experiences. In each of item program, hospitality and a warm welcome were manifested in rituals, food, souvenirs and fraternal smiles.

On the morning of April 3, a dialogue was held with the Minister Provincial, Br Michael Peruhe, the Vicar Provincial, Br Daniel Klau Nahak and the Secretary provincial of Mission and Evangelization, Br Agustinus Nggame, and the animators and staff of the JPIC, as well as some friars working in schools, orphanages, parishes, and others. Ongoing projects undertaken by the animation bodies of the General Curia and the Province were mutually shared. Likewise, the local works being done by the brothers of the Province at various levels were respectively valued.

In the afternoon, they visited a Muslim community that develops a life around integral ecology and art. They made the decision and commitment to transform a city garbage dump into a green zone like a protected forest along the Ciliwung river, the largest river in Jakarta. At six o'clock in the afternoon, as the Ramadhan fast-breaking time ends, a bountiful dinner was shared.

The next day, early in the morning the brothers traveled to Carceri Fraternity in Singdanglaya, West Java, which is in a hilly area with green tea plantations. This fraternity develops eco-pastoral programs that consisting of the cultivation of flowers, coffee, fruits and vegetables by some families in order to raise >>

awareness of the importance of caring for the common home and gaining economic resources.

Meanwhile, on the morning of April 5, a fruitful meeting was held with the fraternity of the novitiate in Depok, West Java. Novices learned about the new facilities of the formation house and greeted the elderly brothers who live next to the novitiate. Furthermore, the meeting with the friars in temporary profession took place in the afternoon. The topics of mission, evangelization and JPIC were addressed. Then a dialogue was opened in which the participating brothers could share their wishes, aspirations and doubts. On April 6, Br Taucen and Br Daniel had a meeting with the Inter-Francis-

can Commission for JPIC of Indonesia at the San Pascual Bailón Parish. The meeting presented the global and local challenges being faced and the responses being given at various levels.

At the end of the visit, the brothers of the General Curia expressed their gratitude to the Province of Saint Michael the Arcángel for the important work they carry out with its roadmap in different areas of evangelization, mission and JPIC materialized in sending friars to various missions of the Order, the eco-projects, pastoral care, interreligious dialogue, care for orphans and the poor, contributions to the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the *Ratio Evangelizationis*, synergy with the Franciscan family.

PROVINCE OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY, CHILE  
**FIRST NATIONAL MEETING OF THE PEACE CIRCLES**

**F**rom April 12 to 14, in accordance with the provincial plan of animation (JPIC 2022-2024), the first national meeting of the Peace Circles, organized by the brothers of the Province of the Most Holy Trinity, took place in Chile.

Among its primary objectives: the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence and the construction of a culture free from hatred.

The meeting brought together the communities of Castro, Angol, Parral and Mostazel, for a total of 16 participants, including Br Julio Campos OFM, Br Máximo Cavieres OFM, and Br Jaime Campos OFM, of the provincial JPIC staff, and 13 lay persons.

JESUS AT THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING

One of the salient moments of the meeting was the online presentation from Colombia of the theologian Br Juan Rendón OFM, on the theme “Foundations for a culture of peace”. He began by recalling the meeting of the Holy Father with some brothers of the Tuscany Province (Italy) in observance of the 8th centenary of the gift of the Stigmata which St. Francis received on September 14, 1224. “For Pope Francis, the Stigmata recall the pain suffered by Jesus in his flesh for our love and our salvation, but they are also the sign of the Paschal victory: precisely through the wounds, the mercy of the Risen One crucified moves toward us, as if by channels”, observed Br Juan. Subsequently he analyzed the relevant aspects of the Medellin Conference, the Extraordinary Chapter of the Order in Medellin, and the General Chapter of Madrid, underlining that, to be in line with the foundations of JPIC and to be builders of peace, it is very important to return to the social and theological geography, and to return to where Jesus is, “which places

us definitively, not as sporadic visitors, much less as benefactors of the poor or victims of any system. It makes us citizens of the world, inserting us into its dynamics, its languages, its organizations”, he said.

Finally, he issued a challenge. “We are before St Francis and Francis. Before Francis and Franciscanism. Faced with the institution and the charism. We have the duty and obligation to practice Franciscanism starting from what has been called the DNA of Franciscan spirituality, from JPIC”, concluded Br Juan Rendón.

For more information: [www.ofm.org](http://www.ofm.org)

*Also contributing Br Ronald Villalobos A., OFM*



## FRANCISCAN PROVINCE OF THE ASSUMPTION OF RIO DE LA PLATA CHAPTER OF MATS 2024 IN ARGENTINA-PARAGUAY



At the Franciscan Residence of St Anthony of Arredondo, Córdoba (Argentina), from February 25th to 28th, 2024, the Provincial Chapter of Mats was held in a synodal modality, a historical milestone for the life of our Province of the Assumption of Río de la Plata and for the entire Church. Since last year, a team of friars and lay people was formed who began to plan the organization of the meeting. During that preparation time, materials were

sent to each fraternity of the Province, volunteers from Provincial Projects, members of the Secular Institute, the Poor Clare nuns, lay people and those who follow our charism, with the invitation to remain focused on three questions that the Franciscan Order proposed: What characteristics of the charisma should we open ourselves up to today? What is the prophetic model of brotherhood in minority? And who and how do we serve?

Everything collected formed part of the base material for the work in the Chapter itself, where 14 friars and 13 lay people concluded the meeting by writing up and approving 10 specific proposals, which form part of the final document.

At the conclusion of these days of prayer and fraternal life, we recognized the richness and possibility of sharing life, without ceasing to see the difficulties we are faced with different lifestyles, languages, life-journeys and worldviews.

We continue to value it as a new path that can open up the life of our charisma in Argentina and Paraguay. We feel that this sharing, this closer living together offers a real possibility of deepening our commitment of following of Jesus in the light of Francis and Clare of Assisi.

*Br Diego Omar Figueroa, OFM*

## PROVINCE OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI THE MEETING OF THE GUARDIANS IN POLAND

On 10th and 11th of April 2024 the meeting of the Superiors of the Province of St. Francis of Assisi in Poland took place at Wejherowo.

The event was fraternal and formative. It was a moment of common prayer, dialogue and sharing of experiences.

Within the scope of workshops, the guardians expressed the importance of “emphatic and non-violent communication for the Christians.” The formation was carried out by Doctor Elżbieta Jurzysta (an educator, mediator and psychologist).

During the meeting, Br Maciej Olszewski, Guardian of the Generalate, had a presentation on the service of the superior in the documents of the Order; Br Bernard Marciniak, the Provincial Bursar, presented the financial situation of the Provincial Curia and Minister Provincial, Br Leonard Bie-

lecki, expressed his observations and the actual challenges of the Province after his visit.

*Br Leonard Bielecki, OFM, Minister Provincial*



APRIL 22 - 24, LA VERNA  
**COMPI LAY BROTHER GATHERING**



From the 22nd to the 24th of April, the first lay brothers of the COMPI conference took place, with about 40 brothers from 9 Provinces in attendance, about a third of the lay brothers that make up the conference. The title chosen for the gathering was “Sic et simpliciter”, or “Simply and Fully.” This expression represents well what these days were all about, days that included a simple renewal of the profession of the Rule by which the Friars Minor enter a life and vocation complete in itself, striving to follow the Lord Jesus in simplicity, holding nothing back for themselves.

The logo chosen for the event took the “S” from each word of the Latin title and wrapped them together into a strand of DNA, a symbolic way of saying that the lay brother vocation is the core, the DNA, of the Friar Minor vocation. As lay

brothers of COMPI, the Friars offer a joyful service to the Order and to the world, believing that they must know, live, and announce their identity as Friars Minor “sic et simpliciter” in the certainty that embracing such a vocation will always be a gift and benefit to the Church of the day.

The gathering took place in the Sanctuary of LaVerna, a place celebrating all throughout this year of 2024 the centenary of the Sacred Stigmata. The warm, fraternal welcome by the community that cares for the sanctuary on that holy mountain started off beautifully the two days that were filled with precious moments of personal and communal prayer and sharing. With the Sacred Stigmata as the theme, Br Bill Short and Definitor General Br Cesare Vaiani offered input that was discussed in small groups and complemented by a message from Minister General Br Massimo Fusarelli.

Great moments of fraternity ensued and the fruits of the gathering were written up in the form of simple, concrete proposals to be brought to the upcoming 2025 Lay Brother International Convention, which will include four delegates from this conference.

The brothers returned to their fraternities with grateful hearts to the Father of all Mercy, to the hosting fraternity of Mount La Verna, and to all the brothers who organized this gathering. All who participated felt the joy of being “brothers in Christ, profoundly united in He who is the first born of many brothers.”

ASSISI, APRIL 8 - 12  
**COTAF, A BROTHERLY MEETING IN ASSISI**



From April 8 to 12, COTAF held its (lay) brother conference at *Domus Madonna delle Rose* of our Franciscan Sisters Missionaries of Mary (FMM) in Santa Maria degli Angeli, Assisi. Brothers from all seven entities (Romania, Hungary, Austria, Switzerland, Germany, France/Wallonia, and the Netherlands/Flanders) were present. There were 23 brothers in total. The participating brothers were between 75 and 33 years old. There are

a total of about 150 brothers within COTAF, but most of them are over 80 years old. When one reaches such ages, these kinds of trips and conferences quickly become too much.

Prior to the conference, a considerable discussion had taken place, partly in response to the questionnaire from the general board, as to whether such a meeting was necessary. Within the provinces there was fear that the order was re-creating the old brother-father division. A division that was difficult to overcome within COTAF in the second half of the last century. The fact that there were 23 participants was mainly due to the fact that these brothers enjoyed experiencing the international character of the order, but also because they know that in other parts of the world there is still a lot to do around the vocation to brotherhood. >>

**BROTHER**

An important theme, also in response to the questionnaire, was how should we be called. The term 'lay brother' is seen as old-fashioned, but also misleading. In normal language, a 'layman' is someone who knows nothing about a particular subject. You could therefore interpret 'lay brother' as a somewhat 'simple brother'. That is by no means the case, as many of those present have had an excellent education and can be seen as professionals in their profession: as a nurse, teacher, communications officer, school leader, and so on. In addition, it is our brothers and sisters of the OFS who often emphasize that they are the true lay sisters and lay brothers of the Franciscan family.

In the past the term 'brother-non-priest' had also come into use. This term also meets with strong resistance, because why would you describe yourself by what you are not (non-black-haired, non-female, instead of blond and male...). Ultimately, we feel best when we are simply called "brothers." The others in the order can then call themselves 'brother-deacon', 'brother-priest' or 'brother-bishop'. The term 'father' has fallen into disuse in most COTAF provinces. In any case, that is the reason why we will consistently call ourselves 'brother' in this message.

**BACK TO THE ROOTS: FRATERNAL ORDER, A BROTHERHOOD**

During the days it became clear that not everything within COTAF is as you would wish. People from outside often think that we are all priests. And if they already know that our order has two vocations, the question quickly becomes: "are you a priest or just a lay brother?" What do you mean 'only'? People seem much more aware that the Roman Catholic Church has priests and sisters.

Sometimes we have to call ourselves "male sisters" or justify why we are not priests. Which are negative experiences to us, as if we are 'defected friars' (brothers-priest can do every job, we cannot celebrate Mass, hear confessions) instead of an equal part of the order and the church as a whole.

We therefore call on our order to act less like a clerical order. Francis and his first companions were almost without priests. Over the course of history, the Church has come to see the Franciscans as a wonderful source of parish pastoral tasks. That is seriously a narrowing of the spirituality of our order. If we want to take the roots of our order seriously, we must regard ourselves as a fraternal order, a brotherhood.

The order must more strongly recognize and make visible throughout the world that we are one order, with two equal types of vocations, among the many equal vocations that the Church knows (vocation to marriage, diaconship, as a consecrated virgin, priest, sister and therefore brother). After all, before God his children are all equal.

For more information: [www.ofm.org](http://www.ofm.org)

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**DECEASED BROTHERS \***

- 14th April: Br José Manuel Barrio Fernández, Missionary Prov. St Anthony (Bolivia)
- 11th April: Br Ciro Iodice, Prov. Immaculate Conception (USA)
- 7th April: Br Bartholomäus Frech, Prov. St. Elisabeth (Germany)
- 30th March: Br Jan Berchmans Romuald Wozniak, Prov. Our Lady of the Angels (Poland)
- 20th March: Br Roland Bonenfant, Holy Spirit Province (Canada)
- 24th February: Br Bertrand Sylvain, Holy Spirit Province (Canada)
- 13 March: Br. Samuel [Bernardino] Cavero Miguel, Prov. Immaculate Conception of the BVM (Spain)
- 15 de April: Br. Nikica Zlatunić, Prov. Holy Cross Bosnae Argentinae (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

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**OFM**  
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