



## “Behold, your Saviour is coming”

*from the Letter of the Minister General to the Order on the occasion of Christmas*

On this day of grace, the Saviour comes to all who experience in their flesh the fragility of the human and He embraces all who bear in their hearts the desire for a new world in which justice reigns.

On this day of grace, the liturgy brings us the voice of the Lord, which is addressed to all who expect to be liberated, ransomed, redeemed, saved. The words of Holy Scripture reach our hearts and the hearts of all the poor and it is announced to all that the Saviour, the Messiah, the Lord (cf. Lk 2,11), the victory, the prize (cf. Is 62,11), light for the just, joy for the upright of heart (cf. Ps 97,11) is coming.

*Daughter of Zion, exult; shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem! Your King is coming, the Holy One, the Saviour of the world” (Nativity of the Lord. Communion Antiphon of the Mass at dawn).*

Our heart of a believer intuits the hopeful tingle of the poor who listen to the words of prophecy: *He will call them “a Holy People”, “the Redeemed of the Lord”*. *Daughter of Zion, you will be called “the Sought after”, “City-not-forsaken” (Is 62,12).*

The birth of the Son of God as the Son of Man is the final word of heaven which says to all that God seeks the earth, that the Creator seeks His creature, that Love loves us, that we the weak are the debility of God.

Our faith knows that the day of the birth of Christ is a unique day in the History of Salvation, a solemn day in the course of the liturgical year, a singular day in the life of every believer, because on that day another Sun shone (cf. Lk 1, 78), another Light was lit for all (cf. Lk 2, 32), the goodness of God appeared for all and the love which God has for all was revealed (cf. Tit 3, 4). The day of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ will always be marked by the *novelty* of what happened then, for since that day God has a *new name*: Our God will be called *Jesus* for ever,

because He will save His people from their sins (cf. Mt 1, 21), and He will also be called *Emmanuel*, which means “*God with us*” (cf. Mt 1, 23). Since that day, faith knows the mystery of a *new conception* and of a *new birth* (*Nova autem nativitate generatus, quia inviolata virginitas concupiscentiam nescivit, carnis substantiam ministravit*: Leo the Great, *Tractatus XXII, 2*). Since that day, we know the mystery of a *new maternity*, through a mother being a virgin, and of a *new virginity*, through a virgin being a mother. Since that day, there has been revealed to us *the new order* into which, through the incarnation, the Son of God enters, since He who was invisible, generated by the Father, has become visible, being born of the Virgin Mary; He who was vast in the infinity of His divine being, has become limited in the smallness of the human; He who existed before all times, began to be of our time in the womb of a mother; He who was the Lord of all, the glory of His majesty now hidden, assumed the form of a servant and lowered Himself to the depths of the human condition; the impassive God has become a passive man, the immortal God submitted to the laws of death (cf. Leo the Great, *Tractatus XXII, 2*).

Rejoice, dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord, because the Son of God, in whom we also are children and inheritors of eternal life through the Spirit (cf. Tit 3,7), has been born as a man among men. Rejoice, because the day of the new redemption has dawned, the day of eternal happiness (Cf. Leo the Great, *Tractatus XXII, 1*). Rejoice, because on this day, on which Christ was born for us, life for all has been born (cf. LEO the Great, *Tractatus XXI, 1*). Celebrate with indescribable joy this “*feast of feasts, in which God, become a small child, was nourished at the breasts of a human mother*” (2Cel 199).

*(Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, ofm)*

## GENERAL CURIA - VIII Centenary of the Foundation of the Order

In the month of July 2004, the General Definitory established the “Forma Vitae” Commission for the VIII Centenary of the Foundation of the Order 2008/2009. The Commission has the task of drawing up the contents and to prepare the aids for the itinerary of the Centenary.

The Commission is composed of: Br. Hermann Schalück and Br. Giacomo Bini (ex-Ministers General), Br. Joxsé Maria Arregui of the Prov. of Arantzazu (Spain), Br. Thaddée Matura of the Prov. of St Joseph (Canada) and Br. Francesco Bravi, Vicar General. Br. Ambrogio

Nguyen Van Si, General Definitory, is the President of the “Forma Vitae” Commission. The definitive text of the celebrative itinerary, approved by the General Definitory, bears the title of “The grace of our origins”. The “Forma Vitae” Commission also presented the work project of the Centenary to the Definitory. The itinerary will be centred on the Rule, the project of life which Francis pointed out to the Friars and which we must put into practice. Reflection will begin on the text “The Vocation of the Order Today”, the final document of the Madrid Chapter

of 1973, in order to confront and to ask ourselves: “What possible steps can we undertake today?”

The *Instrumentum Laboris* for the extraordinary Chapter, which will have the aim of bringing the Rule closer to life, will be written with the suggestions which arrive from the Provinces. The Extraordinary Chapter and the Document it will produce will be a contribution to the future itinerary of the Friars. Among the initiatives for the celebrations of the VIII Centenary of the foundation of the Order, Br. José Carballo, Minister General, has invited the General Postulation to prepare a volume called “Santorale” with biographical profiles of all Friar Minor Saints, Blesseds, Venerables and Servants of God. The Definitory also appointed **Br. Miran Spelic** (Prov. of Holy Cross, Slovenia), as Secretary of the extraordinary

General Chapter to be held in Assisi in September 2006.

The Secretariat is composed of **Br. Miguel de la Mata Merayo** (Prov. of St. James of Compostela, Spain), **Br. Gianpaolo Masotti** (Seraphic Prov. of St. Francis of Assisi, Italy), **Br. Michael Moore** (Prov. of St. Francis Solanus, Argentina), **Br. Andres Rañoa** (Prov. of St. Peter Baptist, Philippines), **Br. Joseph Legonou** (Prov. of the Incarnate Word, Togo).

The Secretariat is supported by the liturgical group formed by: **Br. Ruben Tierrablanca** (Prov. of Sts. Peter and Paul, Mexico), **Br. Sean Collins** (Prov. of Ireland), **Br. Vittorio Viola** (Seraphic Prov. of St. Francis of Assisi, Italy), **Br. Paolo Canali** (Prov. of St. Charles Borromeo, Italy). **Br. Renato Beretta** (Prov. St. Charles Borromeo, Italy) is Bursar of the Chapter.

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## FRANCE – *Franciscan formation*

28 young Friars and Sisters in formation (3 Friars Minor, 3 Capuchins, 16 Poor Clares and 7 Franciscan Sisters), with their respective formators, met in the convent of “La Clarté-Dieu”, Orsay, from the 23<sup>rd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2004, for talks on the topic of “Foundation and re-foundation in the XIX-XXI centuries”.

The Minister General, Br. José Carballo, sent a message of encouragement to the participants, who were helped in their reflections by the competence of the presenters: J.M. Ploux, a priest of the ‘Mission de France’, presented the “Historical Panorama of the evolution of the world”, and the Slovenian philosopher, Br. E. Kovac, OFM, described the “Universal Fraternity”.

Br. Thaddée Matura, OFM, spoke on the “Return to the biblical, patristic and Franciscan sources at the end of the XIX century” and Sr. Gabrielle Marguin spoke about the contribution of the ecumenical experience, Taizé in particular, to which some Franciscan Sisters are associated. Br. Serge Delsaut, OFM, and Br. Pio Murat, OFMcap, described the return to the sources on the basis of the “Documents” published in many languages and the adaptation of the Capuchin GGCC after Vatican II. Attention was paid to Franciscan iconography, through a study of the series of stained-glass windows in the

Franciscan Church in Paris and of the Capuchins in Blois (Br. JJ. Danel, OFM).

Mrs. Gobbé, a Swiss lay-woman, presented the “History of the SFO and present-day challenges” and Sr. A. M. Cunin, FMM, indicated “new perspectives of mission”.

The testimony of foreign religious who live in France were also heard: those of a Philippine Poor Clare, a 17-year resident, and of a young Ethiopian Capuchin. The Jesuit P. Flipo, director of the magazine “Christus”, spoke about spiritual research as the “last frontier”.

The project of a new Poor Clare Monastery united to a pastoral centre was presented. One day was dedicated to a visit to a Synagogue, Cathedral and Mosque in the town of Evry. There the participants could meet the Dominican contemplatives who asked questions on the catechumenate and differentiated accompaniment.

Br. Arnaud Corbic, OFM, a teacher at the Antonianum of Rome, spoke on the topic: “Unbelief, a risk for the faith”. It was an extremely rich session and initiated reflection in small groups and the birth of 5 workshops until the next session. A Chapter of Mats, directed at Friars and Sisters under the age of 50, was proposed in order to continue the reflection in the ambience of the Franciscan Family.

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## HOLY LAND - “*The Magic Lamp*”: *children’s’ songs for peace in the Holy Land*

Jerusalem – On the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2004 the girls of “The Jasmine Choir”, “St. Joseph’s” School in the Holy Land, enlivened “The Magic Lamp” festival. One intention of Br. Armando Pierucci, director of the Magnificat Institute and promoter of the initiative, was to fulfil his ambition of creating something like the “Zecchino d’Oro” for Jerusalem, which was felt to be like building a cathedral in the desert. But, – says Br. Pierucci – we are dedicated to bringing water to the desert: we invited the schools, asking them to participate as soloists and listeners. Four Palestinian musicians and lyricists generously donated 12 songs to the “Magnificat” Institute, the school for song of the Custody of the Holy Land. The “Magnificat” Institute

took care of harmonisation and printing of the songs, which will be presented to the school later. It is matter of songs on the topic of the family in that garden of the Holy Land and, at times, of the pain of being a Palestinian, of nostalgia for a Peace which is slow in coming. The soul of the Festival is Mrs. Hania Soudah Sabbara, director of “The Jasmine Choir”. Mrs. Sabbara found in the schools of Jerusalem the 12 soloists who, with the girls of “St. Joseph” interpreted the songs, accompanied on the piano by students of the “Magnificat” Institute. Among the stimulators of the initiative is our Minister General who, in 2003, wished to be present at the first edition of the Festival.

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## SPAIN – *The European Congress for Animators of Justice and Peace of the Order*

The European Congress of Animators of Justice and Peace was held in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2004. The meeting, at which 50 Friars, the majority of Animators of European Provinces, dealt with the topic “For a Europe in Solidarity: how to respond, as Franciscans, to the present-day challenges”.

The participants analysed the situation of the old continent in various areas. The difference between the Union of European States, a reality of strong economic connotations, and the geographical Europe was seen to be clear from the political point of view. We observed the consequences of neo-liberalism in the economic field: the divide between rich and poor was studied in depth, the concept of man and work has been totally changed. In the social-cultural sphere, individualism, plurality of culture and de-Christianisation is growing. The fear of losing one’s cultural identity because of the arrival, through the flow of migrants, of new strange cultures and religions is

seen. Europe demonstrates a constant fragmentation from within; an example is the not-merely conceptual division between East and West (represented in the past by the Berlin Wall). The entrance of Turkey into the European Union has become a challenge comparable to the real confrontation between Islam and Christianity in Spain.

The General Secretaries for Formation and Study and Evangelisation, the President of UFME and experts from Franciscans International were present at the Congress.

The Office of JPIC at the General Curia in Rome also presented the proposals of the 2003 General Chapter, which asks the Friars to have a creative presence in the places of rupture. Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, the Minister General, on intervening in the meeting, suggested a Decalogue for being at the practical service of peace for this “crucified humanity”.

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## GENERAL CURIA - *The General Procuration of the Order*

The General Procuration of the Order is that Office entrusted with dealing and concluding, in the name of the Minister General, all business with the Holy See, except the cause of beatification and canonisation, which is the competence of the Postulation Office. Like all offices of the Curia, it embodies one of the characteristic aspects of the charism and Rule of the Friars Minor, such as the freedom and duty of the Friars to have recourse to their Ministers “when they are aware that they are no longer capable of being faithful to their state of life” (cf. Rb X). In recent years the General Procuration has been at the centre of transformations and changes of personnel and structures. After the appointment of Br. Antonio Franjic,

Vicar General, as Procurator, Br. Valentino Menegatti of the Province of Christ the King, Bologna (Italy), was called to the office as Secretary and Vice-procurator in succession to Br. José Beltran, the Province of Arantzazu (Spain), who assured precision, discretion, competence and diligent commitment to the work for 38 years. A further event occurred after Br. Antonio Franjic was called to the house of the Father on the 7<sup>th</sup> September 2004. On the 12<sup>th</sup> November the new Vicar General, Br. Francesco Bravi, was elected Procurator General. We wish him well in his work of fidelity and obedience to Holy Mother Church.

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## CROATIA – *Meeting of the “OFM 10” Friars*

A meeting for Friars of less than ten years solemn profession of the South Slav Conference of Friars Minor was held in Trogir (Croatia) from the 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> October 2004. It was the first meeting of this kind organised by the Secretariat for Formation of the same Conference. About 80 Friars of the six Provinces lived the gift of fraternity in communion with the Minister General, Br. José Carballo, the Definitor General, Br. Sime Samac, the Vice-Secretary for Formation and Studies, Br. Alojzy Warot, and the Assistant General to the SFO, Br. Ivan Matic. The six Ministers Provincial of the Conference

were present. The 27<sup>th</sup> October was dedicated to a meeting of the Friars with the Minister General. The intervention of Br. José was followed by work in groups. In the assembly of sharing, the young Friars had the opportunity to dialogue with the Minister about the life and mission of the Friars Minor today. On the second day, Br. Alojzy Warot of the Secretariat for Formation and Studies, dwelt on the “Discipleship of Christ” and on the “stages of life”. The third day, dedicated to the SFO, You.Fra and Spiritual Assistance, was animated by the Assistant General to the SFO, Br. Ivan Matic.

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## *Franciscan bookmark*

- GUITTON Gérard, **Découvrir Saint François d’Assise** (Discovering St. Francis of Assisi), Éditions Salvator (Paris 2004), pp 122. Can Francis of Assisi be discovered today? This is the question by Br. Gérard Guitton on seeking to undertake a “truth operation”. It is not a search for an alternative way, but an attempt at clarifying the “popular images” of Francis of Assisi so that they might be the

bearers of an authentic Franciscan spirituality.

- LOCHE Giovanni, **La conca Reatina. I primitivi insediamenti francescani** (The Rieti Valley, the early Franciscan settlements) Edizioni Porziuncola (S. Maria degli Angeli, Assisi, 2004), pp 91+54 tav. The author presents the Franciscan settlements of the Rieti Valley, seeking, as far as possible, to place himself in the historical

time of their foundation and then during the continuing times up to ours. Br. Giovanni Loche, OFM, accompanies, through this text, the pilgrim who wishes to have a more profound visit to these places of grace.

• SCHNEIDER Herbert, **Lebendiges Sterben** (Living death), Stella Maris Verlag (Buttenwiesen 2003), pp 77. On the occasion of the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St Clare, Br. Herbert Schneider, OFM, ex-Delegate General

for the Poor Clares and the Cloister Sisters of Franciscan inspiration, published this collection in German. Faced by the present nihilist culture, he offers a reading of death as an opening to life. Many avoid death, they fear it, but for Clare, on the contrary, death is an occasion to bring life to its fulfilment and it leads her towards eternal life in order to unite herself to the King of glory: the risen Jesus..

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### *Small/Big News*

• The Apostolic Penitentiary appointed **Br. Otmar Eglof**, (ViceProv. Of Christ the King in Switzerland) as Ordinary Penitentiary at the Latern and **Br. Roberto De Angelis**, (Prov. Sts. Peter and Paul, Italy) as Extraordinary Penitentiary in the Vatican Basilica.

• The Secretary of the Vatican State, Card. Sodano, announced the appointment of **Br. Nikolaus Schöch** (Prov. Bl. Engelbert Kolland, Innsbruck) as „Substitute Defender of the Bond“ at the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Segnatura.

• During the ‘tempo forte’ of the 8<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> November, **Br. Francesco Bravi** was elected Vicar and Procurator General by the General Definitory. A Definitory will be elected in the near future to complete the number laid down by the 2003 General Chapter.

• The Minister General appointed some Delegates: **Br. Francesco Bravi**, Vicar General, Delegate to the General Curia; **Br. José Pereira das Neves** (Prov. Holy Martyrs of Morocco, Portugal), to accompany the Custody of St. Clare (Mozambique) to autonomy; **Br. Paskalis Bruno Syukur** (Prov. St. Michael Archangel, Indonesia), for the Foundation of Thailand, dependent on the Minister General.

• **Br. Barnaba Hechic** (Prov. St. Anthony of Padua, Italy) was appointed President of the Scotus Commission (Rome) for three years. The Vice-President of the same Commission is **Br. César Saco Alarcón** (Prov. St. James

of Compostela, Santiago, Spain).

• On the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> December 2004, the “III Congress of Greccio”, promoted and organised by the Friar Minor Provinces of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul of Lazio and of Christ the King of Emilia Romagna, by the School of Franciscan Medieval Studies, Pontifical Athenaeum Antonianum ([www.antonianum.ofm.org](http://www.antonianum.ofm.org)), and the Frate Francesco Magazine ([fratefrancesco@iol.it](mailto:fratefrancesco@iol.it)), will be held in Greccio, Rieti Valley (Italy). The topic of the Congress is “John of Parma and the great hope”. Prof. Marco Bartoli, Prof. Grado Giovanni Merlo, Prof. Cesare Vaiani, OFM, Prof. Fabio Troncarelli, Prof.ssa Giulia Barone and Msgr. Sandro Corradini of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints will be the speakers.

For information and hotel booking please contact the Secretariat of the Congress in the persons of P. Massimo Cocci and P. Francesco Rossi, at the Oasi Gesù Bambino, 02040 Greccio, telephone no. 0746.750279127 or fax 0746.751776.

• The General Constitutions and General Statutes of the Friars Minor, updated in accordance with the indications of the last General Chapter, come into force from the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2004. The Curia has looked after the printing in English, Italian and Spanish, the official languages of the Order, with the Latin text on the opposite page.

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### *Agenda of the Minister General*

• from **29 November to 6 December** – Visit to the Franciscan Province of the Immaculate BVM, , Sao Paolo, Brazil

• from **7 to 12 December** – Annual spiritual exercises, personal retreat

• **13 December** – Fraternal Visit to the International College of St. Anthony and the International Franciscan Fraternity of “Fra Gabriele Maria Allegra”

• from **14 to 16 December** – Visit to Notre-Dame des Nations Fraternity, Brussels, Celebration of Missionary sending

• from **17 to 18 December** – Meeting with the Conference of Ministers Provincial of Italy in Assisi

• from **20 to 22 December** - Tempo Forte of Minister and Definitory General

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### **New Visitators General**

• **Br. Stephen Bliss** (Prov. Holy Spirit, Australia and New Zealand) Assistant Visitator for Foundation of Prov. of Sts. Cyril and Methodius (Croatia) in Australia;

• **Br. Johannes Bahlmann** (Prov. Immaculate Conception BVM, Brazil) for Prov. Our Lady of the Seven Joys, Brazil

• **Br. William Short** (Prov. Santa Barbara, California/USA) for Prov. of Our Lady, Queen of Peace, South Africa.

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