

## IN SUPPORT OF THE FRANCISCAN MISSIONS, 12TH – 14TH JUNE 2024 OFM FUNDRAISING PARTNERS MEETING 2024



*co-existed, so united in love, available in mutual giving and forgiveness, so united in mercy and mutual help, in sharing the joys, sufferings and experiences of life."*

To continue to help and support these Franciscan Missions, from the 12th to 14th June at the General Curia, the OFM Fundraising Partners Meeting was held, the annual meeting between the three non-profit organizations dedicated to fundraising and supporting Franciscan projects: General Secretariat of Franciscan Missions (GSFM) in Waterford (USA), Franziskaner Helfen in Bonn (Germany) and the OFM Fraternitas Foundation in Rome (Italy). with the participation of the Development Office and numerous representatives of the offices of the General Curia and the General Definitory.

**T**he Franciscan Missions are committed to spreading the message of the Gospel wherever its missionaries are. To respond to the growing demand for solidarity, the missionary activity of the OFM promotes respect for human rights, education, justice and environmental protection for fraternal and peaceful coexistence.

In fact, in Pope Francis' address on the occasion of the 2015 General Chapter we read: *"In the history of the origins, Christians lived fraternal communion to such an extent - as the Acts of the Apostles testify (Acts 2:44; 4:32) - to be an eloquent and attractive sign of unity and charity. People were struck by the way Christians lived and*

Several topics were discussed in the sessions of the meeting. Br. Darko Tepert, Secretary General for Formation and Studies, illustrated the current state of initial and ongoing formation in the various Franciscan Entities and Study Centres, emphasizing the need to form the formators of the new friars, especially in the emerging realities of the Order. Subsequently, each partner made a brief presentation on the projects that are financed, according to the various types: education, basic needs, human rights, emergencies, pastoral care, training and the countries in which they operate. >>>

## GENERAL CURIA AGENDA

- From the 1st to 6th July, Br. Albert Schmucki, Definitor General, is in Innichen/S. Candido (South Tyrol) at the "Summercamp" for the Provincial Definitors of COTAF.
- On the 2nd July, Br. Daniel N. Rodríguez Blanco will be together with some representatives of the Embassy of Chile to the Holy See, Caritas Internationalis and the Jesuit Refugee Service in the St. Callistus Palace in Vatican City for the Cartagena + 40 process: Chile's Declaration and Action Plan 2024 – 2034.
- From 8 to 12 July, the Definitory will meet with the new

Visitors General in the Curia in Rome.

- From the 14th to 19th July, the General Definitory, the Secretariat for Formation and Studies, Br. Paolo Zampolini, Br. Casey Cole, Msgr. Mario Vaccari, OFM, together with more than 150 temporary professed of Europe with some formators will be at the Domus Pacis in Assisi for the meeting of the Temporary Professed Friars of Europe.
- From the 15th to 26th July, the Tempo Forte will be held at the General Curia

Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General of the OFM, in his speech focused on the link between mission and fundraising and on how one can be friars and minors in this field. On the occasion of his fraternal visits, he experienced first-hand the effectiveness of fundraising, especially in the parts of the world affected by war, hunger and social inequality, through small and large projects initiated and supported, which allowed the friars to meet, listen to and serve the cry and suffering of so many brothers and sisters. *"I recognize you as collaborators in the humble desire to let a little hope and peace shine in the world," said Br. Massimo, "helping to sustain the foundations for a more just and fraternal society. Your work increases and strengthens the great project of universal brotherhood to which we all firmly adhere."*

As friars and minors, and as St. Francis did with almsgiving, the Minister recalled, even today we can be Christian and Franciscan missionaries trying to give and find a balance

between the inequalities of the world: in the fields of food, housing, education. In this regard, he underlined the importance of scholarships in favor of entities that have many vocations, but do not have the economic means to be able to support them. With the aim of a more fraternal and humane economy, placed at the service of social progress that can include all peoples, leaving no one behind.

To further support the Franciscan Missions in places which are most in need in the world, it has been proposed to organize a conference in 2025 to help the entities that support Franciscan projects, with the aim of creating a Network among OFM Partners, to encourage the training of fundraisers and share experiences.

Download the Message of the Minister General: [Italiano](#) - [English](#) - [Español](#) - [Français](#)

## THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS HAS AUTHORIZED NEW BEATIFICATIONS

On the 20th June 2024, the Holy Father Francis received in audience Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, and authorized the promulgation of the following decree concerning the General Postulation of the Friars Minor, concerning two martyrs, a Friar Minor, and a contemplative religious.

### VENERABLE CONSTANCE ZAULI, APPROVAL OF THE DECREE OF VIRTUE



The Decree contains, amongst others, the approval of the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Maria Costanza Zauli (née Palma Pasqua), Foundress of the Handmaids Adorers of the Blessed Sacrament of Bologna, born in Faenza on the 17th April 1886 and died in Bologna on the 28th April 1954.

Consecrated to the Lord in the Congregation of the Handmaids of the Sacred Heart in Bologna in 1908, Mother Maria Costanza Zauli was favoured by an intense mystical life. A long period of physical suffering, faced in prayer and abandonment to the will of God, matured the idea of a new foundation entirely dedicated to the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The Congregation of the Handmaids Adorers

of the Blessed Sacrament began under her leadership in Bologna in 1933. From that moment on, worship was the heart and purpose of her life. In the long hours spent in front of the tabernacle, Mother Constance learned more and more every day to identify herself with Jesus the Host, and with Him to offer the Father the prayer of praise, thanksgiving, intercession and reparation for all humanity.

Her Cause for Beatification was initially entrusted to Rev. Fr. Germano Cerafoli, OFM and later to Rev. Fr. Luca De Rosa, OFM, Postulator General of the Order, who signed the *Positio super vita et virtutibus* in 2002.

### VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD ISAIAH COLUMBRO, OFM, APPROVAL OF THE DECREE OF VIRTUE

The Decree contains, amongst others, the approval of the heroic virtues of the Servant of God Isaiah Columbro (born Nicola Antonio Maria), a professed priest of the Order of Friars Minor, born in Foglianise, Diocese of Benevento, on the 11th February 1908 and died in Vitulano, in the same Diocese, on the 13th July 2004.

Entering the Province of Our Lady of Graces of the Friars Minor of Irpinia and Sannio in 1924, >>

Father Isaia Columbro spent his life between the friary of the Santissima Annunziata in Vitulano and that of Our Lady of Graces in Benevento. In the humble daily life of the roles assigned to him, from assistant master to master of novices and clerics, from guardian to assistant parish priest and parish priest, from confessor to exorcist, he acted with generosity, with industriousness, with fidelity. To every task entrusted to him by his superiors he was able to add a surplus of prayer, of charity towards God and neighbour, which did not go unnoticed by his confreres and many of the faithful.



Those who had the opportunity to meet him clearly perceived the breath of God's spirit in his gestures, in his acts, in his welcoming humility, in his generous availability, in his constant trust in providence, in his boundless charity, in his disarming poverty.

As he advanced in years, he was forced for health reasons to live a more withdrawn life, which allowed him to intensify his prayer and devote himself full-time to confession and to listening to the penitents, who were increasingly numerous.

At the ripe old age of 96, he died peacefully in his cell in the friary of Vitulano on the 13th July, 2004, whilst he was praying.

The Cause for his Beatification was initiated in 2014.

#### VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD GJON GAZULLI, APPROVAL OF THE DECREE OF MARTYRDOM



The Decree contains, amongst others, the approval of the martyrdom of the Servant of God Gjon Gazulli, diocesan priest, born in Dajç di Zadriman, diocese of Sappa, Albania, on the 26th March, 1893, and killed in hatred of the faith in Shkodra on the 5th March, 1927. Fr Gjon Gazulli, a priest of the diocese

of Sappa carried out his ministry as parish priest in Gjader, Qelëz, and then, from 1925, in Koman. His martyrdom dates back to the regime of Achmet Zogu, president of the Republic of Albania from January 1925, who was hostile to the Catholic clergy.

Fr Gazulli in his pastoral action was inspired by the nascent social doctrine of the Church, so his work was not well regarded by the regime. When a revolt against Zogu broke out in Dukagjin in November 1926, the Servant of God was unjustly accused of fomenting it and was arrested on the 28th December, 1926. In reality, the accusation was a pretext because the odium fidei against him stemmed from his opposition to the government's plan to suppress Catholic schools. He was sentenced to death by a sentence pronounced by the political court on the 10th February, 1927. The sentence by hanging was carried out publicly on the 5th March, 1927. Before dying, the Servant of God confirmed his full adherence to Christ by saying: "I die innocent. Long live Christ, our King! Long live the Catholic Church! Long live the Pope! Long live Albania and the real Albanians!"

His death was perceived by the faithful as a true martyrdom and his fame remained alive even during the years of communist persecution in Albania. The tomb of the Servant of God in the cemetery of Shkodra is constantly visited and many graces have been received through his intercession. The Cause of Gjon Gazulli began in 2002 and, like the other Causes of Beatification of the Martyrs of the Archdiocese of Shkodra Pult, was entrusted to the Postulator General of the Order of Friars Minor, Rev. Fr. Luca M. De Rosa.

#### VENERABLE SERVANT OF GOD LUIGI PALIĆ (IN ALBANIAN PALIQ), APPROVAL OF THE DECREE OF MARTYRDOM

The Decree contains, amongst others, the approval of the martyrdom of the Servant of God Luigi (alias Matteo) Palić, in Albanian Paliq, professed priest of the Order of Friars Minor, born in Janievo, Archdiocese of Skopje, Kosovo, on the 20th February 1877 and killed in hatred of the faith in Janosh, Archdiocese of Skopje, on the 7th March 1913.

The martyrdom of Venerable Luigi Palić or Paliq, professed priest of the Province of the Friars Minor of the Annunciation in Albania, took place during the First Balkan War 1912-1913 when the territory of the Parish of Pejë, Archdiocese of Skopje, where he worked, was occupied by Montenegro, an ally of Serbia. In this context, there was pressure on the Muslim and Catholic population to convert to Orthodoxy. The Servant of God urged both Catholics >>

and Muslims to remain faithful to their beliefs. The protests of Fr. Palić's ill-treatment and violence inflicted by soldiers on the population led the persecutors to arrest him on the false charge of instigating the population not to surrender their weapons. The Servant of God was a virtuous priest, esteemed by the people. Several times he had been urged to flee because he was wanted, but he had always refused in order to continue to carry out his mission in fidelity and out of love for the persecuted people.

On the 4th March, 1913, he was arrested. He was asked to renounce his Catholic faith and convert to Orthodoxy, but he steadfastly refused. On the 7th March, 1913, on the way to Pejë along with other prisoners to stand trial,

he was separated from the other prisoners and stripped of his religious habit. As he was about to be shot, he confirmed his full readiness to die for Christ and for the Church, crying: "O Jesus, let it be for Thy love!"

The Cause of Recognition of Martyrdom began in the Diocese of Shkodra in 2002.



THE CELEBRATION WAS PRESIDED OVER BY BR. MASSIMO FUSARELLI IN WŁOCŁAWEK (POLAND)  
**THANKSGIVING FOR THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEATIFICATION OF FIVE OFM MARTYRS**



On the 23rd June, the Minister General presided in Włocławek, Poland at the solemn thanksgiving celebration for the 25th anniversary of the beatification of five Friars Minor, which took place in Warsaw on the 13th June 1999, when St. John Paul II beatified 108 martyrs of the Second World War. The

beatified friars are: Br. Jan (Narcissus) Turchan, OFM, Br. Wojciech (Cristino) Gondek, OFM, Br. Jan (Martino) Oprządek, OFM and Br. Jan (Bruno) Zembol, OFM, of the Province of Our

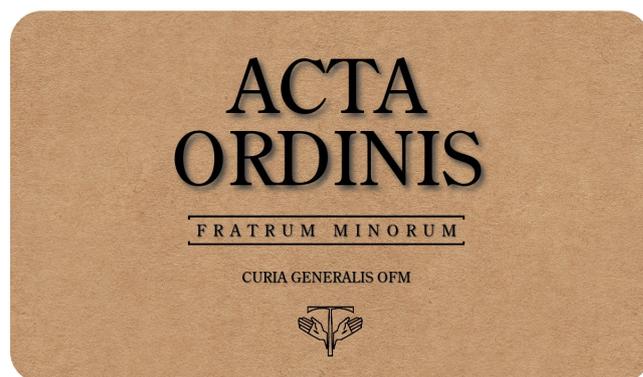
Lady of the Angels; Br. Jakub (Anastasio) Pankiewicz, OFM, of the Province of the Immaculate Conception.

In the church of the Friars Minor in Włocławek there is an altar dedicated to all five: three of them were deported to Dachau from Włocławek: Br. Narcissus, guardian, Br. Cristino, the Vicar, Br. Marino; Br. Bruno was deported from another friary of the Friars Minor, that of Chełm. Br. Anastasio was for some years Master of novices in the friary of Włocławek, but was deported from Łódź. All of them died in the Dachau concentration camp in the terrible year of 1942. They accepted death and various tortures and sufferings in faith. Their final days were in the concentration camp for fidelity to obedience to serve the People of God to the end: all of them had the opportunity to escape, leaving their friaries and pastoral activity, but they chose not to do so.

JANUARY - APRIL 2024  
**ACTA ORDINIS FRATRUM MINORUM 2024/1**

Acta Ordinis Fratrum Minorum is available online:

An. CXLIII – Ianuarii-Aprilis 2024 – N. 1



# OFM WORLD

Franciscan Vocation Day (Chile)



Evening "Gifra Pub" (Sicily)



Conference about the Little Flowers of St Francis for Sudanese (Sudan)



World Refugee Day 2024 (Asia e Africa)



10th Franciscan March in Jordan on Mount Nebo (Holy Land)



Provincial Meeting of Catechesis, Prov. St Paul the Apostle (Colombia)

## MADRID, SPAIN

### CHAPTER OF THE MATS OF THE PROVINCE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BVM

From 4th to 7th June, the Chapter of Mats of the Province of the Immaculate Conception was held in Madrid. It brought together thirty-four capitulars and officials, including friars, brothers of the OFS and religious sisters. It was a meeting point to discuss and reflect on the three central aspects proposed by the Order: Charism, Communion and Mission.

The afternoon of the 4th June began with the invocation of the Holy Spirit and then the intervention of the Minister Provincial, Br. Joaquín Zurera Ribó, placing the meeting in the framework of the 800 years of 1223 until the glorious transit, at sunset on the 3rd October, 1226.

#### WORK OF THE LOCAL FRATERNITIES

In the previous three months, the fraternities of the Province had carried out preliminary work by applying the DAFO of

the marras to the panorama of the three nuclei (Charism, Communion and Mission), in the friaries and in the Province, emphasizing perspectives, unmasking reticence and formulating proposals.

#### CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT

On the 5th June, the study of the first nucleus related to the charism was presented, seen from five aspects with the contributions or diagnoses of the fraternities. Then, divided into four groups with secretary and moderator, the contributions of the fraternities were read and reviewed, and in the afternoon the summaries of each group were presented in plenary.

Thursday the 6th June, was dedicated to the second nucleus: communion; the exhortation in the hall was entrusted to Sr. Valeria Francisca Pasquali, of the Alcantarine >>

Franciscans Sisters, *"in the heart of the Chapter,"* Sr. Valeria emphasized, on a treasure that we carry in clay vessels. The treasure is none other than the badge of the charism in the history of consecrated life: fraternal life in minority. The work was done in three sessions.

On the third and final day of the Chapter, Friday, the 7th June, was dedicated to the third nucleus, that of the Mission, precisely the year in which five centuries of those twelve

Discalced friars who, starting from Spain, brought evangelization to the American continent are celebrated. In the chapter house, the brothers of the SFO Manuel Sánchez Barranco and Andrés Francisco Gandolfo Santonja related to the mission highlighted the phrase "our cloister is the world." At the end of the day, as in the previous days, the

moderator of ongoing formation, Br. Juan José Rodríguez, read the last paragraph of the final document.

*Taken from the chronicle of Br. Antonio Arévalo Sánchez OFM, Provincial Secretary*



## 9TH -13TH JUNE, PROVINCE OF ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS (RDC) THE CHAPTER OF MATS IN GREAT KASAI

In view of the preparation of the Chapter of Mats for the whole Franciscan Family in the world which will take place from the 2nd to the 8th of June 2025 in Assisi, the Franciscan Family of Kasai celebrated its chapter of mats from the 9th to 13th of June 2024.

The Great Kasai is the region that stretches from the central to the southeastern part of Democratic Republic of Congo, which has the oldest presence of Secular Franciscan Order in the country. Thanks for the missionary activities of Br. François-Marie Lufuluabo, the first friar from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He is the initiator of "Congolese African Franciscanism" an experience lived in fidelity to the Franciscan, Congolese and African values.

This makes Kasai a land where the Franciscan presence vibrant and comprise the following: Clerics and Laity, Franciscan Youth, Religious men and women both contemplative and active.

During the chapter of mats almost 300 people gathered at the monastery of the Poor Clare's (Mamu wa Bupole) in Mbujimayi. We appreciate the presence of Br. Amaral Bernardo Amaral the General Visitor from the autonomous Custody of St. Clare in Mozambique.

The theme of our chapter was "Re- interpreting our Franciscan Presence in Great Kasai. Where do we come from? Where are we? Where are we going?" On Sunday

9th of June Br. Grégoire Bowa, the Minister Provincial, opened the chapter with his presentation entitled "The fraternity in a large Franciscan family of Great Kasai". He spoke of the fraternity as it is articulated in legislative and spiritual texts. He pointed out the challenges to fraternal life which are indifference, prejudices, contempt, the fear of the other and individualism.

On 10th June Sr Marie Keta from the Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Spirit spoke of the "Visibility and the impact of the Franciscans in Great Kasai". According to Sr. Marie, the visibility can be noticed through the realization of various pastoral activities whose motivation is the service of God through evangelization of people especially the poor. These are the visible signs of communion and the love of Christ.

On Tuesday 11th June Sr. Marie Goretti Mujinga, from the Poor Clare's, spoke on the importance of prayer in fraternities demonstrating the central characteristics of prayer in the life of the Franciscans. St. Francis of Assisi was used as an example, indicating that Franciscan vocation is essentially, contemplation, praise and relationship with God.

Her presentation was brought into completion by Br. Adrien Kabambi whose title was: "The heredity of prayer according to Br. François-Marie Lufuluabo". He evidenced that through prayer life and penance, Br. François-Marie introduced charismatic Franciscan prayer which has become a place of manifestation for Franciscan presence >>

in Kasai. On 12th June Br. Pierre Kabamba, OFM and Sr. Adolphine Elisabeth Mutamba from the Stigmantine Sisters, developed the theme: "Franciscan life in Great Kasai in relation to the stigmata of St. Francis of Assisi". Finally, on Thursday 13 June, the closing mass was presided by the Minister provincial, Br. Grégoire Bowa.

The chapter of mats which involved the whole Franciscan family of Great Kasai was the first in history since the Province of Our Lady of the Angels was on 16th February 2015. It was a moment of fraternal sharing, reflection, prayer and study. It will remain as a sign of development for the Franciscan Family in Great Kasai.

This synthesis was composed by various comments collected by Br. Théodore Kabongo, and Sr. Adolphine Elisabeth Mutamba.

*Br. Adélard-Marie Ntumba, OFM  
Provincial Secretary, from the Province of Our Lady of the Angels (RDC)*



TARANTO, 14TH –16TH JUNE 2024

## CHAPTER OF THE MATS OF THE TWO PROVINCES OF PUGLIA (ITALY)

The Chapter of the Mats of the Friars of the two provinces of Puglia (Italy) took place in Taranto from the 14th to 16th June, and saw the participation of Franciscan friars, nuns and lay people from the Provinces of St. Michael the Archangel and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The participants dedicated themselves to listening to the changes taking place in the contemporary world, trying to respond to the sufferings and current challenges. The aim of the Chapter was to overcome indifference and promote peace and reconciliation, through a profound rethinking of being Franciscans in today's context.

The chapter concluded with the presentation of the final document, the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, and the march for peace through the streets of the historic centre of Taranto, organized by the Franciscan Youth.

The final document, presented during the closing ceremony, charts a clear path for the future of the Order, emphasizing the importance of continuous dialogue and concrete action to address global challenges. Amongst the highlights of the document are the promotion of peace initiatives, support for the most vulnerable communities, and a commitment to environmental protection. The Chapter of the Mats of Taranto represents a significant moment of reflection and rethinking of the Franciscan charism for all the members of the Order of Friars Minor, committed to responding with faith

and courage to the challenges of our time. In his homily, Br. Massimo Fusarelli stressed the importance of knowing how to grasp "sprouts of novelty" in our communities. Br. Massimo, referring to the parable of the mustard seed presented in the Gospel of the day, highlighted that, within us, there are seeds of goodness that we do not see but that are growing through the work of God. As a Church, and not as a closed community, we are called not to make this good our own, but to make it grow and to share it through acceptance and openness to others.

*With the contribution of Br. Marco Valletta, OFM*



PROVINCE OF ST FRANCIS SOLANUS  
**CHAPTER OF MATS IN ARGENTINA**

On Thursday, the 20th June 2024, in the chapel of our friary in the Villa Santa Clara del Atuel, 52 people including Sisters and Brothers, young people and adults - several lay men and women and about 35 friars - at the level of family equality, began our Provincial Mats Chapter, with a celebration at the beginning with the motto "In the hand of Francis, wheresoever love takes us."

In the opening assembly, Br. Daniel Fleitas, our Minister Provincial, dedicated this Chapter as our contribution to the 2025 General Chapter of Mats, which must be a privileged moment of synodal participation, listening and courage. In the months leading up to the Chapter, more than 300 people participated from every presence of the Province, listening, diagnostic sharing, and participation with lay people and friars; everything that has been reflected on has been systematized and has been the working tool for these days. During the days of the Chapter there was intense work organized in 6 fraternities with a variety of people, where the coordination and secretarial services were also taken over by lay men and women and friars who gave their best to encourage reflection, dialogue and exchange starting from the working tool organized in three nuclei: "Renewing Our Vision," "Walking a Pattern," and "Embracing Our Future." After each moment of work in the fraternity, there were moments of assembly where the synthesis of what was reflected in each fraternity was presented and then space was given to fraternal debate.

Some points resounded such as: the appeal for greater attention to the complex and somewhat "dizzying" reality that we must learn to listen to and read in the light of faith;

we agree on the need to take steps in "Integral Ecology" as a central and current aspect of our Franciscan charism, to unite listening with the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. The need to renew liturgies and ways of celebrating the faith. Considerations followed on the risk of self-referentiality in projects and the need to create mechanisms and strategies so that there is fraternity between lay people and friars; the need for training on issues such as addiction and social inclusion, greater systematisation of existing projects and communication between areas; also on the validity of the charism that transcends any institutional historical form.

Each day waxed and waned with spaces for prayer and celebration that nourished spirituality and invited us to grow with a believing outlook on life.

The intense work was characterized by a joyful, relaxed and enthusiastic fraternal atmosphere, there was no lack of recreational and leisure spaces, as well as large Argentine catering facilities where there was no lack of family sharing.

*Br. Fernando Ferrario, OFM*



**SOLEMN PROFESSIONS \***

We are happy to announce that the following friars have made their solemn profession:

- Br. Selenzio Katusiime on the 7th June, Prov. St. Francis, Kenya
- Br. Henry Mubangizi on the 7th June, Prov. St. Francis, Kenya
- Br. Jean Baptist Ndagijimana on the 7th June, Prov. St. Francis, Kenya
- Br. Ambrose Ngahamiire on the 7th June, Prov. St. Francis, Kenya
- Br. Sebastian Niwahereza on the 7th June, Prov. St. Francis, Kenya
- Br. Thierry Nzoyikorera on the 7th June, Prov. St. Francis, Kenya
- Br. François Uwimana on the 7th June, Prov. St. Francis, Kenya
- Br. Marco Cosini, on the 18th May, Prov. St Anthony, Italy

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

## CONCLUSION AT THE CONVENT OF ST. FRANCIS (BRAZIL)

**VOCATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE CUSTODY OF ST. BENEDICT OF THE AMAZON**

**O**n the 14th June 2024, the Custody of St. Benedict of the Amazon successfully concluded the experience of the Fraternity of Vocation Reception (FAV) 2024. The last week of integration took place at the friary of St. Francis, located in Santarém, Pará, Brazil.

This event was attended by six young people who are preparing to apply to enter the first stage of Franciscan formation, called the postulancy. During the first half of 2024, these young people were immersed in coexistence within the Fraternities of St. Francis, in Monte Alegre, and St. Anne, in Itaituba.

The vocation animator, Br. Erlison Campos, emphasizes that the experience of FAV 2024 has been extremely positive. Amongst the six young people who completed the stage, three are indigenous to the Munduruku people, a fact that reinforces the commitment of the Vocation Animation of the Custody of St. Benedict of the Amazon, with the promotion and support of indigenous vocations.

Now the young people are returning for a holiday with their families. If admitted, they will begin the postulancy in August

2024, continuing their journey of formation in Franciscan life. The conclusion of this experience marks an important step in the Custody's mission to welcome and form new vocations, especially amongst indigenous communities, reaffirming its commitment to diversity and inclusion in Franciscan religious life.



## SILENCE AND PRAYER IN FRATERNITY

**SPIRITUAL EXERCISES IN MOROCCO**

**F**rom the 17th–21st June 2024, the friars serving in the Custody of the Franciscan Protomartyrs of Morocco had their spiritual exercises at the monastery of the Trappist monks in Midelt, which preserves the memory of the blessed martyrs of Tibhirine in Algeria. As moderator of the spiritual exercises, Br. Darko Tepert, Secretary General for Education and Studies, who proposed, as a theme, the event of La Verna, on the occasion of its eighth centenary.

Br. Darko, in his reflections, using the account of the Life before Thomas of Celano and the texts of the Cartula given by Francis to Brother Leo, tried to show what was Francis' relationship with God and how the contemplation of Francis affected his activities, his life in fraternity and the life of the fraternity itself. In addition, the reflections were aimed at giving impulses for the daily life of the friars. The spiritual exercises were marked by silence and moments of prayer in fraternity.

During his brief stay in Morocco, Br. Darko had the opportunity to visit all the fraternities in this country and was able to see how the friars are dedicated to their different activities, including working in parishes, assisting the many migrants, and life amongst the people of the Islamic religion.



## DECEASED FRIARS \*

- 25th June, Br. Giammaria (Donatantonio) Apollonio, Prov. St. Michael the Archangel
- 21st June, in Italy: Br. Manuel Blanco Rodríguez, Prov. of the Immaculate Conception
- 20th June, in Portugal: Br. António Lopes Vieira, Prov. The Holy Martyrs of Morocco
- 15th June, Br. Noel (Michael) Fauth, Prov. of the Holy Spirit
- 14th June, in Honduras: Msgr. Maurus Muldoon, OFM, Prov. Immaculate Conception of the BVM
- 13th June, in Italy: Br. Salvatore Barbagallo, Prov. of The Holy Name of Jesus
- 29th May, Br James (Sebastian) Fitzgerald, Prov. of the Holy Spirit.
- 25th May, in Honduras: Br. German Humberto Burgos Zamora, Prov. Of Our Lady of Guadalupe

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

## BR. MANUEL BLANCO RODRÍGUEZ OFM HAS PASSED AWAY



“LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON HIM”

We communicate with sadness that between the night of Thursday 20th June and the early morning of Friday the 21st June of this year Br. Manuel Blanco Rodríguez, at the age of 85, left this life for the Father's house. Amongst the various services he rendered are: Definitor General, Minister Provincial, Visitor in various Entities of the Order, as well as Vice-Rector, Dean and Professor of Philosophy at the Pontifical University Antonianum, and more recently as confessor to Pope Francis.

*"We thank the Giver of all good for all that He has given us during the life of Br. Manuel, including the inevitable weaknesses that are entrusted to the inexhaustible mercy of God,"* Br. Massimo Fusarelli wrote this to Br. Joaquín Zurera Ribó, Minister Provincial, and to all the friars of the Province of the Immaculate Conception in Spain. The Requiem Mass will take place on Monday the 24th June 2024, at 10:00 a.m., at the Santi Quaranta Martiri Church and then interment at the San Pasquale Baylon cemetery in Rome.

[Read the letter of condolences from the Minister General.](#)

### THE FUNERAL RITES

The funeral of Br. Manuel Blanco Rodríguez was celebrated on the 24th June at the Church of Forty Martyrs and St. Paschal Baylon in Rome. Present were Br. Joaquín Zurera Ribó, Minister Provincial of the Immaculate Conception Province of the BVM of Spain, Br. Jimmy Zammit and Br. Cesare Vaiani General Definitors, friars from different friaries in Rome, religious, family and friends of Br. Manuel. In his homily, Br. Joaquín thanked the Father of Mercy because he found in Br. Manuel a generous and docile heart to carry out His mission: "He was able to enter into the mystery of love," the Provincial said, "and today we say goodbye to his body, aware of what he left us: the testimony of his life with the gifts that God gave him and that he was able to put at the service of others, leaving a trace of its passage in men and women he served."

*"Great human, spiritual and intellectual qualities: he was a true Friar Minor, an intelligent man, studious, decisive and always accurate in his judgments and convictions on the questions of life itself,"* said Fr. Antonio de la Presilla, guardian of the fraternity and confrere in various friaries, after the Eucharist. The latter also recounted the journey he made and the various services he carried out, including: Minister Provincial, Guardian of various friaries, Visitor and Delegate of the Minister General in various entities of the Order, Vice-Rector, Dean and Professor of the Antonianum University. Br. Manuel was also the confessor of Pope Francis, chosen as his confessor from the beginning of his Pontificate. "The day before yesterday, Father Manuel Blanco, a Franciscan who had lived for forty-four years in the Church of The Forty Martyrs and St. Paschal Baylon in Rome, passed away. He was superior, confessor, man of counsel. In remembering him, I would like to recall the many Franciscan brothers, confessors and preachers who have honoured



and continue to honour the Church of Rome. Thank you to all of them!" [said the Holy Father after the Angelus on the 23rd June](#). Br. Antonio recounted how on the same day the Holy Father presented himself at the funeral chapel of the friary, where he prayed together with the fraternity for the eternal rest of Br. Manuel; After Lauds, the Pope made a brief exhortation to the

friars, highlighting some of the virtues of Br. Manuel: "humility, simplicity, brotherhood, being a Friar Minor, intelligence and acuteness of judgment." [On the Vatican News website \(Italian\)](#), Michele Raviart and Benedetta Capelli also recounted this visit of Pope Francis to the friars of the fraternity of The Forty Martyrs and St. Paschal Baylon.

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## ON THE SITUATION OF THE POOR CLARES OF BELORADO **COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE MINISTER GENERAL**

To the President of the Federation of the Poor Clare Sisters of Aránzazu

*And for information:*

To the Coordinator and the Presidents of the Federations of Spain and Portugal

To the Archbishop of Burgos

To the Minister Provincial of Aránzazu

Rome, 24 June 2024

Dear President and all Sisters,

*May the Lord give you His peace!*

After the days of waiting and patience that the Archbishop of Burgos has shown towards the Monastery of Belorado, the declaration of excommunication *latae sententiae* to the ten sisters was served.

It is a very sad time and I feel the gravity and weight of it. I share in your bewilderment and sorrow, and I feel that for all our Order it is a moment that obliges us to pray and reflect. In the first place, with prayer we want to accompany these Sisters who have chosen to leave the Catholic Church, who have fallen into a distorted and gravely misleading reading of the last seventy years of the Church's life. In the history of the Church, every time a small group has isolated itself, it has become a sect and thus lost the larger breath of the Catholic Church.

The reflection is to take care of ourselves, especially the weakest members and those who risk remaining isolated, guaranteeing a solid formation and the bond of fraternity. We see that nostalgic and traditionalist tendencies are present in our Church, as well as others of a different kind, and this asks us to strengthen our bonds and to take care of unity. This is why the Federations are important, so that each Monastery can feel

the presence and accompaniment of the whole larger family. Now the ten sisters are no longer Poor Clares or religious and it would be appropriate for them to divest themselves of the habit of St. Francis and St. Clare, but I do not think they will do so. We must make it clear to everyone that they are no longer Poor Clares, even though the doors of our hearts and our families always remain open to them. I hope that the necessary corporal and spiritual care will be guaranteed for the elderly Sisters who remain.

I am pleased to take this opportunity to greet you, to remain united in the bond of charity and obedience to the Gospel, as I invoke upon all of you the blessing of St Francis.

Fraternal greetings,

Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM  
*Minister General*

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# OFM

ORDO FRATRUM MINORUM

Director: Br Byron A. Chamann Anléu OFM

Translators: Br John Luke OFM, Br. Arthur Andersen OFM,

Br. Cyrianus Korongo, Br Rick Martignetti OFM

**General Curia of the Friars Minor**

Via di S. Maria Mediatrix, 25 - Rome, Italy - [comgen@ofm.org](mailto:comgen@ofm.org)  
[www.ofm.org](http://www.ofm.org)



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