

International Bulletin
Fraternitas
Ordo Fratrum Minorum

388

Edition

Volume LIX | 24th September 2026

Feast of the Stigmata 2026

INDEX

Feast of the Stigmata 2026	2
General Curia Agenda	2
Letter from the Minister General to all Postulants, Novices and Temporary Professed of the Order of Friars Minor	4
The Minister General visits the Province of the Immaculate in Madagascar and Mauritius.....	5
New Government of the Custody of St. Benedict of the Amazon	6
800th anniversary in France: St. Francis in manga!.....	6
In Medjugorje the final celebration of the Franciscan Jubilee.....	8
Meeting of the General Secretariats for Formation of the Franciscan First Order	9
Incipe Iterum – Begin Again	10
JPIC Commission Meeting of the Province “Our Lady Queen of Peace”, South Africa.....	11
The second phase of the Course for Formators of the Brazil–Southern Cone Conference has concluded	12
OIKOS Mediterraneo Summer Camp for university students from Türkiye	14
Franciscan joy in Lubumbashi.....	15
Life in the Order	16
OIKOS Mediterraneo promotes cultural and interfaith dialogue in Egypt.....	17
First Asian Assembly of Catholic Digital Missionaries	18
Franciscan Bookmark.....	19
Br. Gerardo Antonio Vargas Cruz, OFM appointed coadjutor bishop of Fajardo-Humacao (Puerto Rico)	20



Feast of the Stigmata 2026

He kept nothing for himself

WWW.OFM.ORG

As every year, on the 16th and 17th September in La Verna, the Franciscan fraternity, young pilgrims and hundreds of faithful celebrated the Solemnity of the Impression of the Stigmata of St. Francis. A moment very heartfelt and intensely lived by those present, in the Franciscan jubilee year that commemorates the 800th anniversary of the Transit of St. Francis. During the Eucharistic celebration at the Vigil of the 16th September, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, Minister General of the OFM, addressed the many young participants of the night pilgrimage organized by the Friars of the Province of St. Francis Stigmatized of Tuscany: they started from the parish of Chiusi della

Verna, walked praying and singing in the night, to reach the Shrine and celebrate the Holy Eucharist. Addressing the young people, Br. Massimo recalled the image of the journey, which requires leaving something behind and lightening one's burdens. Like Abraham, who left without knowing where he was going, and like St Francis, who arrived at La Verna after having progressively left what he possessed, they too were invited to put themselves in God's hands: "Do not be afraid to leave what weighs you down. Do not be afraid to look at Christ. Do not be afraid to give yourselves to Him: those who give themselves to Him do not lose their life, they receive it new".

General Curia Agenda



✓ From 20th to 23rd September, Br. Jimmy Zammit (Definitor General), Br. Darko Tepert (Secretary General for Formation and Studies) and Br. Francisco Gomez Vargas (Secretary General for Missions and Evangelisation) will attend the Board meeting of the General Secretariat for Franciscan Mission.

✓ From 21st to 24th September, the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, together with the Vicar General, Br. Ignacio Caja, will visit the Custody of the Holy Protomartyrs of the Order in Morocco. From 25th to 27th September, together with the Definitor General, Br. Cesare Vaiani, he will visit the Province of Santiago de Compostela, in Spain. From 28th to 30th September, he will visit the friars of the Province of St Francis (Poland) involved in the Franciscan presence in Västerås, Sweden. Together with the Definitor General, Br. Konrad Cholewa, he will join their ongoing formation meeting. From 2nd to 4th October, he will be in Assisi for various engagements: on the 2nd for the Conference of Ministers General; on the 3rd for the Conference of the Franciscan Family; on the 3rd at Our Lady of the Angels-Santa Maria degli Angeli, together with some friars from the General Curia, to celebrate the Transitus of St Francis; and on the 4th at the Sacred Convent for the celebration of Holy Mass on the Solemnity of Saint Francis. On 5th October, he will be in Jerusalem to

celebrate Holy Mass and to inaugurate the academic year of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum.

✓ From 27th to 30th September, Br. Konrad will celebrate in Sanremo (Italy) the 30th anniversary of the presence of the friars of the Province of Our Lady of the Angels-Santa Maria degli Angeli in Poland in the Ligurian city.

✓ From 29th September to 4th October, Br. Ignacio, together with the General Definitor, Br. Siphelele Gwanisheni, will be in Togo to meet the friars of the Province of the Incarnate Word, to celebrate with them the 8th centenary of the death of Saint Francis and the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Friars Minor in that African region.

✓ From 29th to 30th September, the General Definitor, Br. Albert Schmucki, will be in Assisi to prepare for the canonical visit to the Poor Clares of the Colettine Order.

✓ From 30th September to 3rd October, Br. Cesare will preach the triduum of St Francis in Jerusalem, in the Church of St Saviour.

✓ From 5th to 10th October, the General Definitory will hold its spiritual exercises at Mount Nebo, in Jordan.



At a time when too often, unfortunately, love is confused with possession, the Minister General wanted once again to emphasize the courageous choice of the Poverello-the Poor Man of Assisi, who “kept nothing for himself” except the cross of the Lord: this was the central message of Br. Massimo in his homily on the 17th September, in which he emphasised how St Francis never boasted of the Stigmata, but left a rule, indeed, the Rule, to all his followers: living “without anything of one’s own” is not a norm about goods, but “the form of a life”.

St Francis, the Minister General recalled, had arrived at this freedom little by little: he had returned his father’s wealth, left the government of the Order and recognized that the fraternity was not his. Even the Stigmata, received at La Verna, were not something for him to withhold or boast of: in the Testament, where he mentions lepers, priests, brothers and the Church, he does not mention them. “The man who holds nothing back does not even withhold grace. He does not even hold back his wounds,” said Br. Massimo.

Hence also the link between La Verna and the Transitus: St Francis descended from the mountain and continued his journey to the Portiuncula, where on the 3rd October, 1226 he would also deliver the last thing he had left, his own body. “The seal received in the flesh and the flesh returned to the earth are the same movement,” explained the Minister General, recalling that the call is not to with-

hold what gives security, importance or recognition, but to give back: “He who gives back does not lose. He receives.”

A final reference also to St. Clare, the one she asked not to possess, who chose freedom from everything to be free to follow the poor Christ. The invitation addressed to those present was to “open their hands”: “Brothers and sisters, celebrating the Stigmata today means asking for this grace: to open our hands. Not to keep for ourselves the goods, the merits, the wounds. To receive everything with gratitude. To give everything back with love. So that the One who gives himself whole to us can welcome us whole in himself”, concluded the Minister General.

These exhortations were enclosed in a prayer addressed to St. Francis that the friars and faithful pronounced during the traditional procession to the Chapel of the Stigmata, kept in the Sanctuary.

Read the homily of the 16th September 2026:

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

Read the homily of the 17th September 2026:

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

Download the prayer to St. Francis:

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

See the photos on [Flickr](#)





Government of the Order

Letter from the Minister General to all Postulants, Novices and Temporary Professed of the Order of Friars Minor

On the occasion of the VIII Centenary of the Transitus of St. Francis



WWW.OFM.ORG

La Verna, 17th September 2026

Dear Brothers,

May the Lord give you peace!

I am writing to you on the day when, more than eight hundred years ago, here on La Verna, the Lord impressed on St Francis' body the signs of his Passion. From those wounds to the Transitus, which we will celebrate in a few weeks, there is only one journey: that of a man who has left Christ the last word on his life.

I wish to reach out to each one of you – postulants, novices, and temporary professed – thinking of your faces and the questions you carry in your hearts. You are the young face of the Order. Through you, the Lord continues to call men who desire to live the Gospel in the form that the Lord revealed to Francis.

Read the full text of the Letter:

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



LETTER FROM THE MINISTER GENERAL

*to all Postulants, Novices and Temporary
Professed of the Order of Friars Minor*

on the occasion of the VIII Centenary
of the Transitus of St. Francis

1226 — 2026
Franciscus
Eight Hundredth Anniversary of the Death of St. Francis

The Minister General visits the Province of the Immaculate in Madagascar and Mauritius

27 August - 2 September 2026



WWW.OFM.ORG

From the 27th of August to the 2nd of September, the Minister General Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM, accompanied by the Definitor General Br. Siphellele Paulus Gwanishe-ni, OFM, visited the Province of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which comprises Madagascar and the island of Mauritius. The visit included meetings with the Provincial Definitory, project leaders, houses of formation – formators and candidates together – and several pastoral realities. The visit also included meetings with Franciscan lay people and two monasteries of Poor Clares and Franciscan sisters, particularly the FMM and the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate of Palagano, who actively collaborate with the friars of the mission.

The Franciscan presence on this island began in 1959, with the arrival of the first friars from the former Province of Lyon. They worked in missionary evangelisation; the first Malagasy vocations came only about twenty years later. Today the Province has 51 solemnly professed friars, 43 friars in temporary vows, seven novices beginning their time of probation and at least 14 postulants, as well as numerous aspirants. On the 7th September, nine friars will make their sol-

emn profession and two their temporary profession. In his meetings with the friars, the Minister General called for a deeper understanding of Franciscan identity within the Malagasy context, moving beyond the tendency to focus primarily on priestly ministry. He identified formation and increasingly missionary evangelisation, directed above all towards the poorest, as priorities, and stressed the need for a quality fraternal life shaped by prayer and sharing, especially to support the vocation of the younger friars. The reflection also focused on the path the Province is already taking towards economic self-sustainability, through projects in which the friars themselves work to generate what is needed for their daily support.

The simplicity and joy of faith and community life touched the friars who came on the visit and inspired hope for the future of this young Entity and for the rich Franciscan presence on a large island situated between Africa and Asia. A crossroads of cultures, marked by political instability, serious social injustices, and widespread, deep poverty, yet also by the desire—especially amongst young people—for development and a better future.



New Government of the Custody of St. Benedict of the Amazon

Brazil, 4th September 2026



WWW.OFM.ORG



The Custody of St. Benedict of Amazonia, Brazil, has a new government that took office on the 4th September 2026, and will serve for the next three years. After the spiritual exercises of the Custody, the friars welcomed the Definitor General, Br. César Kulkamp, who read the

Decree of appointment of the new Government, composed of:

- Br. Wanderley Gomes De Figueiredo, OFM, of the Autonomous Custody "Our Lady of the Seven Joys" (Brazil): Custos;
- Br. Valcy de Assunção Pinto, OFM: Vicar;
- Br. Gregory (Gregory Robert) Joeright, OFM and Br. João Messias Da Silva Sousa, OFM, Councillors.

The assembly welcomed this appointment with serenity, seeing the Custody's future path, which lives in a very important missionary territory and is a path of renewal that continues with the help of the Order.

Our best wishes to the new Custos and the new Council.



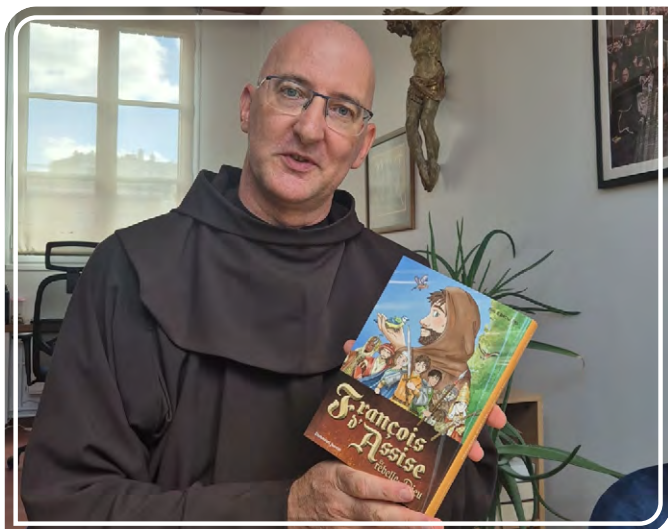
Franciscan Centenaries

800th anniversary in France: St. Francis in manga!

The first manga in French dedicated to the Poverello-The poor man of Assisi



WWW.OFM.ORG



In a jubilee year, an unprecedented project: the first manga in French that tells the life of St. Francis has just been released. It is the result of a collaboration between the Province of the Friars Minor of France and Belgium and the Christian Editions of Emmanuel. Let us retrace the birth of this project.

"We had received from Rome a working document of the International Conference of the Franciscan Family. It invited us to invest in imagination and creativity, so that the celebrations of the Centenary could also have an impact in non-ecclesial social and cultural environments," explains Br. Frédéric-Marie Le Méhauté, at the

time Director of the Communication Service and today Minister Provincial. This invitation met with an ancient desire of this friar, who had had the opportunity to get to know Japanese popular culture up close: to create the first manga in French dedicated to St. Francis.



“The manga format allows us to bring together a saint who died 800 years ago with a very contemporary cultural expression. It means embarking on a path of rereading, translating and rediscovering his relevance for today’s world.” The choice of manga therefore responds to a precise desire to transmit. Through a graphic language widely spread among the younger generations, the project intends to propose an accessible and renewed approach to the life, personality and message of St Francis of Assisi.

The challenge was entrusted to Edizioni dell’Emmanuel and Émilie Droulers, illustrator of the biographical graphic novel Carlo Acutis: On the way to Heaven.

“In manga, the pace is slow. You take the time to break down the movements and show what the characters feel; this makes them close to us and allows us to immerse ourselves in their lives! “, says the young mangaka. And, judging by the intensity of St. Francis’ life, you couldn’t find a story more suited to this language!

The creation of the manga was carried out in close collaboration with the friars and their collaborators. The main stages of St. Francis’

life were first identified and organized, in order to build a coherent narrative progression. This preparatory phase made it possible to develop the script, which was essential before starting the graphic work. But what face should be given to Sultan Malik al-Kamil? Was it better to represent him as a distant or very friendly figure? And how to depict Br Elias, who for a long time was a controversial figure within the Order?

“For each image we had to evaluate different possibilities and make choices. We started again from the Franciscan Sources, but translating also means betraying; at the same time, it means embodying and transmitting. At times I felt like Thomas of Celano, looking for the words capable of helping our author to get as close as possible to the experience of Francis’ conversion,” explains Br. Frédéric-Marie Le Méhauté.

From the first pencil drawing to the final nib work, Émilie Droulers has been able to progressively bring out a representation of St. Francis adapted to the codes of the manga, while maintaining a particular attention to historical and Franciscan sources. Through this editorial project, the Province of the Friars Minor of France and Belgium wishes to contribute to making St. Francis known or rediscovered to readers who do not necessarily know his history or Franciscan tradition.

Indeed, the French publishing house also declares itself in favour of any projects to translate the work in other countries. The invitation, therefore, is addressed to the bold: St. Francis has not yet said his last word!

Émilie Rey, Communications Office
Prov. Blessed Duns Scotus

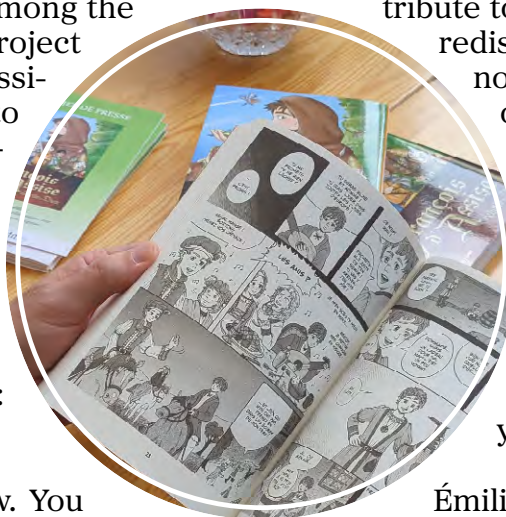
François d’Assise, le rebelle de Dieu (Francis of Assisi, God’s rebel)

Emilie Droulers

Editions Emmanuel

Septembre 2026

200 p. 15€



In Medjugorje the final celebration of the Franciscan Jubilee

The Mass presided over by the Minister General, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM



WWW.OFM.ORG

On Saturday, September 5, in Medjugorje, the final celebration of the Franciscan Jubilee took place on the occasion of the Eighth Centenary of the Transitus of St. Francis. Members of the Franciscan Order of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Franciscan nuns, members of the Secular Franciscan Order, young people of the Franciscan Youth and numerous pilgrims participated.

simplicity and love for every person and for the whole creature,” said Br. Zdravko Dadić. The Holy Mass was presided over by the Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM, and concelebrated by 184 priests. In his homily, the Minister General recalled the theme of mercy as a key to reading the path of St. Francis: to receive mercy, to live mercy and to return mercy.



The day opened with the greeting of the parish priest of Medjugorje, Br. Zvonimir Pavičić, and with the catechesis of Br. Ante Vučković on the theme “The Lord has given us brother Francis”. On behalf of the Council of the Franciscan Communities, Br. Zdravko Dadić, Provincial Minister of the Franciscan Province of the Holy Cross Bosna Srebrena, invited the Franciscan Family to live the Jubilee as an opportunity for renewed loyalty to the vocation and testimony of the Gospel.

“May this Jubilee not stop us only at the memory, but may it awaken in us a new zeal for Christ, a renewed fidelity to the vocation and the courage to witness the Gospel. In a world where there is a lack of peace, communion and hope, the Franciscan family continues to be a recognizable sign of peace, fraternity,

Commenting on the evangelical image of the sentry, Br. Massimo recalled mutual responsibility: “The sentinel is not the one who watches to judge, but the one who watches so that his brother does not get lost”. He therefore recalled Francis’ encounter with the lepers and the words of the Testament, emphasizing how mercy describes not only what Francis does towards the other, but also what God works in him.

The Minister General also recalled the secular presence of the Friars Minor in the region: “The Friars Minor have remained next to the people: guardians of the faith and announcers of the Gospel”. Looking at the wounds left by war in families, in memory and in relations between peoples, he indicated in reconciliation and peace a concrete task entrusted to the

Franciscan Family. “We have received mercy. We return mercy. We received peace. Let’s bring peace,” concluded Br. Massimo, recalling the greeting of St. Francis, “May the Lord give you peace”, and inviting all to bring the greeting to fraternities, families and among the peoples of the region.

At the end of the Mass, the film “The Lord has given us brother Francis - from Assisi to the Croatian regions” was screened, followed by a concert by the Franciscan choir conducted by Br. Ante Vukoja. The day ended with the Eucharistic adoration.

Animation of the Order



Meeting of the General Secretariats for Formation of the Franciscan First Order *General Curia, 12 September 2026*



WWW.OFM.ORG

On 12 September 2026, a meeting of the General Secretariats for Formation of the Friars Minor, the Conventual Friars Minor and the Capuchin Friars Minor was held at the General Curia of the Friars Minor.

During the meeting, participants were able to share their experiences in the field of formation across the three Or-

ders. It became clear that the challenges and opportunities are very similar, and it was concluded that a more regular exchange of information on the work of the respective Secretariats could be beneficial to all. A number of issues of common interest were also discussed, in particular that of joint study centres. At the end of the meeting, the participants were joined by the

Minister General of the OFM, Br. Massimo Fusarelli, who spoke about the possibilities for collaboration within the Franciscan Family.

The meeting provided an opportunity to get to know one another better and to lay the foundations for future opportunities for meeting and exchange.



Incipe Iterum – Begin Again

OFM Guidelines for Presence in Digital Media



WWW.OFM.ORG

Throughout history, the Gospel has called us to share peace and goodness in the languages and places of the people. Today, this mission extends to the vast and complex world of digital media. As Friars Minor, we are invited not only to be present in these spaces but to live our Franciscan life there - with honesty, humility, and meaningful relationships.

For this reason, as a concrete aid to living this mission in digital media, the document “Incipe Iterum - Begin Again. OFM Guidelines for Presence in Digital Media” is available, which gives guidance to all friars and candidates on how to be present in digital media, based on Church teaching and Franciscan values.



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



INCIPE ITERUM

Guideline for Presence in Digital Media



OFM General Curia
Rome 2026

JPIC Commission Meeting of the Province “Our Lady Queen of Peace”, South Africa 1-2 September 2026



WWW.OFM.ORG

On 1 September 2026, the Vice-Director of General JPIC Office, Br. Taucen Hotlan Girsang, attended the meeting of the JPIC Commission of the Province of Our Lady Queen of Peace in Besters, South Africa, together with Br. Albert Sibusiso OFM, Secretary of the JPIC Commission. The meeting was led by Br. Mawetu OFM, the main coordinator of the JPIC Commission, and was attended also by Br. Makhomba OFM, a member of the Commission.

In this meeting, Br. Sibusiso presented several initiatives already planned by the Commission in preparation for the Jubilee of the Transitus of St. Francis of Assisi. These include tree planting, a week-long symposium, and a recollection for the feast of the Transitus involving Franciscan religious and members of the Secular Francis-

can Order. Br. Taucen shared about the principal tasks of a JPIC animator, namely animation in the areas of formation, coordination, collaboration, and communication. He also explained how the General JPIC Office is working to strengthen and develop the Franciscan Network in the regions of the Americas, Mediterranean, Asia, and Africa.

At the moment of the open dialogue, three main points were identified for further action. First, the JPIC Commission needs to materialize its existing plans and communicate its activities more effectively to the friars. Second, the Commission proposed developing a pig-farming project as a means of producing biogas.

Third, JPIC activities could also serve as an opportunity for Franciscan vocational

promotion and outreach to young people interested in Franciscan life. In the afternoon, Br. Sibusiso and Br. Taucen joined the Eucharistic celebration at St. Joseph Theology Institute (STJI) for the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. Many students from different religious congregations participated in the celebration, including several religious sisters.

During the Mass, the main celebrant highlighted the connection between faith and care for creation, emphasizing that authentic Christian faith should lead people to take concrete action for environmental justice and peacebuilding. The celebration provided an opportunity for the participants to deepen their awareness that care for our common home is an integral part of Christian discipleship.



On the following day, 2 September, Br. Taucen had the opportunity to meet with the friars in formation at the Formation House in Hilton, Durban. During the session, he introduced the values of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and explained why these values are important to the Franciscan Order, describing them as part of the Order's "DNA." Br. Taucen shared examples of how Franciscan brothers around the world are actively engaged in JPIC ministry: praying and working for peace, caring for the Amazon rainforest in Brazil, accompa-

nying and assisting migrants in the Americas and the Mediterranean, serving people in refugee camps in Africa, and advocating for the right to a healthy environment in Asia.

There was a space for dialogue, and the students raised an important question: How can we become involved in JPIC, and how can we encourage others to participate in JPIC activities? In response, Br. Taucen emphasized that awareness and sensitivity to social and environmental realities are the basic foundations of JPIC engagement. JPIC begins with the

willingness to respond whenever we encounter injustice and suffering; to act when we see social injustice, to care when we see our common home being exploited, and to stand in solidarity when we encounter victims of war and conflict. For Franciscan friars, JPIC is therefore not simply an additional activity or programme, but a way of living the Gospel according to the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. It calls every friar to see the reality around him with compassion, to discern what action is needed, and to respond concretely in fraternity and solidarity.



News from the Entities

The second phase of the Course for Formators of the Brazil–Southern Cone Conference has concluded *OFM formators from Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Chile took part*



WWW.OFM.ORG



With a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida, the friars of the Brazil–Southern Cone Conference of the Order of Friars Minor, who were taking part in the Course

for Formators, brought the second week of in-person formation to a close on the 30th August 2026. Organised by the Conference, the Course for Formators, Vocational Animation

Coordinators and Guardians brought together the nine Entities in Brazil (six Provinces and three Custodies) and the three Provinces of the Southern Cone: two in Argentina and one in Chile.

The formation programme took place in two in-person phases, with two weeks in April and two in August, in the city of Petrópolis (RJ), in addition to weekly online sessions between May and July. Eighteen Franciscan religious took part in the course, including two Franciscan Sisters of Amparo. In addition to Brazilians from various states, two friars from Paraguay and one from Argentina also participated.

The course addressed various aspects of the formation process: the role of the formator, with particular emphasis on spirituality and religious life; the ministry of the formator, considering skills, documents and formation structures; young people and contemporary challenges; and, finally, the relationship between formation and mission. The teaching staff comprised speakers from Brazil, Argentina and Chile, offering an intercultural perspective on the challenges of Franciscan formation that characterise the reality of the Conference.

Participants also had the opportunity to learn about and reflect upon, through direct experience, aspects that form part of the Order's evangelising identity: a visit to communities living in poverty (Rocinha favela), social projects supporting people experiencing homelessness (Casa Franciscana – SEFRAS Rio), the Fazenda da Esperança and the Shrine of Frei Galvão (Guaratinguetá).

The aim of these experiences was to help participants understand that Franciscan formation is not confined to the academic sphere, but that concrete experiences, in direct contact with extreme situations that challenge our lives, are legitimate paths of formation in the Franciscan charism.

On the 30th August, the participants made a pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida, where they had the grace of giving thanks to God, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary; for all that they had experienced during the formation programme and for the graces received on each person's

personal and vocational journey. The formation programme, however, did not end with this in-person phase. As part of the conclusion of the course, participants will be required to write an article on a topic that most deeply aroused their interest during the formation programme. Following assessment by a panel of lecturers, some of these articles may be included in an anthology to be published as an e-book.

The formation of formators is a service that goes beyond mere preparation for a specific role: it is an investment in the future of Franciscan life. It is formators who accompany friars most closely through the various stages of formation, helping them to discern their vocation, fostering their human, spiritual and fraternal growth, and ensuring that the Franciscan charism is embraced, lived and handed on to new generations. "Forming formators" is an essential task in the formation of Franciscan discipleship.

It is not merely a matter of transmitting content or teaching rules. Above all, it means accompanying people on the journey of following Jesus Christ according to the form of life inspired by St Francis of Assisi. The quality of the training of formators is directly reflected in the quality of the formation process and, consequently, in the vitality of the Franciscan charism itself.

On behalf of the Secretariat for Formation and Studies of the Brazil–Southern Cone Conference, we thank all those who, in one way or another, made it possible to complete these stages of the course: Franciscan Missions, which made this course possible; the lecturers; the consultants; the fraternities and communities that welcomed the participants; and the organising teams.

May all that has been shared, experienced and learnt bear fruit in the service of accompaniment and formation, so that Franciscan discipleship may be lived with fidelity, creativity and hope.

Br. Sandro Roberto da Costa, OFM

Secretary for Formation and Studies of the Brazil–Southern Cone Conference

OIKOS Mediterraneo Summer Camp for university students from Türkiye Büyükdada, 2nd–6th September 2026



WWW.OFM.ORG



The summer camp, titled ‘Care for the Common Good: From Vulnerability to Planning’, concluded in Istanbul. This educational and workshop-based experience took place from 2nd to 6th September in the splendid setting of Büyükdada, one of the Princes’ Islands.

The initiative, organised by OIKOS Mediterraneo at the invitation of Br. Luca Refatti, OP (Director of Turkish University Pastoral Care), brought together young university students studying in Türkiye but hailing from as many as 16 different countries (Türkiye, Lebanon, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Guinea-Bissau, Chad, Gabon, Togo, Benin, Iran, Guinea-Conakry, Ivory Coast, Rwanda and Nigeria). The participants stayed at the house of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart and were welcomed at the San Pacifico house of the Friars Minor.

The first few days focused on training and ecological and social reflection. The proceedings opened with a presentation and workshop by Br. Antonino Clemenza, OFM, on the theme ‘A journey towards cosmic fraternity through the *Canticle of the Creatures*’. Subsequently, Br. Francesco Zecca, OFM, and Prof. Paolo Cancelli led a workshop on how to engage with today’s vulnerabilities to transform them into opportunities for redemption, introducing

participants to the courses of action undertaken by *OIKOS Mediterraneo* and presenting the Mediterranean basin as a fundamental symbolic and paradigmatic space.

The operational heart of the Summer Camp was a *hackathon*, an intensive workshop. Divided into working groups, the young people developed six concrete projects designed to enrich *the Oikos hub* for integral ecology in Turkey. The proposals presented have a strong social and community impact:

1. **Kardesol (We Are Brothers):** An integrated support programme for homeless people, combining food aid with psychological support and assistance in finding accommodation.
2. **Birlikte (Together):** A mobile app designed to combat loneliness amongst international students, facilitating the creation of social networks, the exchange of second-hand items and the sharing of local events.
3. **Talent Bridge:** A digital platform created to connect the talents of university students with the world of work, facilitating the matching of young people’s skills with businesses.

4. Seed (Seeds): A project offering emotional support and solidarity to those experiencing bereavement or periods of severe hardship, based on active listening and a spirit of fellowship.
5. Oikos Karabük: A practical response to the student housing crisis, aimed at supporting and accommodating university students who have been left without accommodation.
6. Mosaic: An intercultural festival of art and music designed as a space for dialogue, sharing and encounter between different cultures through creativity.

Thanks to the tremendous commitment of the participants, the Istanbul Summer Camp has once again proved itself to be a workshop of hope and a concrete model of global citizenship and transnational fraternity.

Franciscan joy in Lubumbashi

Religious professions and jubilees on the Feast of the Nativity of Mary



WWW.OFM.ORG



On the 8th September 2026, on the joyful feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, the parish of Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles, in the heart of the Kigoma district of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was filled with a deeply Franciscan joy.

On this day marked by simplicity and grace, 16 brothers made their first profession – 11 from the Province of St Benedict the African and 5 from the Province of St Anthony of Padua – whilst 6 brothers made their solemn profession (4 from the Province of St Benedict the African and 2 from the Province of Saint Anthony of Padua).

Five others celebrated 25 years of religious life. The Mass, presided over by Br Georges Misange, Provincial Minister of the Province of St Benedict the African, was also an opportunity for him to give thanks for his 25 years of consecration.

The parish community, the families of the newly professed and those celebrating their jubilees, members of the Franciscan Family and numerous friends surrounded the friars with their prayers and affection. An atmosphere of simple, joyful and deeply evangelical fraternity enveloped the entire assembly.

In his homily, the Provincial Minister recalled that this celebration brought together three graces: the birth of Mary, the new religious commitments, and the fidelity of those celebrating a quarter of a century of consecrated life. In this year marking the 8th centenary of the Transitus of Saint Francis, he emphasised that the legacy of the Poor Man of Assisi remains a living Gospel. Just as in the genealogy of Christ, God does not choose the perfect, but the lowly and the humble: Mary, Francis, and so many brothers from humble backgrounds. The Franciscan life, he insisted, loses its soul the moment it seeks honours, titles or power.

Addressing the brothers in temporary profession, he reminded them that poverty, obedience and brotherhood require true detachment. The habit is neither a privilege nor social security: it is a commitment to love, even when it comes at a cost. To the brothers making their solemn profession, he showed that their definitive 'yes' is a prophetic act in a world where everything

is discarded and replaced. He urged them never to let routine stifle their first love. To those celebrating their jubilees, he reminded them that 25 years is not a medal, but a question: what have we truly offered to the fraternity? Seniority can never replace conversion. Finally, the Minister General recalled the heart of Franciscan fidelity: remaining available to God, to the Church and to the brothers. To live out religious profession to the full, one must let die within oneself the desire to show off, the will to possess, rivalries and indifference towards the poor. The world does not need worldly or busy religious, but brothers imbued with prayer, rooted in a radical fraternity and embodying joyful poverty. Men can-

pable of unsettling the world through the transparency of their lives and the power of their holiness. On this blessed day, the community has entrusted each person's journey to Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord, and to St Francis, the universal brother: may their readiness to serve and their humility inspire the newly professed, sustain those who have made their final vows, and rekindle the fidelity of those celebrating their jubilees. May this feast be for the whole Franciscan Family a call to walk in the joy of the Gospel, as Friars Minor, simple and zealous, in the service of God and His people.

With the contribution of Br. Luca Nzita, OFM

LIFE in the Order



Solemn professions

13th September, Province of the Holy Cross (Slovenia): **Br. Bernardin (Domen) Ilijaš**

12th September, Seraphic Province of St Francis of Assisi: **Br. Angelo Nicolò Calleda, Br. Gabriele Calzoni, Br. Dario Colella**

12th September, Province of St Francis of Assisi (Vietnam): **Br. Anthony (Phi Thien) Ho**

8th September, Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius: **Br. Danko Mihoviločić and Br. Loris (Petar Loris) Pilav**

23rd August, Custody of Christ the King (Switzerland): **Br. Niklaus (Silvio) Meienberg**

3rd August, Province of Saints Peter and Paul (Mexico): **Br. Jesús Gerardo León Romo, Br. Filiberto Maciel García, Br. Juan Alonso Ramírez Hernández**



Deceased Brothers

† 5th September: Br. Adam (Eugene) Szufel, Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe (USA)

† 31st August: Br. Werenfried (Bernhard) Wessel, Province of Saint Elizabeth (Germany)

† 17th August: Br. Zlatko (Marijan) Matanović, Province of the Holy Cross (Bosnia-Herzegovina)

Information received from the General Secretariat

OIKOS Mediterraneo promotes cultural and interfaith dialogue in Egypt

“Mediterranean: A Polyphony of Diversity”



WWW.OFM.ORG



From 7th to 12th September, a group of young Italians and Egyptians shared an immersive experience combining cultural diplomacy, music workshops and the important consolidation of the partnership with Al-Azhar University.

The “Mediterranean: Polyphony of Diversity” camp was a cultural diplomacy and exchange experience promoted by OIKOS Mediterraneo. Br. Milad Shehata, head of the Franciscan Cultural Centre in Cairo, organised the initiative in collaboration with the Province of the Friars Minor of Egypt.

The first day focused on getting to know one another and exploring the theme of diversity in Egypt under the guidance of Marianne Mounir, who offered insights into local cultures, laws, and religions. Among the most visually and spiritually impactful moments, the young people visited the famous ‘City of Rubbish’ and the Sanctuary of St Simon, carved entirely from rock. The programme then continued with a workshop on the Mediterranean and the official presentation of OIKOS Mediterraneo by Fr Francesco Zecca, concluding with a cooking competition

and a music workshop. One of the most significant stops on the entire trip was the institutional meeting aimed at strengthening collaboration with the prestigious Al-Azhar University, which has 500,000 students. The Italian and Egyptian delegations were warmly welcomed by representatives of the Al-Azhar Graduates’ Organisation on a day entirely dedicated to interfaith dialogue and exchange.

The seminar was attended by leading academic and religious figures, including Prof. Dr. Abdel Dayem Nossair, Secretary General of the Organisation and Adviser to the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar; Prof. Dr. Ibrahim Al-Hadid, Scientific Adviser to the Organisation and former President of Al-Azhar University; Br. Milad Shehata, Director of the Franciscan Cultural Centre for Studies and Research; Eng. Mohamed Galal Kotb, Director of the Organisation’s Projects Department; Prof. Tasneem Ammar and Prof. Tasneem Yehia, Deputy Directors of the Projects Department; and Prof. Mostafa Abdel Hamid, of the Projects Department. The Minister of Culture at Al-Azhar University also came to greet us. Following a discussion centred on diversity

in the Mediterranean basin, the participants took part in an Arabic calligraphy workshop and an intercultural socialisation activity led by Fr Francesco Zecca. The meeting, which concluded with the presentation of a plaque of appreciation, marks a historic step for OIKOS Mediterraneo, the Pontifical Antonianum University and Al-Azhar University, with a view to transforming diversity into a concrete space for building the future.

The third day featured a special appearance by Maestro Carlo Morelli (a Neapolitan conductor, composer and arranger), who travelled from Italy to join the group and lead a music workshop focusing on rhythm and music's ability to break down cultural barriers. The musical journey found its ultimate expression of solidarity at the paediatric cancer hospital in Cairo, where the young people met the young patients and ran a therapeutic music workshop.

The day then concluded with a visit to the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation. The trip then focused on exploring the places of

worship of the three great Abrahamic traditions. The young people visited monuments that bear witness to Egypt's profound religious diversity, including the Sultan Hassan Mosque (1356), the Al-Rifa'i Mosque (1912), the Coptic Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary, the Greek Orthodox Church of St George and, finally, the historic Ben Ezra Synagogue. This symbolic itinerary reaffirmed the Mediterranean's pluralistic roots and cultural richness.

Against this backdrop, a conference explored the relationship between the figure of Saint Francis of Assisi and contemporary Arab culture. Guiding us on this journey was Prof. Giuseppe Cecere, from the University of Bologna and the Italian Archaeological Centre in Cairo, who introduced us to the perspective of Hasan 'Uthmān (1907–1973), a great Egyptian scholar and translator.

The experience concluded with a visit to the Pyramids of Giza and the Sphinx, symbols of a millennia-old history that continues to bear witness to the Mediterranean's complexity and richness.

First Asian Assembly of Catholic Digital Missionaries

A Shared Commitment to the Church's Mission in the Digital World



WWW.OFM.ORG



ASIAN CATHOLIC DIGITAL MISSIONARY ASSEMBLY 2026



Quezon City, Philippines. Franciscan Communication Philippines (FRANCOM PH), together with other members of the Franciscan family, joined more than 100 Catholic digital missionaries, communicators, content creators, and faith influencers from across Asia for the First Asian Catholic Digital Missionary Assembly, held on 10–13 September 2026 at Radio Veritas Asia in Quezon City.

The Franciscan family was represented by the Order of Friars Minor (OFM) through FRANCOM Philippines, the Franciscan Sisters of St. Elizabeth, and the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, reflecting a shared commitment to the Church's mission in the digital world.

Under the theme “Influencers to Witnesses: Synodal Way for Digital Mission in Asia,” the assembly was organized by the FABC Office of Social Communication and Radio Veritas Asia, in partnership with the Vatican Dicastery for Communication through the Fully Present Network. Nataša Govekar, Director of the Dicastery's Theological-Pastoral Department, accompanied the gathering.

Pope Leo XIV encouraged participants to become “authentic witnesses of Jesus Christ in their digital content.” At the opening Mass, Archbishop Gilbert Garcera of Lipa reminded them: “We bring Jesus, not by shouting over Asia, but by drawing close to Asia.”

Bishop Marcelino Antonio “Junie” Maralit, Jr., Chairman of FABC-OSC, proposed five shifts for digital mission: from content to encounter, audiences to communities, virality to fidelity, competition to collaboration, and influence to witness.

Significantly, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare of Assisi were among the six patron

saints of the assembly, offering the Franciscan family a special connection with this historic gathering.

The assembly also highlighted the contribution of women religious, lay women, young people, and digital missionaries in building a more synodal and relational Church presence online.

At the closing Mass, Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David, Bishop of Kalookan, challenged participants: “When others close the door, become a bridge.”

For the Franciscans present, the assembly affirmed that the values of fraternity, minority, dialogue, peace, and closeness to the poor must also be lived in the digital continent. Inspired by St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, Franciscan communicators are called to build bridges, foster fraternity, proclaim peace, and bear joyful witness to the Gospel online.

Franciscan Bookmark



Studi Francescani. Anno 123, 2026, n.1-2

Le tre famiglie del Primo ordine francescano:
evoluzione e identità tra il XVI e il XX secolo.



A cura di Fr. Felice Autieri, OFMConv



Br. Gerardo Antonio Vargas Cruz, OFM
appointed coadjutor bishop
of Fajardo-Humacao (Puerto Rico)
8 September 2026



WWW.OFM.ORG



The Holy Father has appointed the Reverend Gerardo Antonio Vargas Cruz, OFM, until now episcopal vicar for the clergy of the archdiocese of San Juan de Puerto Rico, as coadjutor bishop of the diocese of Fajardo-Humacao, Puerto Rico.

Curriculum vitae

Msgr. Gerardo Antonio Vargas Cruz, OFM, was born on 2 December 1976 in Mayagüez. He joined the Order of Friars Minor in the Franciscan Custody of the Caribbean, carrying out his novitiate in the Dominican Republic. He continued his formation in Puerto Rico at the Universidad Central de Bayamón, graduating in social service and obtaining a Master of Divinity.

He gave his solemn profession in 2004, and was ordained a priest on 12 August 2006.

He has held the following offices: master of novices; national assistant of the Secular Order in Puerto Rico; deputy Custos and Custos of the Franciscans in the Caribbean; professor at the Universidad Central de Bayamón; director of radio programming; chaplain of Bayamón Prison; vicar for the clergy in the archdiocese of San Juan de Puerto Rico, and collaborator with the Conference of Religious of Puerto Rico.

From the bulletin of the Holy See Press Office of 8 September 2026.

Subscribe

Write us

Web

Follow us



Newsletter



comgen@ofm.org



www.ofm.org



@ofmorg



@fratrumminorum



@ofm.org



flickr

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 OFM

OFM

Ordo Fratrum Minorum
 © 2026 All rights reserved