

International Bulletin
Fraternitas
Ordo Fratrum Minorum

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*Merry
Christmas!*



*This is the day the Lord has made:
Let us rejoice and be glad in it*

(Ps 117:24)

Letter of the Minister General for Christmas 2025



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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the Lord give you peace!

As Christmas 2025 approaches, the Jubilee of Hope—which Pope Leo XIV will close on January 6, 2026—draws to its conclusion. At the same time, we approach the commemoration of Francis’s blessed passing at the Porziuncola on October 3, 1226. I wish to share with you a word of hope born from contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation, as Francis lived it and passed it on to us.

His greatest desire was to live the Gospel. At Greccio, he wanted “*to somehow see with his bodily eyes the hardships [our Lord] endured for lack of what a newborn needs; how he was laid in a manger and how he lay on the hay between the ox and the donkey*”. He wanted to see how Jesus “*was born for us along the way*”, poor and naked, just as Francis himself wished to go “*naked to meet the Lord*”.

Greccio and the ever-present memory of the Gospel—lived *sine glossa* through the Rule—opened the celebration of the Eighth Franciscan Centenary in 2023. This memory was inscribed in Francis’s flesh through the Stigmata and opened him, by divine inspiration, Greccio and the ever-present memory of the Gospel—lived *sine glossa* through the Rule—opened the celebration of the Eighth Franciscan Centenary in 2023. This memory was inscribed in Francis’s flesh through the Stigmata and opened him, by divine inspiration, to the beauty of that Canticle of praise through which he invited all creatures to acknowledge the Most High and good Lord, the source of all good.

In this Christmas 2025, illuminated by hope, the Centenary now opens toward that of Francis’s Passover, his encounter with death, whom he sang of as sister...

Read the full text of the Letter:

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Government of the Order



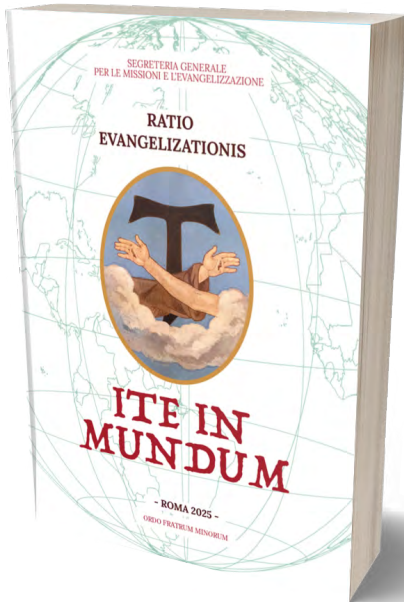
Ite in mundum

OFM Ratio Evangelizationis has been published

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“Ite in Mundum,” the *Ratio Evangelizationis* of the Order of Friars Minor, developed by the General Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization (SGME), has been published.

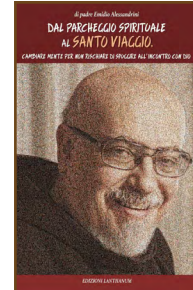
This document was born in response to Mandate 20 of the 2021 General Chapter, which entrusted to the General Secretariat for the Missions and Evangelization (SGME) the task of preparing an inspiring document for the evangelization of the Order, in keeping with the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church and the documents of our tradition. The mandate provided that this work would take place in a participatory way, through a synodal process involving the Conferences, the Provinces and the friars at the local and continental level, so that each reality could then formulate its own *Ratio*, rooted in its context and in its own challenges.



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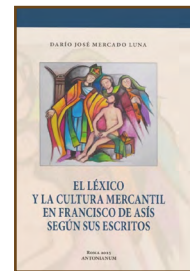
Franciscan Bookmark



**DAL PARCHEGGIO
SPIRITUALE
AL SANTO
VIAGGIO.**

Cambiare mente
per non rischiare di
sfuggire all'incontro
con Dio

Br. Emidio Alessandrini, OFM
Edizioni Lanthanum



**EL LÉXICO Y
LA CULTURA
MERCANTIL EN
FRANCISCO DE
ASÍS SEGÚN SUS
ESCRITOS**

Br. Darío José Mercado Luna, OFM
Antonianum

General Curia Agenda



- ☑ On the 25th December 2025, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General, will preside over Holy Mass at the Shrine of Greccio. From the 2nd-9th January, accompanied by the General Definitor for Asia-Oceania, Br. John Wong, he will visit the Custody of St. John the Baptist in Pakistan. On the 10th, he will be at Our Lady of the Angels-Santa Maria degli Angeli for the opening of the Centenary of the death of St. Francis; on the 14th, he will participate in the Pre-Capitular Assembly of the Seraphic Province at Our Lady of the Angles-Santa Maria degli Angeli.
- ☑ Up until the 1st January, 2026, Br. John Wong will visit the OFM communities and projects in Turkey,
- as General Delegate. He will be accompanied by Br. Baptist D'Souza, Delegate of the General Secretary.
- ☑ On the 8th and 9th January 8, 2026, Br. Jimmy Zammit, General Definitor, will visit the Franciscan Community of Stratford in London (UK), accompanied by Br. Franco Mirri (Director of the OFM Fraternitas Foundation) and Br. Aidan McGrath (Minister of the Province of Ireland), members of the CEF (Executive Commission for the New Fraternity of London).
- ☑ The Tempo Forte will be held at the General Curia from the 12th-23rd January 2026

Sowing seeds of Franciscan compassion and hope in Korea

*Br Massimo and Br John visited the Province
of the Holy Korean Martyrs*



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From 28 November to 4 December 2025, the Minister General, Br Massimo Fusarelli, and the General Definitor from Asia-Oceania, Br John Wong, visited the South Korean Province of the Holy Korean Martyrs. Founded in 1937 as a mission by 2 Canadian Franciscan friars, the Province continues to grow in a country that in recent decades has moved from a traditional East Asian society to a deeply urbanised, technological and globalised culture.

Contemporary Korean society faces challenges related to rapid population ageing, growing individualism, intense competitive pressure and an increase in psychological distress, especially among young people.

The Province is also in a time of transition as it prepares for the upcoming Provincial Chapter in January 2026. In this context, the importance of looking ahead with sensitivity and hope is recognised.

On 1 December, Br Massimo and Br John celebrated the funeral of Br Matteo Kim, who died at the age of 31. The Minister General emphasised that his presence at this painful time was a true providential sign of the closeness of the entire Order to the Province and to Br Matteo's family.

In his address to the friars of the Province, Br Massimo urged everyone to have a strong sense of the future, to never tire of building fraternal communion and to create spaces for open and constructive dialogue, lived with sincerity, respect and reciprocity. He recalled that, more than structures, what comes first are the brothers and the renewal of our evangelical life; structures must support human and fraternal life, not replace it.

On 2 December, together with Br John, the Minister General and the Definitor General were joined by Br Darko Tepert, Secretary General for Formation and Studies. Together they met with the postulants, novices, some temporary professed and the formators of the Province. In addition to pastoral and formative work, the friars in Korea carry on a strong tradition of commitment to Justice,

Peace and Integrity of Creation, particularly in service to refugees, migrants and the homeless.

With Br John and Br Darko, Br Massimo visited the Hansarang community, where four friars, with lay collaborators, offer hospitality to homeless people and those living in "micro-housing". "I thought I was coming to visit a social service," said Br Massimo, "but here I found a real family!"

During the visit, the Minister General also met with members of the OFS, Franciscan Youth, youth Bible groups and representatives of the five monasteries of the Poor Clares. On the last day, the friars joined about seventy members of the OFS for a six-kilometre rosary walk near the border with North Korea, praying for peace in a land still marked by the wounds of war.

Br Massimo concluded by calling everyone to fidelity, compassion and a prophetic vision of the future: we are not only called to preserve what we have, but to move forward. He invited the friars to reflect: How can we grow in the quality of our fraternal life? In prayer? In evangelisation in our concrete context?



Compassion of youth in Laos

Visit of the Minister General and the General Definitor, 6-9 December 2025



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From 6 to 9 December 2025, Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, and the General Definitor for Asia-Oceania, Br. John Wong, visited the OFM Fraternity of St Anthony in Laos, under the Province of St Francis in Vietnam. They were accompanied by the Minister Provincial, Br. John of God Nguyen Phuoc, and Br. Peter Binh as translator. This visit offered the visitors the opportunity to get to know more closely a young and vibrant reality, which seeks to live the Franciscan charism with simplicity, joy, and deep compassion. The fraternity in Laos is composed of five solemnly professed friars and one temporarily professed friar on missionary exposure. The first missionary, Br. Joseph Huyen, arrived in Pakse in 2012, beginning the Franciscan presence in the local Apostolic Vicariate. The community was officially established three years later. It is a mission with a wide scope in a country with a small local Church: a vast territory, a population of about eight million people, 95% of whom are Buddhist and only about 1.5% of whom are Christian, with numerous Indigenous villages that are isolated and lack essential services. In this context, the friars try to inculturate themselves in the local reality and respond to the concrete needs of the people. Many areas lack clean water, proper schooling, and basic health services. Parents often struggle to support the education of their children and may lack the means or opportunity to send them to school. For this reason, the friars collaborate with international volunteers, NGOs, and educational institutions to carry forward social and formative projects: boarding houses for rural students, tutoring programs and English classes, training of catechists for remote villages, health and clean-water programs, construction of formation and worship facilities, and initiatives for future sustainability. A particularly meaningful testimony of the friars' mission is the growth of the young people who have been accompanied by them over the years. Among these, three stories stand out, showing how compassion and fraternal care can transform lives.

The first is Luke Khan, 29, from the village of Huaoy Tao. In 2018, after finishing high school, he joined the friars as a volunteer in a summer camp for children and youth. He later stayed in their boarding house in Pakse while he completed his university degree in English. In September 2024, he received a scholarship for a Leadership Formation course at the *Fondacio* Institute in Quezon City, Philippines. Returning to Pakse on 3 December 2025, he now col-

laborates with the friars in the vicariate and teaches English in the villages. "I have grown in my spiritual life," he shared. "The community taught me to pray, to live with people from different cultures, and to take care of the children." The second story is that of Mark Min, 27. At seventeen, he arrived at the friars' boarding house in Paksong to continue his studies, impossible in his home village of Kachit. In 2024, he travelled with Luke to the Philippines, where he completed the same courses in leadership and social services. Today, he plans to continue working with the young people of the Paksong boarding house, accompanying them in their human and academic growth. "I want to help develop the young people," he said, "but at the same time, I also need to continue developing myself."



Finally, there is Elizabeth Phaeva, 25, also from Huaoy Tao. She will leave in January 2026 for the same formation program in the Philippines, with the possibility of further formation experience in Singapore. She currently volunteers at the retreat center in Paksong and works with an NGO that distributes and explains medications in rural villages. She too hopes to return and support the mission of the friars and the growth of the local Church. The dream of the friars in Laos is to become a stable Foundation, continuing collaboration with the Vicariate of Pakse, with their Province, and with neighboring Franciscan missions in Cambodia and Thailand. In recent years, they have also received new vocations, another sign of a living Church and a continuing Evangelical journey.

During the concluding Mass on 9 December at the parish church of Huay Peck, Br. Massimo reminded everyone: "Here we speak different languages and come from different cultures, but we know that we are one people of God. And our common language is the language of Love."

Humble new beginnings in Thailand

Br. Massimo and Br. John visited the new missionary presence in Ubon Ratchathani



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From 9 to 11 December 2025, the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, and the General Definitory for Asia-Oceania, Br. John Wong, visited the Order's new mission in Ubon Ratchathani, in north-eastern Thailand. Their presence was an important support for a missionary initiative that marks the third time the Order of Friars Minor has established a presence in the country.

The first presence dates back to the 16th century, with Portuguese missionaries from Macao and Malacca (in present-day Malaysia). It ended tragically with the Burmese siege of Ayutthaya in 1767. The second presence began in 1985 with a retreat centre and hospice for HIV-AIDS patients in Lamsai, as well as a convent for initial formation in Samphan, near Bangkok. However, in 2022, after careful evaluation of the situation and the lack of conditions necessary for the continuity of life and ministry, the General Definitory made the difficult decision to close both presences.

The choice was to reconfigure the mission in Thailand under a single entity, focusing on a simple, evangelical missionary presence oriented towards the peripheries. On 1 September 2023, the new Province of St Anthony of Padua in Visayas-Mindanao (southern Philippines) responded to the invitation to open a mission in the Diocese of Ubon Ratchathani, near the borders with Laos and Cambodia. The diocese has 61 parishes, 39 priests and about 25,000 Catholics. It is marked by the witness of seven martyrs – six catechists and a



young mother – who were killed during the Franco-Thai conflict of 1940.

The first two missionaries, Br. Crisologo Dragon, a clerical brother, and Br. Christopher Villanueva, a lay brother and artist, officially began their mission in August 2024. Today, they serve alongside the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (SFIC) in three parishes near the Cambodian border, in an area affected by armed conflict due to a territorial dispute. In some areas, the faithful have been forced to evacuate.

The mission presents several challenges, including the time needed to obtain missionary visas and to learn the Thai language and the local *Isan* dialect. Br. Crisologo candidly recounts the difficulties of the first few months: “I really struggled a lot, but I learned so much. My patience and humility were put to the test. I had so many plans, but I had to accept my personal limitations and those of reality. I am learning to be patient with

myself and with the process of inculturation. All I can do is maximise the opportunities I have.”

When the Minister General asked him, “Can you continue this mission?”, Br. Crisologo replied without hesitation, “I am sure we can. Together.”

The missionaries enjoy the full support of the local bishop and diocesan clergy, the SFIC sisters and the people of God. Bishop Stephen Boonlert has already initiated plans to build a new friary for the fraternity, which hopes to welcome a third friar next year. There are many opportunities for missionary evangelisation and interreligious dialogue, although the friars recognise that everything must begin with the building of a small but solid fraternal community. “My hope,” says Br. Christopher, “is that we can have the same direction as a community and as a Province, so that we can walk together. This mission belongs to the Province and to the Order. It is not so much about

what we can achieve, but how we live and walk the path as a fraternity.” In his homily on 10 December 2025, the Minister General encouraged the friars with words of realism and hope: “You live your mission

in a different land, amid many challenges. As Friars Minor, we learn to recognise our limitations with serenity. We learn to need others. Humility is looking at reality as it is, without trying to change it according to

our plans, but discerning God’s will in it. Live with humility in Thailand. Remember that your mission does not depend on your strength, but on the presence of God working through your reality of littleness.”

Plenary Assembly of the Conference of Santa María di Guadalupe

Also present were the Definitors General, Br. Joaquín Echeverry and Br. Jimmy Zammit.



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The Plenary Assembly of the Conference of Santa María de Guadalupe, which brings together the Provinces of Mexico, Central America, Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean, was held at the Franciscan House of “Peace and Goodwill” Paz y Bien in Tijuana.



The participation of the Provincial Ministers of the United States and Canada gave a special character to this meeting. Although these Provinces are geographically neighbours, they belong to the English Language Conference (ESC), and their presence in the Assembly of Guadeloupe was experienced as a historical event that opens new paths of communion and collaboration. Together with them, the General Definitors Br. Jimmy Zammit and Br. Joaquín Echeverry accompanied with closeness and fraternity, enriching the dialogue and offering guidance for the future of the Order. The main objective was to foster a fraternal approach to learn about the realities of each Province, share the challenges they face and discover together the signs of hope that strengthen Franciscan life.

During the conference, various aspects of life and mission were reflected upon:

- The life of the fraternities: the importance of supporting each other and of living with joy the vocation of Friars Minor was emphasised.
- The evangelizing mission: experiences were shared in parishes, schools and social works, highlighting the service to the poorest and the closeness to the communities.

- The formation of the friars: the accompaniment of those who begin Franciscan life and the commitment to support the ongoing formation of all the friars were valued.
- Care for vocations: the need to welcome young people with openness and fraternity was highlighted, recognising their personal and family histories.
- Justice, Peace and Care for Creation (JPIC): the commitment to social causes and the importance of strengthening initiatives such as the Franciscan Network for Migrants (RFM), which accompanies those who are forced to leave their homes in search of a dignified future, were reflected.
- The missionary presence in other countries: the project in Liébana, Spain, was shared with hope as a sign of openness and interprovincial collaboration.

Continue reading at www.ofm.org

Tempo Forte



Communiqué Tempo Forte



*Ordo Fratrum Minorum
Secretarius Generalis*

The Communiqué of the General Definitory regarding the Tempo Forte of November 2025 has been published.

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Franciscan Centenaries

The Canticle of the Creatures at Novosibirsk University, Russia

*In the capital of Siberia, university circles
have taken an interest in St. Francis.*



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Organised by the Italian Centre of the Institute of Humanities at the prestigious Novosibirsk State University, on 1 December Br. Stefano Invernizzi, OFM gave a lecture on the 'Canticle of the Creatures', the first literary document in Italian literature whose author is known, on the occasion of the eighth centenary of its composition by St. Francis of Assisi. In the lecture, the figure of St Francis and the Canticle were placed in their historical, social and ecclesial context. This was followed by a literary critique of the text of the Canticle.

For her part, Lyudmila Viktorovna Budneva, senior lecturer in the Department of Literary Sources and Ancient Languages, gave a lecture on the interpretation of the Middle Ages in the novel *The Name of the Rose* by Italian writer Umberto Eco, showing how Franciscanism, by bringing Christianity back to its evangelical roots, made that historical period much less obscure than we usually think, starting from the stereotypical judgements deriving from

the Enlightenment, thus restoring to man the right to "feel alive".

Many students and lecturers from various disciplines attended the event, and all showed great interest in the topic, asking several questions for clarification and initiating discussions in the days following the lecture.



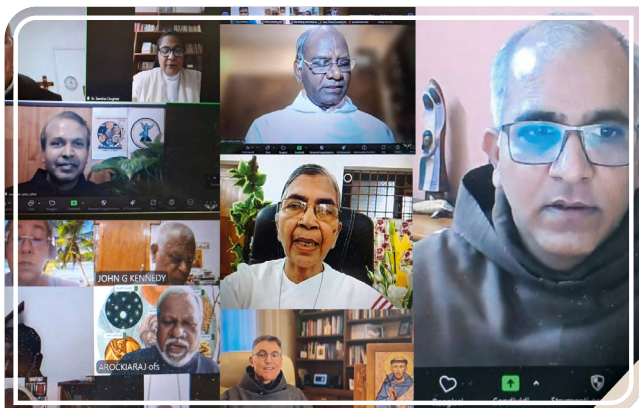
Franciscan Vision Global Summit 2025

A Jubilee-Year Journey into the Heart of the Canticle of the Creatures



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The Franciscan Vision Global Summit (FVGS) has continued its inspiring mission in 2025, marking the third consecutive year of a truly global digital pilgrimage.



After celebrating the centenary of Francis' Rule of 1223 & Christmas at Greccio in 2023, and the centenary of the gift of the Sacred Stigmata in 2024, the FVGS has now completed the Jubilee Year of the 8th Centenary of the *Canticle of the Creatures*. This journey has brought the Franciscan Family and the wider world closer to rediscovering Francis of Assisi's creation-spirituality in the light of today's ecological and human challenges.

This year's FVGS, organized by *TAU: A Franciscan International Journal* (OFM-India), deepened the exploration of the Canticle's enduring message: that every creature is a brother or sister, woven into a sacred web of interdependence. Blessings from Br Carlos Alberto Trovarelli,

OFMConv, Minister General, along with a warm welcome from Sr Fatima Rodrigues, FMCK, Superior General, and moderation by Br. Xavier Durairaj, OFM, Minister Provincial, inaugurated FVGS 2025 on 25 January. The sessions are coordinated by Br Arokiam John, OFM, Professor at the Pontifical Antonianum University (Rome) and Editor of *TAU*.

The year's journey unfolded through a rich sequence of monthly thematic sessions that drew participants deeper into the spiritual, theological,

ecological, and cultural resonance of the *Canticle*. This opening conference, led by Br Mauro Botti, OFM, Guardian of San Damiano, returned participants to the birthplace of the *Canticle* and set the tone for a year of reflection. It was followed by a foundational study of the text and structure of the *Canticle* with Br Cesare Vaiani, OFM, and an exploration by Br Joseph Dolphy Pais, OFM Cap, of Francis' sermons to the birds and what they mean for ecological harmony today.

Continue reading at: www.ofm.org

Animation of the Order



The Beatification of 4 Friars Minor victims of Nazism

Notre-Dame, Paris, 13th December, 2025



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On Saturday, the 13th December, 2025, the beatification of four Friars Minor, the Venerable Servants of God Br. Gérard Cendrier, Br. Paul Le Ber, Br. Joseph Paraire and Br. Xavier Boucher, professed religious and students of the Franciscan Seminary of Champfleury (Poissy-Paris), was celebrated

in the cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris. They are part of a group of fifty martyrs of the Nazi persecution against the Catholic Church (1944-1945). The Cause of Beatification was initiated by the French episcopate in 1988. Postulator of the Cause was Rev. Br. Bernard Ardua, o.praem.

The Minister General Fr Massimo Fusarelli was also present at the celebration.

Read the story of the 4 blessed at: www.ofm.org



The Conclusion of the training for the 2nd batch of the Asian Franciscan Formators Training

The participants met in Singapore



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14 friars from all over Asia gathered in Singapore for their 2-week Closing Residency Programme of the Asia Franciscan Formators Training, having completed 16 modules over 9 months of hard work.



The programme consists mainly of online videos on demand with interactive forum discussions and zoom tutorials with trainers. Each participant has his own accompanier to navigate his own internal terrain especially when the lesson material triggers difficult emotions or memories.

Their time in Singapore covered the modules on *Ratio Formationis* Planning & Programming with Br Darko Tepert, Secretary General for Formation & Studies; and Franciscan Formative Accompaniment.

The participants also had opportunities to interact virtually with Friars from the General Curia responsible for Mission & Evangelisation, JPIC, Inter-Religious Dialogue and OFS, to better integrate these aspects into their formation programme. They also had a very interactive zoom session with Tibor Kauser, OFS Minister General.

For 2026, the programme will be welcoming Franciscan Sisters so that it will be more reflective of our journeying as a Franciscan Family, with both female and male perspectives complementing each other. At the end of the Programme, the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, sent a Message to the participants of the Course.

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Franciscan takeaways from COP30

Franciscans International at the UN Climate Conference



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COP30 came to an end on 22 November 2025, closing two weeks of negotiations for which more than 56,000 delegates descended on Belém, Brazil. In a year that marks the 10th anniversaries of the Paris Agreement, the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, and the 800-year anniversary of the “Canticle of Creatures,” *Franciscans International* supported a large delegation to attend the UN Climate Conference. Twenty-four brothers and sisters, representing all branches of the Franciscan family, took part in events inside and outside the COP30 venue, sharing concerns of the grassroots communities they represent to demand stronger climate action.



Despite an ambitious agenda set by the Brazilian presidency, COP30 ultimately fell short of delivering a breakthrough in the struggle against climate change. Billed as the ‘COP of im-

plementation’, negotiators failed to adopt an envisioned roadmap to phase out fossil fuels. Instead, the commitment to transition away from fossil fuels made two years ago at COP28 in Dubai

continues to be watered down at the insistence of a coalition of oil-producing countries.

“This is a great disappointment and shows the failure of political leaders to take the climate crisis seriously,” said Budi Tjahjono, FI’s International Advocacy Director. “While it’s encouraging to see that over 80 States are considering their own initiative to phase out fossil fuels, COP30 did not meet the moment. Similarly, while delegates agreed to an urgently needed increase in funding, these political pledges need to be made concrete. However, Belém did make one thing crystal clear: across the globe, people are running out of patience.”

Spurred on by climate-vulnerable nations and civil society, the push for stronger climate action continued. As part of these efforts, FI and the Lutheran World

Federation (LWF) launched [a new report exploring faith-based perspectives on a Just Transition](#) – one of the key issues being discussed at COP30. Drawing on inputs from communities at the frontlines of the climate crisis, the organizations propose that a Just Transition should not be narrowly approached as a shift to a low-carbon economy, but rather as a structural and systemic transformation to a more equitable, inclusive, and greener society.

Throughout the conference, FI joined several side-events and press briefings to raise the need for such a truly Just Transition and provide recommendations on the way forward to negotiators. This research also built on [a previous report on non-economic loss and damage](#) released by FI and LWF during COP29 in Azerbaijan. Utilizing the deep

connections of the two organizations in grassroots communities, this paper provides a deeper understanding of climate change-related impacts that cannot be expressed as monetary value, such as the destruction of cultural heritage or the loss of traditional knowledge.

Outside the COP30 venue, civil society organized a range of events to provide a platform to those unable to join the negotiations and to explore alternative solutions to the crisis. Members of the Franciscan delegation joined the Talanoa and Tapiri interfaith dialogues, where they met with representatives from Indigenous, traditional, and marginalized communities.

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Source: www.franciscansinternational.org

New Forms of Life Meeting in Austria

Pupping, 23 – 27 November 2025



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What are the essential signs of Franciscan life in our time? This was one of the central questions of the meeting of friars engaged in searching out “New Forms of Life and Mission,” which took place from November 23 to 27, 2025, in Pupping, Austria. The event was attended by about twenty friars from many European countries, from Sicily (Italy) to Poland and Ireland.

During the working days, the participants discussed the essentials of our charism for contemporary life. They emphasized, among other things, the importance of the quality of fraternal life, understanding the fraternity as the place where one can share experiences, contemplative prayer, life among the

poor, and accompaniment of new forms of life. The participants also spoke with the General Minister, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, via video link. “Research into New Forms of Franciscan Presence, Life, and Mission... is very vital for us at this moment in the journey of our internation-

al fraternity, for the present and future of the charism,” said the Minister General. The Provincial Minister of Austria, Friedrich «Fritz» Wenigwieser, along with the local community, explained the origins of the Pupping fraternity. It is composed of First Order friars, a Poor Clare nun, and



lay members of the OFS, and has been offering hospitality to many people for over 30 years. Br. Jacopo Pozzerle illustrated the origins of the New Forms movement and proposed some ideas for the future. The friars have decided to propose to the General Minister and the General Definitory the creation of a European international community that lives according to the principles of the New Forms expressed in the document *Ite, nuntiate* (2014). This could accommodate

other friars for specific periods. A proposal for the 2027 General Chapter regarding New Forms was also agreed upon.

The gathering also included moments of fraternity and shared manual work at the friary. One evening was dedicated to the local population of Popping, with whom the friars shared songs and music. «I'm going home richer,» «I'm encouraged,» some participants said during the final evaluation. «The fire is no longer

just ashes, but has been rekindled into flames,» added another brother regarding the passion for Franciscan life in its new forms.

The meeting was organized by the Commission for New Forms, established by the General Minister in 2021. The Commission's task is to evaluate, encourage, and support appropriate initiatives and new life experiences that are emerging within the Order at the European level.



News from the Entities

Br. Antonius Duma takes possession of the parish of Santa Maria Draperis *Istanbul, Turkey, 8th December 2025*



WWW.OFM.ORG

On December 8, Br. Antonius Duma took possession of the Parish of Santa Maria Draperis in Istanbul, on the patronal feast of the Franciscan Order and of the International Fraternity for Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue in Turkey. Bishop Massimiliano Palinuro, Vicar Apostolic of Istanbul, presided over the celebration.

During the ceremony, the appointment of Br. Duma as new parish priest was read publicly and he made the profession of faith and oath of fidelity before the bishop and the community. During his homily, Bishop Massimiliano thanked former parish priest, Br. Eleuthère Baharanyi Makuta, for his service, and also for the apostolate that the Franciscan friars have been carrying out for several

years in Istanbul. In addition, he invited Br. Duma and the faithful to walk together to continue building up this community. The Vicar Apostolic also recalled that the feast that is celebrated in honor of the Immaculate Conception is thanks to Franciscan tradition and theology, since the friars have maintained this tradition and clarified its theology. At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, Br. Duma gave thanks for his appointment, recalling that this service is in response to the call of God. He also recounted the story of his vocation which began in Indonesia, his country of origin, and that subsequently led him to serve in Istanbul.

Dogma of the Immaculate Conception

The Blessed John Duns Scotus offered a decisive explanation for this dogma: Mary is also redeemed by Christ, but in a preventive way, being preserved from sin “in anticipation of the merits of Christ, which made it possible to harmonize the Immaculate Conception with the doctrine of redemption “Potuit, deuit, ergo fecit” (it was possible, it was fitting, therefore it was accomplished). The feast of the Immaculate Conception was established in 1476 by Pope Sixtus IV; Pope Clement XI made it universal in 1708. Pope Pius IX in 1854 solemnly proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, 1854).



Chile, Plenary Council of the Province of the Most Holy Trinity 1st-5th dicembre 2025



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From the 1st -5th December, the friars of the Franciscan Province of the Most Holy Trinity of Chile met at Casa Alvernia (San Francisco de Mostazal) to celebrate their Plenary Council. This Council was established by the Chapter agreements of the Provincial Chapter in January of this year in order to make decisions on the redimensioning of the life and mission of the Franciscan friars in Chile.

From the city of Seoul (South Korea) the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM, sent a message to the 43 brothers gathered in Plenary Council. In his message, Br. Massimo invited the friars to have «the courage to choose life over structures.» Indeed, in the light of the Gospel text of Mark 4:35-41, he pointed out to them that «the Province is called to ‘pass over to the other shore’. They cannot stay on this shore, in the current structures, in the presences that no longer give life, in the works that only tire them out.» Regarding the process of resizing, he invited the friars to live the process with three necessary attitudes: «realism, lucidity and audacity»; and with «prayerful discernment».

The Plenary Council was developed with a methodology proposed by the Provincial Team for Ongoing Formation, led by Br. Jaime Campos, OFM, and Br. Lino Miranda, OFM, Provincial Minister. The objective of this methodology was for the friars, through reflection and prayerful discernment in commissions, to define the identity and options of the Province, in response to the elaboration of the Provincial Life Project. Thus, after five days of intense fraternal work, the Plenary Council defined the identity of the Franciscan Province of the Most Holy Trinity of Chile:

«The Franciscans in Chile are a fraternity of Friars Minor who live and witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, poor, humble and crucified, in the style of St. Francis of Assisi. We are itinerant, prayerful and evangelizing, in communion with the Church and in the mission shared with the laity. This identity is expressed mainly in urban and rural parish service, in popular religiosity, in solidarity action and service among the poor and vulnerable, with special attention to the world of youth, as well as in our presence in the educational and cultural spheres, promoting peace and care for creation.» In addition, the preferential provincial options for the life and mission of the Franciscan friars in Chile were established:

Youth accompaniment in a vocational key.

Service amongst the poor and vulnerable, according to our local contexts.

Br. Ronald Villalobos A., OFM

Meeting of the Association of Franciscan Families in India Strengthening the Franciscan Mission in India



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The Association of Franciscan Families in India (AFFI) held its National Assembly at the Diocesan Pastoral Centre in Port Blair, Andaman, from 1-5 December 2025, bringing together 65 participants, including General Superiors and Provincials from Franciscan congregations across India.

This important national gathering prepared the Franciscan Family in India for the 8th Centenary of the Easter of St. Francis, offering a moment of grace, reflection, and fraternity. The Assembly opened with an inaugural ceremony during which Br. Xavier Durairaj, OFM, AFFI President,

delivered his address, inviting all participants to rediscover their shared identity: *Francis, Man of Peace, Brother of All – Called to Live Our Identity and Mission Today*

The Assembly featured a series of rich and deeply reflective input sessions. Br. George

Antony OFM Cap spoke powerfully on *The Passing of Francis and the Birth of a Gospel Movement*, helping participants understand the transformative significance of Francis' Easter.

Sr. Stella FCC offered an inspiring reflection on "Audite, Poverelle" and its implications for renewing Franciscan identity in today's world.

Br. John Sekar OFM led participants into the heart of *The Testament of St. Francis*, em-

phasizing its relevance as a living voice guiding Franciscan spirituality and mission even after 800 years. Further, Br. Scaria OFM Cap addressed the *Changing Socio-Political and Religious Scenario in India*, outlining both challenges and opportunities for the Franciscan mission. His talk encouraged participants to respond prophetically to the signs of the times with courage, discernment, and Gospel-rooted action.

These sessions culminated in group discussions and a collaborative drafting process that shaped the final *AFFI Statement*, that emphasized renewed formation, ecological sensitivity, responsible leadership, and a deeper option for the poor and marginalized. A comprehensive Action Plan was also formulated at the individual, community/provincial, and national levels, committing AFFI members to strengthen community life, promote JPIC values, nurture ecological conversion, improve formation structures, and foster inter-Franciscan collaboration across India. As the Assembly concluded, participants reaffirmed their determination to follow St. Francis—A Man of Peace and Brother of All—especially as the Franciscan world prepares to commemorate the 800th anniversary of his Easter.



Ambassadors of Peace

Fifth Congress of the Commissaries of the Holy Land



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From the 19th to 25th November 2025, the Fifth International Congress of the Commissaries of the Holy Land was held in Jerusalem, on the theme «Ambassadors of Peace: listening, supporting and proclaiming the Holy Land». 75 commissioners from 38 countries on all continents participated, a living sign of the universality of the Franciscan mission.

Mass at the Cenacle, presided over by the Custos Br. Francesco Ielpo, OFM, officially opened the Congress. In the following days, the Commissaries listened to direct testimonies of the Christian communities living in the Holy Land, marked by years of conflict and economic crisis, but bearers of unshakable hope. Amongst the most intense voices was the connection with Fr Gabriel Romanelli, Parish Priest of the Parish of the Holy Family in Gaza, who recounted how the community continues to bear witness to faith in the midst of bombing and destruction, transforming itself into a refuge for displaced families, the sick and children of all religions.

The Congress dedicated space to the knowledge of the works of the Custody that support local communities. Br. Paulo Paulista, OFM, director of the Helen Keller Centre in Beit Hanina, shared the different challenges to protect 620 blind, visually impaired, and deaf children during the war sirens, whilst Br. Jad Sara, OFM, illustrated the complex management of the 404 houses that the Custody offers to Christian families in the Old City of Jerusalem, an essential service to help communities stay in their own land.



The Commissaries reflected on the importance of preserving not only the stones of the shrines, but above all, the living stones. Br. Stéphane Milovitch, OFM, head of the Terra Sancta Museum, explained how the museum spoke of the eight hundred years of Franciscan presence and is transformed into a space for dialogue with Jews and Muslims. Br. Sin-ša Srebrenović, OFM, Guardian of the friary of the Agony in Gethsemane, recalled that taking care of a holy place means first of all praying in it, even when pilgrims are lacking.

A day was dedicated to Bethlehem, where the Commissaries visited the Terra Sancta College, the Home of the Child Jesus and the Catholic Action centre, meeting a community that resists with courage despite the difficulties. The Congress also addressed operational issues, such as the promotion of the Good Friday Collection, a fundamental tool to support the works of the Custody, and the future of pilgrimages, rethought as transforming experiences of encounter with Christ and with local communities.

The Custos presided at the Mass at the Holy Sepulchre on the last day of the congress, inviting the Commissaries to allow themselves to be reached by the gaze of the Risen One to become witnesses of hope. In his final message, Br. Ielpo recalled that the mission of the Commissioner is not an administrative task but an authentic vocation, to be ambassadors of the Holy Land, interpreters of the spiritual sense of the Holy Places, bridges between the Custody and the communities of origin, and support of the living stones that bear witness to the Gospel in fragile conditions.

The congress ended with Vespers at St. Saviour's and the handing over of the insignia with the cross of Jerusalem to each commissary, a symbol of their mission to proclaim peace and guard the hope that is born from the place where Christ lived, died and rose again.

Download the Final Message and Mandate of the Fifth International Congress of the Commissaries of the Holy Land: [Italiano](#) - [Español](#) - [English](#)

LIFE in the Order



Fratelli Defunti

† 2nd December: Br. Bolesław (Józef Kazimierz) Balawender, Province of the Immaculate Conception (Poland)

† 29th November: Br. Eligio (Angelo) Gelmini, Province of St. Anthony of the Friars Minor (Italy)

† 26th November: Br. Hugolino (Guido Brod) Brod, Province of the Holy Cross (Brazil); Br. Francisco Paulino Velásquez Díaz, Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Guatemala); Br. Pedro César Villegas, Province of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rio de la Plata (Argentina).

† 16th November: Br. Georges Morin, Province of the Holy Spirit (Canada)

† 10th November: Br. Matthew (Matthew Nambekale) Minda, St. Francis Foundation (Papua New Guinea)



Priestly Ordinations

6th December, Province of the Holy Faith (Colombia): Brothers Jaime Wilmer Benitez Granados, Juan Guillermo Dávila Suaza, Rafael Enrique Maldonado Carrascal, and Yorgen Omar Marciales Parada.

17th September, Province of Saints Francis and James (Mexico): Brothers Jorge Alberto Hernández Olmedo.

Information received from the General Secretariat



OFS, National Elective Chapter in Kenya 26-29 November 2025



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The National Elective Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order in Kenya was held at the “Franciscan Family Centre for Africa, Portiuncula” from 26 to 29 November. It was presided over by Eremenciana Chinyama, OFS, a member of the CIOFS Presidency, who was delegated by the Minister General, Tibor Kauser, OFS, and witnessed by Br. Pedro Zitha, OFM, who represented the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants. The theme of the Chapter was “Here I am Lord,” which provided new inspiration for the reflection of the day, especially on how to be a “servant leader” in the Council. This was followed by the presentation of the National Minister’s report, financial report, formation report, and Spiritual Assistant’s report. During the Chapter, there were 26 participants, of whom 18 were capitulates, 2 national spiritual assistants, and 4 observers. The delegates of CIOFS were constrained to appoint the council because there was no quorum. After a consultative ballot, Patrick Kamau, OFS, was appointed as National Minister and International Councillor and Josphat Busera, OFS, as the Vice Minister and substitute International Councillor. Immediately following

was the celebration of the Holy Mass of installation of the newly appointed Council, and they were reminded during the homily about the importance of allowing the kingdom of God to grow in the fraternities at all levels. Finally, the new council met with the outgoing council for the handover and to listen to the recommendations and priorities for the next 3 years as the way forward on how to rebuild a national fraternity, focusing especially on the restoration of unity, trust, and hope among the OFS members.



*To one and all: Merry Christmas
and a Happy New Year!*

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OFS

Ordo Fratrum Minorum
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