

International Bulletin

Fraternitas

Ordo Fratrum Minorum

351

Edition

Volume LVIII | 19th February 2025

INDEX

Meeting of the Definitors
of the Iberian Peninsula1

Message from the Minister General
to our brothers in Eastern Congo 2

Tempo Forte 2

General Curia Agenda 3

Isabella of France 3

VIII centenary of the Canticle
of the Creatures in Brazil..... 4

Franciscan Vision
Global Summit 2025 5

Franciscan Bookmark 5

Chapter of the Province
of St. Stephen King of Transylvania 6

Chapter of the Province
of the Most Holy Trinity 6

Zimbabwe National Elective Chapter 7

National Elective Chapter in Benin 8

National Elective Chapter of Togo..... 8

Visit to the Foundation
of Blessed Gabriele Allegra 9

Visit to the Province
of “Our Lady Queen of China” 10

FCAO “New Forms” Assembly 10

27th anniversary
of the death of Br. Vjeko Ćurić 11

First Joint Gathering
of Elderly Friars in the Philippines..... 12

Day of Human
Fraternity in Izmir, Turkey 13

Deceased Brothers 13

Summit on children’s
rights in the Vatican..... 14

World Day of
Consecrated Life, 2025..... 15

Solemn Professions..... 15

Jubilee Celebration
of Communication..... 16

Pilgrims of Hope OFM 16



Meeting of the Definitors of the Iberian Peninsula

Lisbon, January 29-30, 2025

On January 29 and 30, 2025, an important meeting took place in Lisbon that saw the definitors of the four Franciscan provinces of the Iberian Peninsula (Arantzazu, Santiago de Compostela, Immaculate Conception, and Holy Martyrs of Morocco), together with the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli and the General Definitor, Br. Cesare Vaiani.

The meeting, characterized by an atmosphere of fraternal welcome by the Portuguese brothers, saw the participants engaged in a program of prayer, reflection and dialogue on the future of Franciscan presence in the Iberian Peninsula. The participatory methodology, expertly led by Br. Massimo and Br. Cesare as facilitators, allowed us to build a climate of trust and mutual openness. Particularly significant was the dynamic of the “common roots”, during which the brothers, divided into mixed interprovincial groups, shared significant moments of their Franciscan vocation and positive experiences of collaboration among the Provinces. This moment brought out the rich spiritual and pastoral patrimony that unites the four Provinces.

Through the methodology of the World Café, the participants were able to ex-



plore in depth the current reality, confronting their challenges, resources, fears and hopes. This allowed them to build a shared and realistic vision of the present situation and future prospects.

The meeting highlighted the common will to strengthen collaboration in different areas, from initial and ongoing formation to youth and pastoral ministry, from educational commitment to the enhancement of the *Cammino di Santiago* and other significant places of Franciscan presence in the Peninsula. The presence and contribution of the Minister General and General Definitor helped the participants to place their reflection in the broader context of the Order's renewal, encouraging an outlook of hope toward the future.

The meeting concluded in an atmosphere of gratitude for the shared journey and confidence in the

prospects that opened up for the future of Franciscan presence in the Iberian Peninsula.

Tempo Forte



Ordo Fratrum Minorum



Secretarius Generalis

The Communiqué of the General Definitory concerning Tempo Forte for January 2025 has been published:

[Italiano](#) - [English](#)
[Español](#)



Government of the Order

Message from the Minister General to our brothers in Eastern Congo *Solidarity and support in these times of trial*



WWW.OFM.ORG



Dear brothers of Eastern Congo, and especially of Goma, *May the Lord give you peace!*

In these times of great trial and suffering for your region, I want to express all my solidarity and fraternal support. My heart is with you as you witness the daily violence of war, the occupation of your land, and the pain of seeing so many of your brothers and sisters wounded or lose their lives.

This sense of closeness has grown even stronger since my visit with you last February. The moments we shared, the faces I encountered, and the experiences we lived together remain indelibly etched in my heart. This visit allowed me to better understand your daily reality and further strengthens my commitment to stand by your side today.

I am deeply touched and grateful for your constant presence alongside the affected populations, particularly in the refugee camps. Your commitment to standing by the most vulnerable and keeping the flame of hope alive in times of darkness is a living testimony to the spirit of Saint Francis.

Amid daily insecurity and an uncertain future, know that the entire Order is united with you in prayer and hope. Like Saint Francis, who sought peace even in the most difficult times, we remain vigilant in prayer, faithfully awaiting the time of peace.

May the Lord protect you and give you the strength to continue your mission of peace and comfort to those who suffer. May the example of our father Saint Francis continue to inspire your service and witness.



Isabella of France

Letter of the Minister General for the eighth centenary of the birth of Isabella of France, younger sister in the footsteps of St. Francis.

Read the Letter:

[Français](#) - [Italiano](#) - [English](#) - [Español](#)

General Curia Agenda



☑ From the 17th to 19th February, Br. Victor Quematcha, Definitor General for the African Conference, will be in Kigali, Rwanda, for the erection of the new English-speaking African Conference. From the 26th to the 28th, together with Br. Maciej Olszewski, Guardian of the Generalate, he will be in Togo for the erection of the new Francophone African Conference.

☑ From the 18th to 22th February, Br. John Wong, Definitor General, will meet with the SAAOC (South Asia, Australia and Oceania) Conference in Singapore; from the 3rd to 7th March, he will participate in the meeting of the Commission for the Service of Dialogue in Nagasaki, Japan.

☑ From the 22nd February to 2nd March, Br. Fabio César Gomes, General Delegate pro Monialibus will

participate in the second meeting in presence of the International Commission for the Revision of the Constitutions of the Poor Clare Sisters, at the General Curia.

☑ On the 20th and 21st February, Br. César Külkamp, General Definitor, will participate in the second stage of the Chapter Congress of the Franciscan Province of the Most Holy Trinity, in Santiago de Chile.

☑ From the 5th to 7th March, Br. Iurii Semko and Br. Albert Schmucki, respectively Director of the Office for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults and President of the International Commission of the same name, will participate in the meeting of the aforementioned Commission at the International College of St. Anthony in Rome.



Franciscan Centenaries

VIII centenary of the Cantic of the Creatures in Brazil *Opening of the celebrations in the Province of the Immaculate Conception*



WWW.OFM.ORG

On the 2nd February, 2025, the Franciscan Province of the Immaculate Conception of Brazil officially began the celebrations of the VIII Centenary of the Cantic of the Creatures. All 41 fraternities located in the States of Santa Catarina, Paraná, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo, as well as the 5 fraternities present in Angola, have made this date a point of reference for celebrations, prayers and evangelizing activities focused on praising God for Creation and for the gift of being part of it. [...]



Painting by Br. Pedro da Silva Pinheiro of the Province of the Immaculate Conception

In the Fraternity of the friary of St. Anthony, in Rio de Janeiro, the celebration of the official opening of the Cantic of the Creatures was presided over by Br. Claudio Cesar Broca and concelebrated by the Guardian, Br. Walter Ferreira Jr., and Br. Guido Scotini, Br. Sergio de Souza and Br. Roger Brunorio.

The celebration began with the blessing of candles and the procession of light, on the occasion of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. In his homily, Br. Claudio highlighted the historical, religious and spiritual elements linked to the date, manifesting the presence and closeness of God with His people in the simplicity and fragil-

ity of a Child, Jesus Christ, Light of the Nations.

In addressing the Centenary of the Cantic of the Creatures, he recalled that in it St. Francis, “almost blind, but with a gaze full of gratitude, contemplates the wonders of Creation and welcomes the presence of the Creator, who gives meaning to all that exists,” he explained.



At the end of the Mass, all those present went in procession to the cloister of the Convent and, in the green area of that space, recited the Opening Prayer of the Centenary of the Cantic of the Creatures. Br. Roger, one of the creators of the ceremony, explained the meaning of the elements highlighted in that celebratory moment: “The cloister garden, a symbolic space of the world, was chosen as a reference to the Cantic Laudato Si’ by St. Francis, since in this garden there is the representation of the cosmos, of all Creation. In it we can perceive trees, flowers, fruits, birds, bees, weeds, water and earth,” he contextualized.

Throughout 2025, to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Cantic of the Creatures, the Fraternity of the friary of St. Anthony will promote a series of initiatives to commemorate the date and draw everyone’s attention to the urgency and importance of Caring for Our Common Home. [...]

Read the full text on www.ofm.org

By Adriana Rabelo and the Communication Team of the Convent of Sant’Antonio

Franciscan Vision Global Summit 2025

The Canticle of the Creatures at the Center of the Online Seminar



WWW.OFM.ORG



As the Franciscan family celebrates the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi’s Canticle of the Creatures in 2025, this timeless hymn takes on new significance in an era marked by ecological crisis. To transform this milestone into a catalyst for global reflection and action, the Franciscan Vision Global Summit (FVGS) has once again begun its role: a year-long digital pilgrimage uniting scholars and communities worldwide to delve into the enduring wisdom of the Canticle.



Br. Arokiam John OFM (Editor of TAU: A Franciscan International Journal and Professor at Rome’s Pontifical *Antonianum* University), Founder and Coordinator of FVGS, in collaboration with the Province of St. Thomas Apostle of India, has successfully organized a series of monthly online sessions under the banner of FVGS. This initiative spanned 2023 and 2024, commemorating the centenary celebrations of the Rule & Greccio (2023) and the Stigmata (2024). The centenary celebrations commenced with the 25th Session of FVGS on 25 January 2025.

The session began with blessings from Br. Carlos Alberto Trovarelli OFMConv, Minister General, and was moderated by Br. Xavier Durairaj OFM, Minister Provincial (India). Br. Mauro Botti OFM, Guardian of San Damiano Sanctuary in Assisi, was the resource person, offering a profound reflection on “San Damiano in the Jubilee Year 2025: The Site of Composition of the Canticle of the Creatures.” These sessions are offered in multiple languages, including French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Tamil, and Hindi, to ensure broad accessibility.

In 2025, Franciscan scholars from around the globe will come together to engage participants in FVGS on a series of themes related to the Canticle of the Creatures, including The Canticle of the Creatures (February), Francis’ Sermons to the Birds (March), The Choir of the Creatures in Aid of Humans (April), The Cry of the Earth and Laudato Si (May), Francis’ Vision of Creation and its Relevance Today (June), Franciscan Response to Climate Change (July), The Canticle of the Creatures and Audite Poverelle (August), The Inspiration of the Canticle of the Creatures to be Pilgrims of Franciscan-Marian Hope (September), The Creation (Eco) Spirituality of the Canticle of the Creatures: Its Application in the Oraon Tribe of India (October), Promotion of Creation-Spirituality (November), and New Perspectives on the Canticle of the Creatures

Across the World (December).

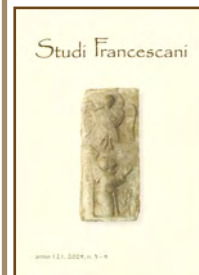
This initiative brings a global audience together on a single platform, united by a shared love for St. Francis of Assisi and a fervent desire to follow his example of loving Creation. May this Jubilee Year inspire a global chorus, echoing Francis’ vision that every creature - from the smallest blade of grass to the vast expanse of the cosmos - stands as a testament to the sacred interdependence of all creation.

Province of St. Thomas Apostle

Franciscan Bookmark

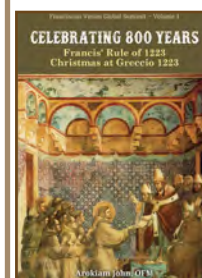


Studi Francescani



Trimestrale di vita culturale e religiosa a cura dei Frati Minori d’Italia
Anno 121, 2024, n. 3-4

Celebrating 800 Years. Francis’ Rule of 1223 & Christmas at Greccio 1223



Arokiam John, OFM

Media House

Chapter of the Province of St. Stephen King of Transylvania

Br. Erik Urban new Minister Provincial



WWW.OFM.ORG



From the 3rd to 7th February, the friars of the “St. Stephen King” Province of Transylvania gathered to celebrate the Provincial Chapter. The Province is part of the COTAF Conference of the Order. The important Chapter event took place in the convent of Șumuleu Ciuc (Csíksomlyó), at the shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Csíksomlyó, one of the most significant spiritual destinations for the Hungarian-speaking in Transylvania and the whole world, with a group of just under forty friars.

The Chapter was presided over by Br. Peregrin Kálmán, who had also overseen the canonical visitation and who accompanied the dialogue and discernment of the capitulars. Present from the General Curia were Br. Konrad Cholewa, Definitor General, and Br. Antonio Iacona, Secretary General. After the invocation to the Holy Spirit with the singing of the *Veni Creator Spiritus* and the completion of the initial formalities,

the Chapter got to the heart of the matter with the listening to the Visitor’s Report, followed by that of the Minister Provincial and the various leaders of the different areas and sectors of the Province. One of the most significant moments was the reading of the Letter of the Minister General, followed by the interventions of Br. Konrad Cholewa and Br. Antonio Iacona, who presented the thoughts of the Minister and the General Definitor on some important choices entrusted to the evaluation of the capitulars. Subsequently, a dialogue was opened between the friars present to discern the path of the Province. The Provincial Definitor, which will lead the Province over the next three years, is composed of: Br. Erik Urban, Minister Provincial, Br. Szabolcs Orban, Vicar Provincial, and Br. Lorand Portik-Lukacs, Br. Leander Albert, Br. Marian Puvak and Br. Julianusz Gego, Provincial Definitors.

The Chapter sessions were alternated with well-kept liturgical celebrations and moments of fraternity, elements that fostered an atmosphere of prayer and communion. In addition, the intervention of Msgr. László Kerekes offered the friars a significant reflection on their service and mission in the Diocese. The Chapter concluded with the voting of the mandates and orientations that will guide the Province of St. Stephen the King in the near future, thus giving impetus to the fraternal life and evangelical commitment of the friars in Transylvania.

Chapter of the Province of the Most Holy Trinity

Chile, January 20-27, 2025



WWW.OFM.ORG

From January 20 to 27, 2025, the brothers of the Province of the Most Holy Trinity in Chile celebrated their Provincial Chapter at the “Casa Alvernia”, in San Francisco de Mostazal.

With the motto “In listening to the Spirit...we renew our identity as Friars Minor”, the brothers of the fifteen Franciscan presences in Chile, listening to the Gospel and guided by the Holy Spirit, met to discern their fraternal life and mission, to define

the provincial priorities for the next three years, and to elect the new provincial government.

Br. Lino Miranda Castañeda, OFM, was elected Minister Provincial: born June 25, 1975 in Padre Hurtado (Melipilla), he entered the novitiate on January 10, 1997, in the fraternity Rapel de Navidad. He made his first profession on March 4, 1998, and solemn profession on March 21, 2003. He was ordained priest by Valparaíso Bishop Gon-

zalo Duarte on August 1, 2008. He graduated in philosophical and theological studies at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, obtained a master's degree in formation from the Pontifical University *Antonianum* in Rome, and a Diploma in Psychological-Spiritual Accompaniment from the Alberto Hurtado University of Chile.

Br. Lino carried out the following assignments in the province: provincial defensor; secretary for formation and studies; animator of vocational ministry; guardian; master of temporary professed, novices and postulants. Br. Claudio Pumarino Guzmán, OFM, was elected provincial vicar; the new provincial Definitorium is now composed of Br. Miguel

Correa, OFM, Br. Ricardo Vasquez, OFM, Br. Jaime Campos, OFM, and Br. Julio Campos, OFM.



OFS



Zimbabwe National Elective Chapter February 7-8, 2025



WWW.OFM.ORG



On the 7th and 8th February, 2025, the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) of Zimbabwe celebrated its Elective Chapter at "Tafara - Our Lady of the Angels - Franciscan Friars OFM".

The meeting began on Friday evening with the prayer of vespers, followed by dinner and then the opening of the Chapter with the greeting of the outgoing National Minister addressed to the capitulars and members of the CIOFS, represented by

the Minister General Tibor Kausser, OFS and Br. Pedro Zitha, OFM, representing Conference of General Spiritual Assistants (CAS). Afterwards, each member of the outgoing National Council shared the many challenges and joys of fraternity with those present. On Saturday morning, all 13 capitulars were present, including the 2 National Spiritual Assistants, Br. Elvis Gwangwava, OFM-Cap and Br. Nicholas Banhwa, OFM. After the praise, the capitulars resumed their work with the presentation of the reports of the National Minister, the formator and the outgoing treasurers. This was followed by comments and questions from the capitulars and spiritual assistants. Most of the capitulars appreciated the report of the National Minister and gave some concrete suggestions on how to move forward in the future and face the challenges that the national fraternity is facing. Later, the National Council began the elective session chaired by the

Minister General, Tibor Kausser, OFS, in which Inviolata Nhunduru, OFS (second from the right in the cover photo) was elected, both as National Minister and as International Councilor. The elective session culminated with photographs of the new National Council.

In the afternoon, the National Spiritual Assistant Br. Elvis presented the report of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, followed by the presentation of the Minister General on the theme "Our Specific Vocation in the Secular Franciscan Order". Finally, the installation of the new National Council took place during the Mass celebrated by Br. Pedro Zitha, OFM and concelebrated by Br. Elvis Gwangwava, OFM-Cap and Br. Nicholas Banhwa, OFM.

After the Mass, fraternal agape followed with delicacies from Zimbabwe.

National Elective Chapter in Benin

Donaten, 26th January 2025



WWW.OFM.ORG



On the Sunday of 26th January 2025, the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscans in Benin celebrated the national elective Chapter at the convent of the Capuchin Friars at Donaten -Cotonou. Present were 34 participants. 29 were Capitulars and 5 Religious together with the Custos Br. Bernadin Boko, OFMCap.

The Chapter was presided by the International Councilor for French-speaking Africa, Adolph Atsu Assagba, OFS from Togo together with the delegate of Tibor Kauser, Minister General of OFS. The Conference of General Spiritual Assistants (CAS) was represented by Br. Tomàs Ginga Panzo Suva, OFMCap, who was the witness during the elections.

The Capitulars had a joy of electing the new Council whereby Mrs. Albertine Attakpa, OFS was elected as the National Minister and International Councilor for the next here years. All was done in a fraternal climate, a promising future for the growth of the fraternity.

Contribution from the International Council of OFS (CIOFS)

National Elective Chapter of Togo

Fraternity "St. Benedict the African"



WWW.OFM.ORG



On the 25th January, 2025, the National Fraternity "St. Benedict the African" of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) of Togo joyfully celebrated its Elective Chapter at the Fraternity of the OFM Friars of Adidogome, in Lomé. The elective session was chaired by the National Minister of Chad, Angel Gabriel Soulassengar, OFS, delegate of the Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, in the presence of Br. Serge-Armand Adjessi, OFM, delegate of the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants (CAS). The Chapter was attended by 58 brothers and sisters, including

46 capitulars, 10 observers and 2 religious. René Komlan Gamélé D'Almeida, OFS has been elected as the new National Minister and International Councilor, according to the fraternity's statutes.

On the 26th January, the day of the inauguration of the new National Council, the new National Minister thanked his predecessor, Joseph Kosjo Fogan Adegnon, OFS, for his faithful, affectionate and tireless service to the national fraternity over the past 9 years and for his organization of the Chapter.

Although it was a day full of "bureaucratic" commitments (presentation of reports and elections of the new Council), the capitulars enjoyed a very fruitful and festive occasion; Everyone went home happy, thanks to the collaborative spirit that characterized the fraternal meeting. The Conference

of General Spiritual Assistants is very grateful to Br. Serge-Armand Adjessi, OFM, for his readiness and willingness to accept the request to testify to the Chapter on behalf of the General Conference, despite his pastoral commitments. May the Lord continue to bless his generosity in sharing his time with the OFS.

With the contribution of CIOFS



We ask the National Councils of the OFS to send comgen@ofm.org an article (maximum 4000 characters including spaces) describing the activities at the national level of your Fraternities, to make our readers aware of the Secular Franciscan Order in the world.

Animation of the Order



Visit to the Foundation of Blessed Gabriele Allegra *The Order's Animation Offices in Hong Kong*



WWW.OFM.ORG

From February 2 to 6, Br. Francisco Gómez Vargas and Br. Dennis Tayo of the General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization (GSME), together with Br. Daniel Rodriguez Blanco and Br. Taucen H. Girsang of the General Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) visited the Franciscan Foundation of Blessed Gabriele Allegra in Hong Kong as part of inter-office collaboration. The main purpose of the visit was to meet with the friars and mission partners, update them on ongoing activities, and emphasize the need for closer collaboration.



Upon their arrival, the visiting friars eagerly joined a pioneering project with the NGO “Fortune Multiplex,” which aims to create a vibrant community space and foster positive interactions among neighbors. They then proceeded to La Verna Community, where they were warmly welcomed by 14 friars and 2 temporarily professed friars during the Foundation’s Chinese New Year celebration. The festivities began with the community’s vespers, followed by a sumptuous meal and a lively tombo-la that culminated the day’s events with laughter.

The following days marked a profound journey through nearby school ministries. Starting with St. Bonaventure College and two St. Bonaventure primary schools, each visit became a powerful opportunity for the friars to connect deeply with these educational communities. They also explored St. Joseph Primary, St. Joseph Secondary, and St. Francisco Primary Schools. Throughout these interactions, the friars engaged meaningfully with

fellow friars, school administrators, and dedicated staff – commending them for their works, especially on how Franciscan spirituality and values as inspired by the OFM document “*Go and Teach*,” particularly in the commitment to caring for creation, were intricately embedded in the schools educational system and premises, including the appropriate use of engineering and communication technologies, which confront especially the younger generations of today. This experience highlighted the transformative power of education rooted in schools’ motto: “*Ubi humilitas, ibi sapientia* (Where there is humility, there is wisdom).” It served as a compelling reminder of our shared duty to nurture and protect our world, inspiring future generations with Franciscan values. Each visit stood as a testament to the profound impact of faith-driven education and a call to embody these ideals, marking the school’s identity as a true Franciscan Catholic School.

In addition, they visited the St. Bonaventure Franciscan parish church, which operates to provide supper meals to thirty people daily. They also saw valuable collections, of Blessed Allegra particularly in the gallery and Studium Biblicum reading rooms. Later by night, they attended an assembly organized by Hong Kong friars, well participated by the OFS HK Community, significant lay partners from different schools, delegates from a Green Parish project, and some press members of the Diocese, including a zoom-telecast of the meeting. This assembly focused on ongoing Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation efforts and evangelizing missionary activities of the Order today, which were highly appreciated by the participants.

On the last day of the visit, Br. Francisco, GSME General Secretary, and some Asian friars had a fraternal and fruitful meeting. This was followed by a dinner shared by all to bid them farewell, for an early the next morning flight.

In conclusion, although the visit was brief, it resulted in significant and impactful outcomes for both our Hong Kong Franciscan friars and friends, as well as the two offices involved.

Visit to the Province of “Our Lady Queen of China” The Order’s Animation Offices in Taiwan



WWW.OFM.ORG

The trip of the representatives of the Animation Offices of the General Curia in Asia continues. After visiting the Franciscan Foundation of Blessed Gabriel Allegra in Hong Kong, they visited the friars of the Province of Our Lady Queen of China in Taiwan, from 6 to 10 February 2025.

After arriving in the afternoon, the visit began with a brief meeting at the provincial house hosted by Br. Claudio Pegoraro (Guardian) and Br. Michael Woo (previous Minister Provincial). In this fraternal gathering, some important information was shared: from the decisions of the most recent provincial Chapter of this Entity, in particular how the friars will carry-out the spirit of evangelization and mission, as well as the values of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in their ministries in the country. That the friars have been working hard to serve the believers in more than 20 parishes, to educate the students in two schools, to participate in interreligious dialogue, to collaborate with the Franciscan family and other congregations, and to maintain strong relationship with the dioceses. Their focus will be on fraternal community life, the continuity of Franciscan presents in several parishes, collaborating with foundation Blessed Gabriele Allegra in Hong Kong and other Franciscan Entities in Asia.

The next day, the visit was continued with a trip to the Franciscan cemetery of the deceased friars in Daxi Region, who were some of the first missionaries in Taiwan coming from different countries such as Italy and Belgium. Afterwards, a fraternal meeting with the Guardian and other friars, including two

postulants, was held in the Postulancy House community followed by a visit to the Franciscan Parish located on the mountain where local aborigines live.

On Sunday morning, the brothers from the Curia



were introduced to the people during the Eucharist. Then, in the afternoon there was a meeting with the new Minister Provincial to further hear how the Entity will be able to open up for collaboration with other Entities in the area and what are the difficulties facing them. Also, how the Curia Offices can help them to address those challenges.

The Franciscan Missionaries started mission ministry in Taiwan since 1951 and became a province in 1989. It is a reality today that we have fewer vocations in this Entity, and at the same time, the increasing number of elderly brothers is inevitable. However, one has the deep impression that this Province has been testifying our Franciscan charism and identity as brothers and minors while they are facing their own limitations.

FCAO “New Forms” Assembly Franciscan Conference in Asia and Oceania



WWW.OFM.ORG



The General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization, led by Br. Francisco Gomes Vargas and Br. Dennis Tayo, held the first Franciscan Conference in Asia and Oceania (FCAO) “New Forms” gathering, from January 26 to February 3, 2025, in Vietnam.

It started with a 3-day Assembly in Thu Duc, Ho Chi Minh City. Br. John of God Phuoc, the Minister Provincial of the host Entity welcomed them, followed by the inspiring words from Br. Derrick Yap, President of the South Asia, Australia and

Oceania Conference (SAAOC). Gracing the assembly were Br. Taucen Girsang, Vice director of the General Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, and Br. Gil Noriega, who respectively discussed the roles of JPIC and Franciscan Missions, in embodying “new forms.”

Br. Dennis guided the friars on the document “Ite, Nuntiate.” Participants shared “new form” initiatives ranging from simple acts of presence to more institutionalized or organized collaborations.

Aimed at assisting the underprivileged, key focus areas included support for indigenous people and inculturation, displaced individuals and migrants, dialogue and peace projects, health-

care, agricultural initiatives, and environmental care, alongside traditional ministries promoting livelihood projects, psycho-spiritual assistance, educational support and welcome/boarding houses, and youth ministry.

The friars emphasized the importance of a contemplative, supportive fraternity in energizing their mission amidst various challenges shared.

The past day’s activities and inputs, with the message of Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM Minister General, became the points of reflection and inspiration, in crafting a common commitment.

Continue to read in www.ofm.org

News from the Entities



27th anniversary of the death of Br. Vjeko Ćurić Celebrations in Rwanda in memory of the Franciscan missionary



WWW.OFM.ORG



On 1st February 2025, the friars and Christians from the Autonomous Custody of Our Lady of Kibeho in Burundi-Rwanda came together at Kivumu Parish in Rwanda to commemorate the 27th anniversary of the death of Br. Vjeko Ćurić, who was killed on 31st January 1998 in Kigali. Ten people from the “Holy Cross” Province of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Entity of origin of Br. Vjeko, were also present. [...]

Custos Br. Theoneste Twahirwa shared a memory of the Franciscan missionary: “Reading the chronicles preserved in the records of the fraternity, we learn that in 1982, as soon as Br. Vjeko heard about the new initiatives of the then Minister General Br.

John Vaughn to start a new Franciscan presence in Africa, he wished to be part of the first volunteers to come, to such an extent that he had to ask exceptional permission to complete his theological studies as soon as possible to come to Rwanda. For that reason, he arrived on 28th August 1983, only six months from the arrival of Br. Giacomo Bini and Br. Raul”.

The story of Br. Vjeko is truly incredible and almost 30 years later he has much to teach everyone. In Rwanda, in Kivumu, a school bears his name (“Father Vjeko Center”) and he is remembered as “the apostle who distinguished himself among the Rwandans” or as “the African Oskar Schindler” for his tireless saving work during the genocide of 1994.

Arriving in Rwanda in August 1983, in the first moments he experienced the difficulties of the local language, so much so that he preferred not to speak for fear of mispronouncing the words, but he paid great attention to people’s conversation. By this attentive method, he was able to penetrate the genius of the Rwandan language and was soon able to communicate with all categories of people, so much so that it arose the doubt that he was not a white-skinned Rwandan. He was a good priest who knew every single parishioner by name, he

was interested in their daily life, he fought so that no one was lost or lacked consolation: he was truly the “good shepherd” who takes care of the sheep and never lets them die of hunger.

During the tragic events that Rwanda experienced in 1994, Br. Vjeko decided to stay and showed extraordinary love and courage. He was a fearless fighter in protecting the innocents from the hands of assassins. He faced murderers at the barriers, hid pursued people in the bushes, suffered hunger on the Gitarama-Bujumbura Road to get something to eat for the refugees, without forgetting that under the truck he hid those who had just escaped the spears and machetes. In view of reconciliation, he tried to be a bridge between the factions fighting for power; at the last minute he saved Msgr. Wenceslas Karibushi, who was about to be slaughtered. He was a compassionate good Samaritan: instead of avoiding this or that act so as not to compromise himself, he said to himself: “If I don’t do it, what will become of them?”. [...] He was killed in unclear circumstances on January 31, 1998, in Kigali; he was 40 years old.

We continue to pray that the Lord may grant him the grace to be counted among His blessed into the Church and into His kingdom.

Read the full text on www.ofm.org

With the contribution of Br. Daicolas Nsabimana, Custodial Secretary of the Custody of Our Lady of Kibeho



Br. Vjeko (first on the left) on the day he was clothed in the Franciscan habit.

First Joint Gathering of Elderly Friars in the Philippines Quezon City, February 3-7, 2025



WWW.OFM.ORG

From February 3 to 7, 2025, the serene grounds of Our Lady of the Angels Seminary in Novaliches, Quezon City served as the epicenter of fraternity and renewal. Franciscan friars from the Province of San Pedro Bautista (Luzon) and the Province of San Antonio de Padua (Visayas and Mindanao) gathered for a landmark event: the inaugural Joint Accompaniment Program for Senior and Elderly Friars. This gathering embraced the theme “Fran-

ciscan We Are, Gracious and Grateful,” and was animated by the On-Going Formation teams of both Entities. Events of this five-day encounter revolved around checking up on each other and sharing of memories from formation and mission experiences. Participants received inputs on elderly nurturance and community together with inspiring conversations with young friars and aspirants. On the Provincial Celebration of the Feast of San Pedro



Bautista last February 5, the participants received a tribute program as way of thanking and recognizing their years of service to the Church and fraternity.

The First Joint Accompaniment Program for Senior and Elderly Friars concluded with a mass and a simple dinner program in Santuario de San Antonio Parish in Makati City. This pioneering joint accompaniment program stood as a testament to the Franciscan spirit of brotherhood, gratitude,

and grace. It provided a space for senior friars to reconnect, rejuvenate, and celebrate their lifelong vocation in an atmosphere of joy and mutual support. As the echoes of shared laughter and prayer lingered, the gathering left an enduring legacy of unity, love, and renewal for the Franciscan family in the Philippines.

Makki Cruz, OFM

Day of Human Fraternity in Izmir, Turkey

Reflection and common prayer



WWW.OFM.ORG



On the 10th February at the Italian Cultural Centre “Casa Italia” in Izmir, Turkey, a meeting of religious leaders of the city was held for a moment of reflection and common prayer.

The event, organized by the Diocesan Commission for Interreligious Dialogue with the participation of the friars of the Fraternity of Bornova (Smyrna), brought together several prominent figures.

The meeting was attended by the Consul General of Italy in Izmir, the Archbishop of Izmir, the Anglican Chaplain, the Dede of the Dervishes of Magnesia (Manisa), a delegate of the Synagogue of Smyrna, the Mufti of the neighbourhood, together with members of the communities, priests and religious.

The event began with a short lecture given by one of the friars, accompanied by local musicians who performed significant pieces in Turkish. Subsequently, each religious leader shared their own spiritual reflection.

Inspired by Pope Francis’ words for this occasion, the meeting ended with a prayer for peace and for the victims of wars, followed by a short musical intervention.

These meetings represent an important opportunity for mutual knowledge, fostering new friendships and ways of dialogue to build a more peaceful and tolerant world.

Deceased Brothers



- † 3rd February: Br. Gottfried Zedler, Prov. St. Elizabeth (Germany)
- † 30th January: Br. Anto Cvitković, Prov. Holy Cross (Argentine Bosnia)
- † 28th January: Br. Leonardo Fernández Fernández, Prov. Immaculate Conception (Spain)

- † 18 December: Br. Michael Angkur, Prov. St Michael the Archangel (Indonesia)

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



Summit on children's rights in the Vatican

Br. Ibrahim Faltas OFM: "Peace is the fundamental right of children"



WWW.OFM.ORG

On the 3rd February, 2025, the International Summit on Children's Rights was held in the Vatican: chaired by Pope Francis, it was attended by institutional representatives, political leaders and humanitarian organizations from all over the world, with the aim of finding programmatic guidelines for urgent and synergistic action to protect children around the world.

Amongst the participants was Br. Ibrahim Faltas, OFM, Vicar of the Custody of the Holy Land, who said in an interview with the SIR agency: "Peace is the fundamental right of children. The war that began sixteen months ago [in Israel and Palestine] has brought death and de-

struction, multiplied the suffering of Palestinian children and Israeli children. In Gaza, children have suffered from hunger, thirst, cold, heat, lack of care and education," Br. Ibrahim testified, "essential needs and rights have been lacking.

The respite and the much desired peace may relieve the physical and material needs of the children, but it will be difficult to erase the visible and invisible traumas they have left on the children's bodies and minds. In these sixteen months of war, many children have been born, but many have died, many have not had the opportunity to save themselves."

The religious then underlined the school emergency in the Gaza Strip, as many schools were destroyed during the conflict: "Thirty-nine thousand children last year were unable to take their high

school exams, and it will be the same for many of them again this year. They do not see their future and are losing hope for the future," concluded the Vicar.

Pope Francis, who strongly wanted this international meeting "to rescue and protect children, whose rights are trampled on and ignored every

day", in his final thanks quoted a speech by Br. Ibrahim: "Father Faltas said a word, a phrase that I like so much: 'Children are watching us'.

It was also the title of a famous film. Children look at us: they look at us to see how we go forward in life," the Holy Father concluded.



Also present at the meeting was the Italian Foreign Minister, Antonio Tajani, who announced that 30 Palestinian children with cancer reported by Card. Pierbattista Pizzaballa, OFM and the Pope John XXIII Centre.

Sources: www.agensir.it and www.vaticannews.va

Photo: OFM Archive

World Day of Consecrated Life, 2025
Feast of the Presentation of the Lord



WWW.OFM.ORG



On February 1, the first Vespers of the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord and World Day of Consecrated Life, were celebrated in St. Peter’s Basilica as part of the Jubilee of Hope.

Pope Francis, who presided over the vespers, addressed the consecrated, saying: “In a liturgical context characterized by the symbol of light, all of you, sisters and brothers who have chosen the path of the evangelical counsels, have consecrated yourselves, as “Spouses before the Spouse...enveloped by his light”.

The Holy Father continued his homily, reflecting on religious vows as three aspects that can help in becoming bearers of “light” in today’s world. Speaking of poverty, he explained that it has “its roots in the very life of God, eternal and total gift of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”, emphasizing



that the consecrated person must be a “bearer of blessing” through the free and generous use of all things.

On February 2, in the Church of *Santa Maria Mediatrice*, the brothers of the General Curia celebrated

the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord with a Eucharist presided over by Br. Massimo Fusarelli. The celebration began with the blessing of the light, in which the Minister General, remembering that we are celebrating the Jubilee, invited us to be men of expectation and hope. During the homily, speaking of the figure of Simeon, he emphasized that he has the Holy Spirit on him: “Thus, Simeon is a sign of the rest of faithful Israel that walks in search of the Lord”. He also invited those present, like Simeon, to wait for the consolation of the Lord. At the end of his homily, he conveyed best wishes to the brothers and nuns present, as well as all the religious and people who have consecrated their lives to the service of the Lord.

[Read Pope Francis’ Homily](#)



Solemn Professions



15th February, Prov. Our Lady of Guadalupe (Guatemala)
Br. Mario David Ixmey Ralac

1st February, Prov. Immaculate Conception (Spain)
Br. Israel Bonilla Jaramillo

25th January, Foundation of the Immaculate Conception (Angola)
Br. Luís Gungo

Information received from the General Secretariat

Jubilee Celebration of Communication

The truly wise know how to communicate



WWW.OFM.ORG



The Jubilee Celebration for the World of Communication opened on Friday, January 24, 2025, with the celebration of Holy Mass presided over by Card. Baldassare Reina, Vicar General for the diocese of Rome. The gathering was open to all professional figures in the world of communication: not only to journalists, media operators and newspaper publishers, but also to those who use social media to create video content, audio and video technicians, writers, and computer programmers. Pope Francis has had much to say during this Jubilee year on the issue of communications, a sign of the importance he sees in these topics for the Church of today. In his Message for the 59th World Communications Day, the Holy Father highlighted the need to put “our collective and personal responsibility to others” at the center of what is communicated. In a world “marked by disinformation and polarization,” he called for media content which generates hope instead of fear or desperation in those who access it.

On Saturday the 25th, during a meeting held in Pope Paul VI Audience Hall with those involved in the world of communication, the Pontiff highlight-

ed the importance of coming together with others. “Communicating,” he said, “means stepping outside of oneself to make room for the other. Communication is not only producing something, but also encountering the other. The truly wise know how to communicate!”

Read the full text on www.ofm.org

Pilgrims of Hope OFM



Send comgen@ofm.org an article (maximum 4000 characters including spaces) telling the story of the Jubilee 2025 experienced by your OFM Fraternity.

comgen@ofm.org

Subscribe

Write us

Web

Follow us



Newsletter



comgen@ofm.org



www.ofm.org



[@ofmorg](https://www.youtube.com/@ofmorg)



[@fratrumminorum](https://www.instagram.com/@fratrumminorum)



[@ofm.org](https://www.facebook.com/@ofm.org)

Curia Generale dei Frati Minori
Via di S. Maria Mediatrix, 25
Roma, Italia

Director: Br Byron A. Chamann Anléu OFM
Translators: Br. John Luke, Br. Arthur Andersen, Br. Cyrianus Korongo, Br. Rick Martignetti

OFM

Ordo Fratrum Minorum
© 2025 All rights reserved