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The new OFM Anglophone African Conference is born
Kigali (Rwanda), 17th February 2025

On the 17th February, 2025, the erection of the new English Speaking African Conference (ESAC) of the OFM was celebrated at the Custodial House of the Autonomous Custody “Our Lady of Kibeho” (Rwanda-Burundi). The new Conference is composed of the following Entities: Province of Our Lady Queen of Peace (South Africa); Province of “St Francis” (Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania); Autonomous Custody of. “St Clare” (Mozambique); Autonomous Custody of “Our Lady of Kibeho” (Burundi-Rwanda); Dipendant Custody of “The Good Shepherd” (Zimbabwe); “St. Francis of Assisi” Foundation (Sudan and South Sudan); “Immaculate Mother of God” Foundation (Angola).

In addition to Br. Victor Quematcha, Definitor General for Africa, the meeting was attended by the Provincial Ministers, the Custodes and the Presidents of the Foundations of the Entities of the new Conference: Br. Théoneste Twahirwa, Custos of the Autonomous Custody of “Our Lady of Kibeho” (Burundi-Rwanda); Br. Peter Tindo, President of the “St. Francis of Assisi” Foundation (Sudan and South Sudan); Br. Afonso Lage Nhampoca Luís, Custos of the Autonomous Custody of “St Clare” (Mozambique); Br. Fredrick Odhiambo Owor, Minister Provincial of the “St. Francis” Province (Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania); Br. Thomas Makamure, Custos of the Dependant Custody of the “Good Shepherd” (Zimbabwe); Br. Sipehelele Gwanisheni, Minister Provincial of the Province “Our Lady Queen of Peace” (South Africa).

Br. Ivair de Carvalho, President of the “Immaculate Mother of God” Foundation (Angola), was absent. Those present elected Br. Sipehelele Gwanisheni as President, Br. Afonso Lage Nhampoca Luís as Vice-President and Br. Théoneste Twahirwa as Secretary. The erection of the new Conference is part of the process of complete revision of the current structure of the Conferences, as formulated in Mandate No. 31 of the 2021 General Chapter. The General Definitory, during the session of the 16th January 2025, had approved the particular Statutes of the new ESAC.





Government of the Order

Reflections by Br. Massimo *February 2025*



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At the end of January I concluded my visit to Portugal and the meeting with the Definitors of the Iberian Peninsula. This land, which once saw a strong and incisive Franciscan presence flourish, today presents me with a different face, marked by the fragility and aging of our fraternities. Yet, precisely in this seemingly weak reality, I noticed luminous signs of an authentic pilgrimage of hope.

Our brothers live immersed in deeply secularized societies, where the voice of faith becomes increasingly weak and

where our presences become smaller and more humble. The great structures of the past, which once spoke of a strong and visible presence of the Order, today appear to us as clothing too loose for our reduced fraternities. But it is precisely in this vulnerability that I have recognized a particular grace: that of rediscovering the essentials of our vocation as friars minor.

I have seen brothers who, even in their advanced age, continue to keep watch in the meantime, like sentries who scrutinize the horizon. They do not limit themselves to guarding memories of a glorious past, but know how to read the signs of the times with eyes of faith. Their fidelity to their vocation, seen in a context which frequently appears indifferent or hostile, becomes itself a silent prophecy.

This new minority is not the result of a strategy or of a planned

choice. Rather, it is the humble reception of a condition which is given to us. In it we rediscover the grace of simply being brothers who walk with their people, sharing in the concerns and the hopes of this time. The daily gestures of proximity, patient listening, faithful prayer all become the places where the promise of God, which continues to be fulfilled in the world, is manifested.

I met fraternities which knew how to make their weakness a strength, no longer seeking prestige or social relevance, but witnessing with humility the beauty of a gifted life. Some brothers have shared with me how this condition of greater numerical and structural poverty has helped them rediscover the joy of little things, the importance of authentic relationships, the value of silent but faithful presence.

There is certainly no lack of concerns about the future,

General Curia Agenda



- ☑ On March 7, Br. John Wong, General Definitor and President of the Commission for the Service of Dialogue, will be in Nagasaki, Japan, to participate in a meeting of the aforementioned Commission.
- ☑ From 5 to 7 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 a meeting of the aforementioned Commission at the Antonianum in Rome.

- ☑ On March 10, Br. Cesare Vaiani, General Definitor, will participate in the opening session of the Provincial Chapter of the Province of S. Mary of Grace (Benevento - Italy).

questions about how to accompany this process of transformation, the uncertainties about how to manage the structures and presences that we can no longer maintain. But I have seen that, where there is the willingness to welcome this new season as a time of grace,

there also flourish the seeds of unexpected novelty.

This pilgrimage to the Iberian Peninsula reminded me that hope is not linked to numbers or structures, but to the creative fidelity with which we know how to live our charism today.

The promise of God continues to be fulfilled, perhaps in ways that we would not have imagined, through the humble witness of brothers who know how to be “minors”, not only in name, but in the concrete condition of their life.

Let us continue to pray for the health of Pope Francis



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The Minister General with the Definitory, certain of the prayer that is rising to the Father of mercies for the health of the Holy Father, asks the Friars Minor, the Poor Clare and Conceptionist Sisters, the Franciscan sisters affiliated to the Order and the lay men and women of our family, to continue to pray for the health of Pope Francis.

We entrust it to the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin, of our father St. Francis, of St. Clare and of all the saints of our family, so that the Lord may preserve it in his Church and promote the unity of his people and peace in the world.

Eucharist celebrated by the Minister General in Gemelli Hospital

On February 25, Br. Massimo Fusarelli presided over Eucharist in the central Saint John Paul II chapel of Gemelli Hospital. During the celebration, prayers were offered to the Lord for the healing and strength of Pope Francis during his illness. The Minister General joined the ranks of the Friars Minor who have served as chaplains at Gemelli Hospital since 1963. The clinic was founded then in memory of our illustrious brother Agostino Gemelli, founder of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart.



Br. Massimo Fusarelli successfully operated: his recovery is progressing positively



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Dear brothers and sisters,

We are pleased to inform you that the operation for the removal of a meningioma that Br Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, underwent on February 13 at the Policlinico Gemelli in Rome, has been a complete success; the recovery is progressing positively, as expected by the doctors, and Br Massimo will return to the General Curia in the coming

days, where he will remain resting until March 20. The functions of government and administration will be carried out by Br Ignacio Ceja Jiménez, Vicar General. We thank all those who have expressed their prayers and thoughts of closeness during these days and invite everyone to continue praying for his health.

The General Secretariat of the Order of Friars Minor

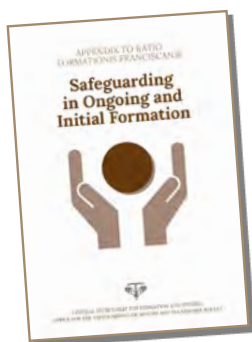


Animation of the Order

Safeguarding in ongoing and initial formation *The Appendix of the Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*



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The Appendix of the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae* on the theme of “Safeguarding in Ongoing and Initial Formation” in the Order of Friars

Minor has been published.

This document, released by the General Secretariat for Training and Studies and the Office for

the Safeguarding of Minors and Vulnerable Adults, is part of the broader framework of the Order’s initiatives in favour of the safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults. In accordance with Mandate No. 9 of the 2021 General Chapter, the OFM over the years has provided for the creation of an [International Commission for the Safeguarding](#), to draw up a [Manual](#) and today to draw up an appendix of the *Ratio Formationis* that helps the Friars

Minor, formators and educators, to «live the charism of minority expressed in the Safeguarding, renouncing any kind of abuse of power over others».

Download PDF: [Italiano](#) - [English](#) [Español](#)

Download the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae*:

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

Deceased Brothers



- † 24 February: Br. Stanislaus Bertagnolli, Prov. Saint Leopold (Italy)
- † 18 February: Br. Plínio Ricardo Maldaner, Prov. Saint Francis of Assisi (Brazil)
- † 15 February: Br. Jean Van Brussel, Prov. Blessed Duns Scotus (Belgium); Br. Juliusz Rydlewski, Prov. Assumption of the BVM (Poland).
- † 14 February: Br. Rémi Konlani, Prov. of the Incarnate Word (Togo)
- † 13 February: Br. Ilario Contran, Prov. of Saint Anthony of the Friars Minor (Italy)

- † 12 February: Br. Richard Klotz, Prov. of Saint Leopold (Austria)
- † 21 January: Br. Silvio Di Gioia, Prov. of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus (Italy)
- † 15 January: Br. Rinaldo Corn, Prov. of Saint Anthony of the Friars Minor (Italy)
- † 31 December: Br. Giuseppe Ferraro, Prov. of Saint Anthony of the Friars Minor (Italy)

Information received from the General Secretariat secgen@ofm.org

The commitment of Franciscans for peace in Japan

The visit in Asia of the Order's Offices of Animation continues



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From February 10 to 17, 2025, the friars responsible for the General Secretariat for the Missions and Evangelization and the General Office for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation of the Order of Friars Minor became acquainted with the Franciscan work in Japan, as part of their visit in Asia.



In 1977 the Franciscan Province of the Holy Martyrs of Japan was created, the result of the missionary presence of entities of the Order from Europe and America. Currently, the province numbers about seventy friars distributed in nine houses.

Undoubtedly, both the local church and the Franciscan presence in Japan have been marked by two events which outline its face. The first of these is the persecution of Christianity that lasted more than two centuries, which left a long list of martyrs. The second refers to the nuclear attack of the United States in August of 1945 against the two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Persecution and martyrdom

The scope, ferocity and duration of the persecution of Christians in Japan, which lasted almost 250 years, are unparalleled in the two millennia of Christianity. During this long period, tens of thousands of Christians lived their faith in secret. Many of them were condemned to martyrdom and most of their names remain unknown. Among those who received the palm of martyrdom there were also some Franciscans. For example, on February 15, 1597, the Spanish Franciscan Pedro Bautista, along with another twenty-five (25) Christians, was assassinated near the city of Nagasaki. Pope Pius IX canonized them in 1862. A public square in the center of the city of Nagasaki is dedicated to these first witnesses of the Japanese Church. Another two hundred five (205) martyrs were beatified in

1867. A group of sixteen (16) martyrs was canonized by St. John Paul II in 1987 and, finally, one hundred eighty-eight (188) martyrs were beatified in Nagasaki. Some Franciscan brothers in Japan are descendants of Christian families which lived their faith in hiding. Therefore, the local church and the Franciscan presence have their origin in the testimony of this great assembly of martyrs in Japan.

Today one of the most important challenges which the religions of this Asian country must face is religious indifference. On the one hand, the average age of the clergy and religious life increases from year to year; on the other hand, diocesan seminaries, houses of formation of consecrated life, and Buddhist monasteries are increasingly empty. In this regard, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, in the 2024 document, *Brothers and Minors Today*, affirms that “the decrease of vocations in some areas and their multiplicity in others, together with the challenges which affect the peace, the common home, and religious freedom, require on our part a lot of discernment to recognize the presence and action of the Lord in our midst and around us”.

The atomic bombs

A damaged clock with hands marking 11:02 is on display at the Museum of the Atomic Bomb in the city of Nagasaki. It was the moment in which it was stopped by the explosion of the atomic bomb on August 9, 1945. In a few hours, it caused the deaths of over 70,000 persons, becoming one of the genocides with the greatest number of victims in a few minutes. Hiroshima had experienced it three days before.

2025 will mark the 80th anniversary of the only nuclear attack recorded in history. Br. Jacob Kataoka, a member of the Franciscan Province, is a survivor of the atomic bomb in Nagasaki. According to his recounting, he was nine years old. His school was half a kilometer away from Ground Zero. He remembers that most of his classmates and teachers died on the spot. Rereading the current situation in the world, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, in the aforementioned document, asks himself: “How can we not realize that, in this historical moment, wars and conflicts, together with climate change, are realities that increase the number of migrants and refugees in the world from year to year, with all the consequences that this entails, including the

pressure to close borders and hearts?” Br. Francis Furusato and Br. Antonio Kim were pioneers of the so-called Nagasaki Project, “an international Franciscan fraternity for peace, whose fundamental concept is to spread and promote lasting peace in the city of Nagasaki and in the world”. Br. Francis assures that “this project is not only a look to the past, but also a message of peace for the present and future.”

A project that was made possible, thanks to the collaboration of other Franciscan provinces, especially on the Asian continent, which have offered their brothers to form the international fraternity. Furthermore, according to Br. Augustine Takuji Kuwata, Provincial Minister, the Nagasaki Project is open to Franciscan brothers from the entire Or-

der who wish to join for a long stay or a sabbatical period. Brothers coming from Germany, Argentina, United States, among other countries have already lived this experience. Christianity and the Franciscan Order in Japan were shaped by a prolonged persecution that led to the bloodshed of the martyrs and also by the consequences of a nuclear attack. From these historical wounds, the message and the commitment of the Franciscan brothers for peace emerges anew. A message posted at the entrance of the city museum, which can be read in ten languages: “Nagasaki must be the last place exposed to an atomic bomb”.

Br. Daniel Rodriguez Blanco, OFM - Director, JPIC Office

The Order's Animation Offices in Singapore

Missionary evangelization starting from social reality



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The General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization (SGME) and the General Office for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) of the Order of Friars Minor wanted to get closer to the different Franciscan presences in some countries of the Asian continent: Vietnam, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Malaysia and Singapore, to animate the mission of the brothers who, in different contexts, they seek to bear witness with their lives “in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Kings 1:2) “to fill the earth with the Gospel of Christ” (1 Cel 97).

Arriving in Singapore on 17th February, 2025, the friars of the formation house “Fraternity of Greccio” of the Autonomous Custody of St. Anthony (Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei) welcomed Br. Francisco Gómez Vargas, Br. Dennis Tayo (SGME), Br.

Daniel N. Rodriguez Blanco and Br. Taucen H. Gir-sang (JPIC) with fraternal affection. The formation fraternity, in addition to accompanying the brothers in formation, also has the task of spiritually accompanying the community in prison pastoral care, in the service of assistance to migrants and the deaf and dumb, in pastoral counseling, in the care of social services.

The following day, visitors attended the meeting of the South Asia, Australia and Oceania Conference (SAAOC), where the Mission Secretariat and the JPIC Office were able to share the progress made and the projects to be carried out in the current year with the Provincial Ministers, Custodes and Foundation Presidents of the Conference.

The challenge remains that of continuing to animate missionary evangelization in each entity starting from the social reality, in the commitment to justice, peace and care for creation for a witness of evangelization starting from the charismatic identity.

We thank God and every friar for the intercultural experience we have had and for the fraternity we have shared: even if in many places we hear trumpets of war, we are still full of hope in the kingdom of God that continues to spread. We felt and lived it in this closeness to the different experiences of missionary evangelization that the friars and Sisters bear witness to with great commitment.

Br. Francisco Gómez Vargas, SGME Secretary

A Call to Justice and Care for Creation

Malaysia, the collaboration between JPIC and the Creation Justice Committee



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From 19 to 22 February 2025, the Church of St. Ann in Kuching (Diocese of Kuching, East Malaysia) welcomed three friars from the General Curia of Rome: Br. Daniel Rodriguez Blanco and Br. Taucen Gir-sang (respectively Director and Vice-Director of the General JPIC Office), and Br. Dennis Tayo (General Animator for Missions). Their visit was a moment of deep reflection, reinforcing the Franciscan call to justice, peace, and care for creation.



Their insights strengthened the mission of Creation Justice in Kuching, particularly in reducing plastic waste, promoting renewable energy, and supporting sustainable practices. This visit also fostered collaboration among friars in Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei, integrating ecological justice with social transformation.

A key focus was the Bunan Resilience Project, which seeks to restore indigenous children's connection to their ancestral land, ensuring their right to heritage and dignity. The friars' reflections opened hearts to the urgent call of caring for the poor and embracing integral ecology as a Gospel imperative.

Creation Justice and JPIC: A Shared Mission

This visit was an opportunity to deepen the collaboration

between Creation Justice and JPIC, opening the eyes of Franciscan friars in Kuching to the interconnection between social justice and care for the earth. The Franciscan mission calls us to walk alongside the marginalized, advocating for both human dignity and environmental sustainability.

By working together, JPIC and Creation Justice can strengthen education and advocacy, empowering communities to protect their land and resources. The Bunan Resilience Project exemplifies how justice for the poor and justice for creation go hand in hand. Through shared initiatives, friars can become catalysts for ecological and social transformation, ensuring that care for creation remains a lived expression of the Gospel.

Taking care of the earth is an ongoing journey. Each action, no matter how small, is a step toward a just and sustainable world. Let us continue to walk this path together, responding to the cry of the earth and the poor with renewed commitment and hope.

Br. Nelson Evarinus, OFM

Franciscan Bookmark



Breve Historia de la Provincia Franciscana de los XII Apóstoles del Perú



Fr. Emilio Carpio Ponce, OFM

Prensa Franciscana

Los estigmas de San Francisco de Asís: don y profecía para nuestro tiempo



Fr. Pedro Castro Castro, OFM

Prensa Franciscana

Iglesia ministerial. Los ministerios laicales en la Iglesia



Kasper Mariusz Kaproń OFM

Facultad de Teología San Pablo - Universidad Católica Boliviana

Iglesia comunidad sacramental



Kasper Mariusz Kaproń OFM

Facultad de Teología San Pablo - Universidad Católica Boliviana



News from the Entities

SAAOC Conference Meeting

*Lights, shadows and collaborative commitments
in South Asia, Australia and Oceania*



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The 12 leaders of the Conference of South Asia, Australia and Oceania (SAAOC) met in Singapore from 18 to 21 February. The meeting was chaired by the President of the SAAOC, Br. Derrick Yap, and was also attended by the President of the East Asia Conference (EAC), Br. Lino Gregorio Redoblado, and the General Definitor of the Franciscan Conferences of Asia and Oceania (FCAO), Br. John Wong. The meeting included an afternoon session with four members of the General Curia who were passing through Singapore, Br. Francisco Gomez Vargas and Br. Dennis Tayo of the General Secretariat for Mission and Evangelisation, and Br. Daniel Rodriguez Blanco and Br. Taucen Hotlan Girsang of the General Office for JPIC.

During the meeting, the leaders discussed the “lights” of the Conference, which include an overall growth in the number of new vocations, with solemn professions and ordinations in many Entities over the past year. Other major strengths in many SAAOC Entities include a strong sense of interculturality and healthy fraternal life, relationships and projects. The Ministers were grateful for the creativity in Franciscan life and ministry, with the development of new forms of evangelical presence and mission. The friars present also recognised that there is a healthy sense of mutual support and inter-En-

tity collaboration in the Conference, with excellent attendance at the two annual meetings of SAAOC Ministers, one in person and one online. Some positive results of inter-Entity and inter-Conference collaboration include the ongoing Asian Franciscan Formators Training (AFFT) course and the Franciscan Network in Asia for Peace and Integral Ecology.

Among the common “shadows” in the Conference is the negative aspect of interculturality, which sometimes manifests itself in regional or cultural divisions among the friars, in lack of trust between some friars and in different personal moral codes. Another challenge faced by many SAAOC Entities is that of formation to the realities of the 21st century, the lack of experienced formators and the gap between formators and friars in initial formation. It was also noted that some applicants to the Order have a very low level of academic qualification or faith background. Some ministers struggle with the lack of trust between some friars, the presence of disruptive friars and the lack of cooperation of some senior friars. It was recognised that in some Entities there is a lack of vocations and in many places there is a lack of qualified personnel to take on responsibilities. Many Entities face the challenge of a highly secularised society and a highly clericalised Church.

The decisions of this SAAOC meeting in February 2025 are as follows:

Formation & Studies

- 1) To support the renovation of the Centre for Evangelisation (Sampaloc, Philippines);
- 2) To develop a proposal for an inter-Conference certificate course in English as a Second Language (ESL) for FCAO friars preparing for future studies/ministries/missions;
- 3) To develop a proposal for a 6-month on-line Italian language course for FCAO friars preparing for future studies in Italy;

- 4) To continue to support and develop the Asian Franciscan Formators Training (AFFT), including a proposal for a new Ongoing Formation Programme for Directors of Ongoing Formation (PDOF) and update modules for current formators in the FCAO;
- 5) To ask the General Curia to update the *Ratio Formationis Franciscanae* to include more aspects of formation for lay friars.

Mission and Evangelisation

- 6) To convene the New Forms Working Group (NFWG) established at the New Forms Meeting in Vietnam in January 2025;
- 7) To promote the Online Primer Course (OPC) on Interculturality in Asia, Australia and Oceania;
- 8) To develop a proposal for a one-year programme for the preparation of missionaries after solemn profession.

JPIC

- 9) To continue to support the ongoing efforts of the Franciscan Network in Asia for peace and the integrity of creation.

Safeguarding of minors and vulnerable adults

- 10) To bring together all the FCAO Safeguarding Directors in a Safeguarding Support Team for ongoing formation, collaboration, mutual support and learning.

Administration

- 11) To produce updated job descriptions for all SAAOC roles - President, Vice-President, Bursar, Secretaries and Animators;
- 12) To review and update the SAAOC Statutes with reference to those of the EAC.

Proposed Franciscan Foundation for Asia

- 13) To support the current preparatory plans for the proposal to establish a Franciscan Foundation in Singapore to serve financial needs of projects in the FCAO Entities and beyond.

“Franciscan synod” to chart the future of the Province
Our Lady of Guadalupe, USA



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Responding to Pope Francis’ call to embrace synodal listening and discernment, the Franciscan Friars of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the United States embarked in a year-long Franciscan synod. Throughout 2024, local friaries first met to discern questions centered on Franciscan life, charism and mission. The fruits of that discernment were revisited during seven regional meetings held throughout the country, followed by a national Provincial Synod held in Kansas City on January 2025. The frigid air and potential travel hassles did not deter close to 200 friars and ministry partners who gathered to pray, discern and help shape the future of the Province. The synod yielded a report with eight top priorities for the Province.

Provincial Minister Br. Lawrence Hayes, OFM, commissioned the synod and said synodality is more than addressing administrative or demographic changes - it is part of a process to renew Franciscan life and reform the Church. Attendees considered the “signs of the times” alongside the realities of diminishing numbers of friars, vocations and resources and an aging community of religious in the US. During the

synod, they held a penance liturgy to be freed from what holds them back from God’s love, ministry to others and moving forward with the renewal process.

Younger friars and young adults shared their perspective, eagerly expressing their participation in Church life, a desire to take leadership positions in ministries and actively preserve the Franciscan tradition.



The synod also unfolded as part of a global discernment led by the Order of Friars Minor, inviting Entities across the world - friars, Secular Franciscans, Franciscan Sisters and lay partners - to synodal discussion and renewal of Franciscan life.

Sr. Marilyn Trowbridge, SFP, who has collaborated with friars in ministry, called her attendance a “true privilege of God” and cited the “camaraderie” as proof of God’s presence.

“As fellow Franciscans, we have a rich heritage that is beyond measure,” she said. “Part of that

is to bring it forward to the people of God in various and sundry ways.”

The Synod ended prayerfully with a Mass celebrated by Br. Lawrence, who encouraged the assembly to discern one quality or virtue of Jesus to embody and share with others. “We go out as brothers and sisters. Thank you for walking with us and know that we walk with you. Remember that we always have the promise of the Holy Spirit with us: Know that I will be with you until the end of time.”

Photo Credit: Octavio Duran, OFM



OFS

Extraordinary Fraternal and Pastoral Visit to OFS in South Africa 11-15 February 2025


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From the 11th - 15th February 2025 extraordinary International fraternal and pastoral visit took place in South Africa. It was carried out by the Minister General of OFS, Tibor Kauser who was accompanied by the President of the Council of CIOFS Eremenciana Chiyama, OFS, and the General Spiritual Assistant Br. Pedro Zitha, OFM. After clarifying some questions with regard to the identity of the Order of the Secular Franciscans they visited the Bishops of the Diocese as follows:

Rev. Siegfried Mandla Jwara, C.M.M, the Archbishop of Archbishop of Durban, together with the Auxiliary Bishop, Elias Kwenzakufani Zondi.

Mons. Neil Augustine Frank, OMI, bishop of Marian Hill Diocese. After that meeting the Minister General and his companions went for the Eucharistic celebration and renewal of the promises of the brothers and sisters at Pietermaritzburg in the hands of Tibor Kauser, during the mass that was celebrated by Br. Pedro.



Mons. Stanislaw Jan Dziuba, O.S.P.P.E, Mzimkhulu Diocese.

Mons. Thulani Victor Mbuyisa, C.M.M., bishop of Kokstad Diocese: During the Eucharist celebration the members of OFS fraternity renewed their promises.

The retreat house of the Capuchin Poor Clares at Hibberdene, where the visitors were hosted.

P. Robert Bissel, diocesan administrator of Capital City, who attended the mass and the renewal of promises of OFS.



Br. Albert Gonsalves, OFM Cap, the major superior of the Capuchins who discussed with them on how to insert in their formation the theme of the identity of OFS, their autonomy and on how to act so as to strengthen unity and collaboration between the first order, TOR and OFS.

After the visit they went back to Gauteng to the Catholic Croatian Church where mass was celebrated together with the renewal of promises. There followed the meeting with the Secular Franciscans. They met Card. Stephen Brislin, the Apostolico Nuncio Henryk Mieczyslaw Jagodzinski and finally Mons. Dario Pavis.

Lastly, they had a meeting with Br. Siphelile Gwanisheni, the Minister Provincial of OFM so as to deepen with him on how the ministers of the three Orders can work together as a conference so as to enable the OFS of Kwazulu Natal region come to realize that OFS, is an Order in the Church and not confraternity and enable the brothers of the first

Order to consider OFS as their priority in their ministry.

The bishops appreciated the decision of the visitators to meet. They expressed their disappointment that in some diocese the OFS are not known officially. They took the observation made by the bishops adding that it was one of the motives that made them decide to meet them so as to make them aware of OFS identity, unity and their service in the Church. Together with their visitators they committed themselves to send the program of formation so as to deepen the OFS of South Africa. They asked the bishops to commit themselves to inform the OFS fraternity that their members are no longer authorized to wear a habit. They are to orient them to the fact that they should were in common a Franciscan TAU. It is a recommendation to the members of OFS in all levels to make themselves known in parishes where the fraternity lives, operates and also asking the bishops the possibility of asking the diocesan priests who accompany them officially or non-officially in their parishes, to participate at formation workshops so as to understand and have a knowledge who secular Franciscans are in their parishes. This is in the view also of facilitating the future appointment of spiritual assistants of OFS from among the diocesan priests who always render their services to them because to small number of the friars who are now few.

The visitors acknowledged the fact that they are many challenges that the International OFS fraternity of South Africa faces, to change the mentality and the attitude of their member patience, courage and prayers are needed. They were optimistic and sure that with proper formation of OFS members the situation might change. Lastly the visitators expressed their deep thanksgiving to the national assistants for their commitment and dedication.

Br. Pedro Zitha, OFM

Solemn Professions



20 January, rom the Prov. of the Holy Martyrs of Korea (South Korea)

Br. Thomas Cho, Br. Stephen Choi, Br. Joseph Eyun, and Br. Michael Jeong.

Information received from the General Secretariat



Br. Pierre Charland OFM appointed Bishop *Diocese of Baie-Comeau (Canada)*



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The Holy Father Francis has appointed as Bishop of the Diocese of Baie-Comeau in Canada, Br. Pierre Charland, OFM, member of our Province of the Holy Spirit

in Canada, until now Provincial Minister of the same Province since its creation in 2018.

Br. Pierre was born on December 20, 1962, in North Bay, Ontario. He vested the Franciscan habit on August 18, 1991, in the then Province of St. Joseph, continuing his philosophical-theological studies in Montreal and Strasbourg. He made his Solemn Profession on May 12, 1996, and was ordained to the priesthood on June 22, 2012. During his ministry, he has held various

positions in the Province, including Provincial Vicar, Provincial Definitor, General Visitor, and parish priest. He was also a professor of spirituality at the University of Montreal and provided spiritual accompaniment at the Argenteuil Health and Social Services Center, while also supporting former drug addicts.

We extend our best wishes to our brother, His Excellency Mons. Pierre Charland OFM for his new ministry in service of the people of God.

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for Lent 2025 *Let us journey together in hope*

Dear brothers and sisters,

We begin our annual pilgrimage of Lent in faith and hope with the penitential rite of the imposition of ashes. The Church, our mother and teacher, invites us to open our hearts to God's grace, so that we can celebrate with great joy the paschal victory of Christ the Lord over sin and death, which led Saint Paul to exclaim: "Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Cor 15:54-55). Indeed, Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, is the heart of our faith and the pledge of our hope in the Father's great promise, already fulfilled in his beloved Son: life eternal (cf. Jn 10:28; 17:3).

This Lent, as we share in the grace of the Jubilee Year, I would like to propose a few reflections on what it means to journey together in hope, and on the summons to conversion that God in his mercy addresses to all of us, as individuals and as a community.

[Read the full text of the Message](#)

HAPPY LENTEN JOURNEY
to all!



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