

Evermore creatively capable of a future

Address of the Minister to the Colloquium of the Pontificium Athenaeum Antonianum, 27 May 2004

First of all I have to state with conviction that the PAA wants to become even more capable of projecting, that is, of *proiectum*, of a push forward, my dear members of the academic community. We members of the General Government want it, the Order wants it. I am certain we could achieve our common objective: “A Centre of University and Franciscan Studies today”, if we could unite these desires.

This movement towards the future requires freedom and strong motivation. It demands wisdom, in order to discern; a prophetic eye, in order “to read” the present so it can be opened to the future. In this sense I would like to make the words of John Paul II, “not only as a *remembrance of the past*, but also as a *prophecy of the future*” (NMI 3), my own so as to invite all, starting with myself, to live this moment that I feel is of grace.

It seems to me that a cultural and university institution, like that of our *Antonianum*, can draw freedom and motivation from the very source of the spirit, capable of reflection on itself. It is from that source that the possibility is offered to study, which is not only an activity that tends towards increasing our knowledge, or a passive repetition of what was already acquired. We oppose this rationalist vision with a profound sense of *mens* and of *spiritus*: study is a complex and deep space, in which the person, gifted with will and freedom, accepts, knows and encounters the reality of the world and of his fellow man in his continuous transformation. Enlightened by Revelation, we recognise this profound space of the person as the very “permanent indwelling” of God (cfr.

Rnb XXI, 27). For these reasons, “Study, as an ‘expression of the unquenchable desire for an ever deeper knowledge of God, the source of light and of all human truth’ (VC 98), is fundamental...” (*Ratio Studiorum*, 3). It is in the light of faith and reason that we recognise the dimensions of freedom and creativity of study and, therefore, capable of a future. If it is cultivated assiduously and with the power of love and thought, it will not allow itself be turned in on self and its small interests. It will promote the very greatness of mankind, called to cultivate and care for the garden of the world in order to realise its immense possibilities.

I expect that the PAA – like the other Study Centres of our Order – will help us to become evermore creatively capable of a future. This will come about if we cultivate study as the capacity to elaborate our great tradition through contact with the change of times in which we are immersed in order to write new pages on our vision of the world, of mankind, of God, of creation. It is the *Ratio Studiorum* that again suggests to us that “The Franciscan tradition has always sought dialogue between faith and reason, between sanctity and doctrine. Placing himself in continuity with this, the Friar Minor seeks to elaborate, through study, methods and models for a critical dialogue with the present-day culture and to propose a human, Christian and Franciscan response to the challenges that come to us from the said culture” (RS 16).

Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, ofm
Minister General and Grand Chancellor of the PAA

ITALY – *Franciscan Itinerant Mission*

An itinerant missionary experience told by Br. Giacomo Bini

A small and varied group made up of 18 Friars, Sisters and lay people, had an experience of Franciscan itinerancy in Caulonia, a small town of around 8,000 inhabitants, in the diocese of Locri in Calabria (Italy). From the 15th to 30th March 2004 the group of itinerant missionaries shared fifteen days of fraternal and missionary life in the gospel-Franciscan style. The exceptional testimony is that of the ex-Minister General, Br. Giacomo Bini, together with Br. Paul Iorio, Br. Mario and Br. Stefano from Assisi, Br. Jean Claude Chopun from Paris (France), Br. Giorgio from the Venetian Province, Friars Minor, other religious men and women of different Institutes and 6 lay people (men and women). Coming from various parts of Italy and Europe, the group

came together for the first time in Caulonia to celebrate the Eucharist with the local Bishop, Mgr. Giancarlo Bregantini, and the parish priests concerned. There was no specific training for the itinerant missionaries or people, but all were informed about the gospel and Franciscan style that would characterise the proclamation. Br. Giacomo reports:

“It was a mission supported and nourished by prayer; we prayed an average of 4 hours a day, in the clear awareness that it is the Lord that sends; the Lord is the centre, the reason and purpose of the mission. It was a mission lived in fraternity as a concrete sign of reconciliation and communion. We met in the place of the mission and we set out without money, as a sign of trust in God and in

others. "Eating and drinking what they had...", we were always fed, abundantly, and accommodated by the families we met on our journey. Besides the sign of fraternity, our message was that of peace, reconciliation and love in all ambiances of the region (bars, play centres, schools, local market...).

We were divided into groups of six in order to reach the different areas and parishes around Caulonia. The day began with at least three hours of prayer, adoration and Lectio Divina, involving the local people where possible. Then, two by two, we went to visit the families and to ask our "daily bread". Each day, at 18.30, we celebrated the Eucharist with a great number of people present. After Mass the visits, two by two, continued, asking for food and hospitality for the night.

As in the experience of the first 72 disciples sent by Jesus (Lk 10,17), we returned "full of joy". The final evaluation with the Bishop, the parish priests and the people, at the end of 15 days, was a hymn of praise and thanksgiving. We ourselves were surprised by the signs of reconciliation operated by the Lord before our very eyes.

Ours parting had a certain sadness, like any parting of friends, as we bade farewell to the Bishop, the pastors and people with the hope of meeting again sometime.

It was an experience that strengthened our vocation. We asked ourselves: "How can we make others taste the beauty and richness of our fraternal, missionary vocation in collaboration with other religious and laity? How can we give "mobility" back to our calling, to our gospel-Franciscan life?"

CROATIA – *National Meeting of Franciscan Youth*

The National Meeting of Croatian youth was held in the city of Sibenik (Croatia) from the 24th to 25th April. More than 20,000 young people were present to celebrate their faith in the Risen Christ. The theme of the Meeting was: "Set out!" Among the young, from various Church movements, there was a great number of Young Franciscans (You.Fra) from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and other neighbouring countries. On Sunday, 25th April, the young gathered in the parishes of the diocese of Sibenik, where the Croatian Bishops celebrated Mass. A numerous group of You.Fra met in the parish of Dnmis where they had the possibility of meeting each other in a climate of sharing and festivity. Br. Ivan Matic, Assistant General, and the National Assistant, Br. Milan Kristo, were present.

From the 26th to the 30th April, Br. Ivan and Br. Milan visited the Provinces of the Friars Minor in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the SFO and You.Fra assisted by them. The aim of the visits was to know the situation of the SFO-You.Fra fraternities after the tragic events of the war, which had hit Bosnia-Herzegovina. They met those responsible for the two regional fraternities to weigh up the possibility of establishing a new National Fraternity in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the future. The first meeting was

in Livno, on the 26th April, and, on the following day, there was a meeting for the whole of Herzegovina held in Medjugorje. Those responsible for the two regions of Bosnia met in Sarajevo on the 28th April to discuss the necessary steps for setting up the National Fraternity. All those responsible for Bosnia-Herzegovina met in Tolisa, in the north of the country, on the 29th April.

Because of the war, many Catholics, among them many Secular Franciscans, were forced to abandon their country. Before the war, the SFO had more than 3,500 members in Bosnia, today there are a little more than 1,000. Great credit has to be given to the Young Franciscans, who began their journey precisely during the conflict and they celebrate their X Anniversary of foundation this year. The young people of You.Fra in Bosnia-Herzegovina are very active and are present in the life of the Church and society.

It is necessary to support initiatives of animation for all the Fraternities of the country after these meetings. There will be a meeting in this regard in March 2005, in which the Minister General of the SFO, Encarnacion del Pozo, will participate. The first Provisional Council for the National Fraternity of Bosnia-Herzegovina will be established on that occasion.

AFRICA – *Up-Coming Congress of Formation and Evangelisation in Africa*

A Meeting on Formation and Evangelisation, involving the Conferences of Africa and the Middle East, will be held in Lusaka, Zambia, from the 3rd to 9th August 2004. The Secretaries for Formation and Studies and for Evangelisation of the Sub-Saharan and COMONA Conferences will participate.

The initiative was born of the understanding between the General Definitior for Africa, Br. Bernardo Amaral, the General Secretaries for Formation and Studies and Evangelisation of the Curia and of the two African Conferences.

The main objective is that of knowing the reality of formation and evangelisation in Africa and the Middle East in order to help, stimulate, support and animate the Entities and Friars. It is hoped to offer help in organising animation and coordination in accordance with the orientations of the 2003 General Chapter and the Priorities for the six-year period through the meeting.

It will have a formative, sharing, and animating character, which will deepen fraternal communion and knowledge of the contents regarding the two areas and be organisational in terms of coordination and cooperation.

ITALY – *Meetings of the Provincial Definitories of North and Central Italy*

Meetings of the Definitories of the North of Italy (Genoa, Turin, Milan, Trent, Bologna and Venice) and of

Central Italy (Assisi, Cagliari, Jesi, L'Aquila, Rome and Florence) were held, respectively, in Assisi, in the Headquarters of COMPI, on the 1st to 3rd June and in the Oasis of S. Maria dei Monti, in Grottammare, on 7th to 9th June, in the context of collaboration between the Provinces of the same region, which the Conferences support and encourage.

This was the third meeting for the Provinces of North Italy and the second one for those of Central Italy. In both assemblies the work was begun by the Definitor General, Br. Francesco Bravi, who presented the topic of interprovincial cooperation in the light of the indications of the General Chapter and path of the Order, of the indications of the 2003-2006 project of COMPI and of the progress the Provinces have made in recent years of collaboration. The days of intense work saw all the Definitors meet either in mixed groups (definitors from different Provinces) or as Provincial Definitories, with the intention of identifying concrete proposals for continuing

the collaboration. There was an unanimous decision to have the meetings become annual events. The Ministers Provincial committed themselves to continue or to initiate regular meetings between them.

The Provinces of Central Italy, besides having the annual meeting of Definitories, are committed to organising an interprovincial course of itinerant spiritual exercises, to planning an annual meeting of Guardians and of those responsible for the Franciscan Sanctuaries.

The North Italy Provinces, in addition to collaboration in an interprovincial Novitiate House, are committed: to beginning the study of a possible common *Ratio Formationis*; to studying proposals for more advanced collaboration in the Postulancy and Post-Novitiate, comprising the problem of the study of theology; to continuing the annual meeting for Guardians; to having greater collaboration between the different sectors of animation and evangelisation; to creating coordination between new experiments of the different Provinces.

ITALY – *Clarean Centenary: Pilgrimage of St. Clare's Relics*

We report, among the initiatives undertaken to celebrate the 750th Anniversary of the Transitus of St. Clare, a summary of the pilgrimage of the Relic of the Saint through some regions of Italy and Albania.

Puglia and Molise – There were many stages in the journey through Puglia to the Poor Clare Monasteries and Churches of the Friars Minor, involving the whole Franciscan Family, Bishops and local clergy. The Pilgrimage began in Foggia on the 28th March. It paused in Campobasso, Molise, where the Relic of St. Clare stopped among the youth of a community of recovering drug-addicts. It then proceeded to San Giovanni Rotondo, Bisceglie, Trani, Altamura, Mola di Bari, Castellaneta, Grottaglie, Manduria, Brindisi, Lecce, Nardò, Alessano and Otranto.

Albania – The Relic, accompanied by two Poor Clares, reached Albanian soil on the 26th April 2004. The next day a notable number of faithful and Albanian Poor Clares venerated the relic in the Church of the Friars Minor and Cathedral in Scutari after the celebrations presided over by the Friars and by the Archbishop, Mgr.

Massafra. The journey continued with a pause at the Carmelites of Nënshat, founded one year ago, then went on to Lezhë and Arameras, where the remains of an old Poor Clare Monastery are preserved. Having returned to Italy on the 1st May, the pilgrimage continued to the Monastery of Soletto, from which the Poor Clare Foundation of Albania was born and it ended on the 2nd May 2004.

Calabria – The Franciscan Provinces of Calabria organised the pilgrimage from the 3rd to 23rd May. The initiative was prepared through the distribution of information material and the Letter of the four Ministers Provincial. The reception by the people was warm in every place. It began in the Poor Clare Monastery of Rossano and passed through more than 15 other centres of habitation. In addition to the Clergy and faithful, the civil authorities were present in an official manner. The Pilgrimage was an occasion to make the life of St. Clare and her message known in our time: the invitation to contemplation, fraternal communion and a healthy detachment “from the anxieties of the world”.

VENEZUELA - *50 Years of presence*

The Custody of the Immaculate Conception celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the second coming of the Friars Minor to Venezuela with gratitude and joy on the 30th May this year. The Friars organised various cultural, academic and liturgical events, in which they highlighted the presence and participation of many Friars and Sisters of the Franciscan Family, especially of two of the first Friars who arrived in 1954, for the occasion. Br. José

Rodríguez Carballo, Minister General, Br. José González, Minister Provincial, Br. Luis Cabrera, Definitor General, and Br. Antonio Merino, Professor at the Pontifical Athenaeum Antonianum, were specially invited to the celebrations. Our sincere congratulations go to Br. Alex Arias, Custos, and to all the Friars of the Entity. May the Lord continue to enlighten and support them in their response to the new signs of the times.

Small/Big News

• On the 1st May 2004, Br. Pierre Charland, Definitor of the Province of St. Joseph (Canada), professor of theology at the University of Montreal, won a prize in the

Brèves littéraires competition, Poetry category, organised by the Literary Society of Laval, for his poetic composition entitled *Vêpres*.

- The President of the Italian Republic, Azeglio Ciampi, conferred the honour of “Knight of the Republic” on Br. Nicola Iachini, OFM, on the 2nd June 2004. Br. Nicola is chaplain to the Italian immigrants and is responsible for the Catholic Mission in Basse-Sambre. Together with the pastoral work and the promotion of humanitarian and social works, he is distinguished by his capacity to be a “bridge” between the common people and the authorities, even to involving Queen Paola of the Belgians in interventions of solidarity in the depressed areas of Basse-Sambre. Br. Nicola Iachini, who has lived for more than 30 years in Belgium, belongs to the Province of St. James of the Marche in Italy.
- During the meeting of the Conference of Assistants General to the SFO, held in the General Curia of the Friars Minor on the 6th May 2004, Br. Ivan Matic was elected President. According to the Rules of Procedure of the CAS, the President remains in office for three years. Br. Ivan is joined by Br. Samy Irudaya, OFM Cap, as Secretary.
- Br. Paul Lachance, OFM, Br. Michel Cusato of the St. Bonaventure University, New York, and Ingrid Peterson, OSF, of the American Franciscan Federation, coordinated the Franciscan sessions for the 39th International Congress of Medieval Studies held at the Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan (USA) from 6th to 9th May 2004. Br. Paul guided the meetings on Franciscan Mystics, Angela da Foligno and Jacopone da Todi, and on the influence of the Vittorini on Franciscan thought and writings.
- Decrees relative to four causes entrusted to our General Postulation Office were promulgated in the presence of the Holy Father on Tuesday the 22nd June 2004. The title of “Venerable” was attributed to the Servants of God Agostino Thevarparampil and Sr. Serafina Gregoris, a Franciscan Sister of Christ the King, by this promulgation. The door to beatification is opened to the Venerable: Eurosia Fabris Barban, widow, of the SFO, and Pina Suriano, a lay woman. Pina Suriano will be

beatified during the International Congress of Catholic Action in Loreto on the 5th September 2004.

- The Municipal Administration of Vega de Valcarce, Leon (Spain), in collaboration with the Fraternity of Friars Minor of Vega, is organising a photographic competition of “The Canticle of Creatures”. 11 images that represent the verses of the Canticle of Creatures will be chosen. The winning photographs, together with the best, will be exhibited in Vega di Valcarce and in cities or institutions along the Path to Santiago.

For further information about participation contact:

<http://www.jacobeo.net/concursofoto/valcarce.htm>

- The “International Council for Evangelisation and Missions” will be held in the General Curia, Rome, from the 13th to 19th October 2004. The International Council for Evangelisation is composed of delegates from all the Conferences of Ministers Provincial and other Friars, in accordance with the Special Statutes. The theme, *Mission and Evangelisation in a changing world*, will be developed through the presentations of various contributors. The work programme of the General Secretariat, the results of the enquiry into Parishes in the Order, the projects of “ad gentes” animation and formative aspects of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in evangelisation and mission will be presented.

- On the occasion of the World Youth Day, which will be held in Cologne (Germany) from the 10th to 20th August 2005, the MEFRA Conference of Ministers Provincial, has set up an executive team to coordinate the presence of Young Franciscans who will participate in the great gathering. A musical about St. Francis is among the proposed initiatives. MEFRA committed itself, in collaboration with Missionszentrale of the Franciscans in Bonn, to finance this initiative.

- The “Acta Capituli Generalis Ordinarii 2003” are ready. The volume, of more than 800 pages, is being sent out to all the Entities of the Order.

Agenda of the Minister General

- **from 2nd July to 4th July** – Chapter of Mats of the French-speaking Provinces at Nevers (France).
- **from 5th July to 16th July** - Tempo Forte of the General Definitory, Rome (Italy).
- **from 17th July to 00 July** – Chapter of the Custody of the Holy Land, Amman (Jordan).
- **23rd July** - Meeting with the Friars in Benevento (Italy)

New Ministers Provincial

- **Br. Virgilio Di Virgilio.**, Province of St. Bernardine of Siena in Abruzzo, L’Aquila (Italy).
- **Br. Bob Van Laer**, Province of St. Joseph (Belgium).
- **Br. Juraj Mihaly**, Province of the Most Holy Saviour (Slovakia).
- **Br. Herkulan Malczuk**, Prov. of St. Michael Archangel in the Ukraine (appointed by the General Definitory).

FRATERNITAS - OFM - Rome

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