

“To begin: we are Friars Minor”

Meeting of the Ministers Provincial recently elected (17th – 21st January 2005)

“If authority in the Church is based on the fact that the Church is communion, the People of God, the service of authority in a Franciscan perspective can only be understood from our being a fraternity of minors/servants. Before being called to exercise the service of authority we were called to be Friars Minor, the name wanted by Francis for his fraternity. The service of authority is a special and temporary calling within the definitive calling to be Friars Minor.

The fraternity, a consequence of being Friars, defines us as: “The Order of Friars Minor, founded by St. Francis, is a fraternity”. The fraternity is, therefore, an indispensable element of our “forma vitae”, an essential element in our spirituality and in the organisation of our Order.

Our father Francis wanted it that way. The insistence on human relationship, on its fraternal and, inclusively, its maternal character, the use of the word “Friars/Brothers” to designate his followers and “fraternity” to designate the group which gathered around him, are sufficient to show the importance which Francis gave to the fraternity. In coherence with the desire of Francis, our legislation recognises that fraternal life is, together with the “spirit of

prayer and devotion”, an undeniable manifestation of the “radical gospel life” which we are obliged to live: “The friars, as followers of St. Francis, are bound to lead a radically evangelical life, namely: to live in a spirit of prayer and devotion and in fraternal communion”.

Equality is one among many notes which characterise the Franciscan fraternity. Even when the Church includes the Order of Friars Minor among the clerical institutes”, “in virtue of their profession”, all those who form part of it are “fully equal”. No Friar is greater than another in the fraternity. None is more important than another. All, without exception, are equal because all participate in the same vocation to fraternity. This also corresponds to the will of brother Francis, who, in his first Rule wrote: “Let no one be called “prior”, but let everyone in general be called a lesser brother. Let one wash the feet of the other”. All have the same title, Friar Minor, and all are called to live relationships of equality within the fraternity, showing themselves to be kind, fraternal and accepting, just as they would like others to be with them.

Br. José Rodríguez Carballo ofm

SOUTH EAST ASIA – Solidarity with the victims of the tsunami

The earthquake under the sea and the subsequent tsunami which struck the inhabited areas on the coasts from Thailand to Somalia on the 26th December set in motion a surge of international solidarity with those left homeless by this disaster. The catastrophe caused the death of more than 160.000 people and there is a threat to the survivors of an epidemic due to the lack of drinking water and medicines.

The Friars Minor present in the zone did not suffer any damage. In collaboration with the whole Franciscan Family, they are organising help for the local populations.

Writing to the General Curia, the Minister Provincial of Indonesia stated “Now we are engaged in helping the victims of the tsunami in Aceh and Northern Sumatra. Up to now we have coordinated, through Br. Saverinus Adir, with the entire Indonesian Franciscan Family and especially with the Capuchins”.

All subscriptions, in Euro or American Dollars, will be managed directly by our Friars in order to help the local populations. Whoever wishes to give financial help can send a cheque payable to:

O.F.M. Economato Generale
purpose: PRO TERREMOTATI ASIA
BANCA POPOLARE DI SONDRIO
Viale Cesare Pavese, 366
00144 ROMA

or through a **Bank Draft** made out to:
purpose: O.F.M. Economato Generale
PRO TERREMOTATI ASIA
N. 5300/66; ABI: 05696; CAB: 03211; CIN: L
IBAN: IT95L0569603211000005300X66
SWIFT: POSOIT22

MOROCCO – The first mission of the Friars Minor

The presence of the Friars Minor in Morocco can be defined as the firstborn Franciscan mission. The Federation of Morocco is the continuation of the first mission desired by Francis of Assisi. All the Friars who live in Morocco met in Rabat from the 2nd to 4th January 2005 to participate

in the Chapter of Mats on the topic of “Fraternity: reflection and communication”. It was a time of fraternity, encounter and prayer for all. Br. Amaral Bernardo Amaral, Definitor General for Africa and Br. Vincenzo Brocanelli, Moderator General for missions also attended the meeting.

During the same days, the General Commission for Dialogue, which had selected Morocco to deepen their knowledge of the Arab-Muslim world and to appreciate the work of the Friars Minor who live in contact with the Moroccan population, met in Rabat. The Mission in Morocco shows some particular aspects which distinguishes it from others: it is a presence of silence and of gospel and Franciscan life among Muslims, it is a bridge for meeting and of inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, it is a place where the Friars also offer a service of education and social assistance to the young, to adults and, especially, to the poor and most needy.

To the missionaries of the “first hour”, belonging to the Spanish Provinces of Granada and Santiago of Compostela

and to the French Province of the Three Companions, old and full of experience today, other Friars from Croatia, Poland, Mexico, Brazil and Egypt have been added, following the appeal of the Minister General, Br. Giacomo Bini, in 1999. The age of the Friars in the Foundation ranges from 30 to 80 years. The example of an inter-provincial, international and inter-cultural Fraternity is presented in this reality.

This very old Franciscan presence, which today has 11 Houses but only 26 Friars, some of whom are sick and some who can only guarantee a temporary presence, needs other Friars disposed to offer generously, as Francis of Assisi wished, simple testimony of Fraternity among Muslims, especially in Morocco.

INDIA – *The Friars Minor in India as spiritual guides among the people*

Br. Dayanand, of the Province of St. Thomas the Apostle, India, has been an itinerant preacher of the Gospel to the poor in villages and towns round about the district of Bellary, South India. He has been accompanied by fellow Friars on this mission on and off. Since direct evangelisation and conversion is constitutionally prohibited in most states in India, he has been involved in preaching the Gospel to the people of diverse faiths and making them disciples of Jesus. About ten years ago the people built an Ashram for him and for any Friar who would share the life with him so that they would be able to meet their “guru” (teacher) in a definite place rather than seek him out among the many villages of Bellary where he would be on itinerant preaching. The people themselves provide food for those who come to the Ashram and there is always enough for all. One characteristic of this Franciscan Ashram is that it also looks after the sick, the mentally ill and Aids patients without diminishing the aspect of the guru’s and the other Friars’ availability to people. This mode of inculturated living is very close to the

people and crowds of people of diverse faiths are drawn to the Ashram. They know that no monetary help is given but they find consolation and acceptance there.

Br. Scaria Varanath, a companion to Br. Dayanand, invited by the Bishop of Raipur, built another Ashram with the same style of life in North India, called “Shantivanm”, that is, Forest of Peace, and is in the midst of deeply religious Hindu believers, who are also fanatical about their faith. Br. Scaria lives with another Friar in this setting in the hope of establishing a fraternal relationship with our Hindu brothers and sisters who have become too conscious, at times even fanatical, of their Hindu identity which they feel they must defend.

The fruits of these two experiments are seen in the many non-Christians seeking gurus of Christian outlook and lifestyle. The great Franciscan simplicity and the Christian spirit of concern for the poor, together with the genuineness of their gurus stand out as the main characteristic of these two Franciscan Ashrams of Br. Dayanand and Br. Scaria.

MAURITIUS – *National Chapter of the SFO*

The Assistant General to the SFO, Br. Ivan Matic, was on the island of Mauritius for the celebration of the National elective Chapter of the SFO from the 15th to 21st December 2004. During his stay he was the guest of the community of Friars at Beau Bassin, where he met the National Assistant to the SFO, Br. René Coutagne, and Br. Krisnah Ramsamy, Definitor of the Province of St. Francis and Assistant to various local fraternities. He met the National Council on the 16th December and had the opportunity to know directly the situation of the SFO and You.Fra. On the 17th December, Br. Ivan, Br. René and Br. Krisnah, together with Br. Gianni Losio, Italian missionary, met Bishop Maurice Piat, with whom they shared information about the life and presence of the Secular Franciscans in his diocese. The 18th was a day dedicated to the National elective Chapter of the Fraternity in Mauritius. Salesio Njuki, from the SFO of Kenya, who represented the Minister General of the SFO, Encarnación del Pozo, presided over the Chapter.

The Chapter members elected Hervé Sylva as National Minister and International Councillor. After the Chapter, the Assistant General also visited the second community of Friars in Chemin Grenier and was a guest of some families of Secular Franciscans.

The reality of the Secular Franciscans in Mauritius is good and is an example as to how Fraternities of the SFO can be active and attractive. Many young couples are a part of the SFO and many others are in initial formation. There is a notable interest in Franciscan spirituality on the part of the laity. There are 10 Fraternities canonically erected and another 10 in the process of formation at present. A spiritual Assistant is lacking in many Fraternities as up to now the Assistants have been Br. René and Br. Krisnah. There is a significant help from the Franciscan Missionary of Mary Sisters, some of whom accompany the SFO Fraternities. Another positively impressive reality is the attention given to Franciscan spirituality by the young, which is made concrete in the birth and growth of You.Fra

and Herald groups.

Franciscan bookmark

- CADDERI Carlo, **Blessed John of Parma**, Seventh Minister General of the Friars Minor after St. Francis, Pazzini editore (Bologna, 2004). This is a study, a biography of John of Parma, an eminent figure of the first century of Franciscan history. Presented at times as a spiritual and at times as a follower of Gioacchino of Fiore; an idealistic Franciscan, fascinating, but surrounded by great adversaries; a saint, tried by a saint.
- LAURIOLA Giovanni, **John Duns Scotus and the new evangelisation**, Editrice AGA (Alberobello 2004) John

Duns Scotus, thinker of the future, offers valid references for reflection and meditation on the nature of evangelisation and missionary life, which every baptised and consecrated person is obliged to live in the first person.

- MAZZOLI Efrem, **La Verna – Franciscan Studies. Indices of the hundred years 1903-2003**, The ‘Studi Francescani’ Review, year 101, 2004, nn. 3 and 4 – Florence. This periodical, under the guidance of the Friars Minor, publishes the indices which gathers articles and Franciscan contributions in a century-long history.

Fraternitas, a short account of the first steps

The idea of an informative bulletin for the Friars Minor was born in 1967, immediately after the General Chapter in Assisi in which the renewal of the Order in accordance with the indications of the II Vatican Council began. In a conversation along the corridors of the General Curia between the Minister General, Br. Constantine Koser, and two Friars, Br. Luis Patiño and Fr Alberto Lopera, the possibility of creating an informative bulletin which would gather the new experiences of the Provinces of the Order, as far as possible, was discussed. Experimentation in new forms of applying seraphic spirituality had been begun among the Friars at that time.

The periodical “Acta Ordinis Minorum” had existed in the Order since 1800, but the publication of “non-official” news or experiences was unthinkable! The publication of experiments coming from the whole Order in the “Acta” would have assumed the significance of “canonising” the experimentations, – whether they were good, regular or bad – of presenting them as being approved or tolerated by the General Government. A new instrument was, therefore, necessary. It, without any comment, would gather news from the periphery to the centre of the Order. The Curia would publish, without attributing any official character, the news and the Friars could judge, carry out or reject what they read. It was a way to gather the multiplicity of ideas and tendencies present in the Order. The Minister General, enthusiastic about the idea even though it presented some risks, set the project in motion and entrusted it to Br. Alberto Lopera Trujillo (Holy Faith Province, Colombia).

In the reorganisation of the Curia the Officium Protocolii

was established and organised into three sections: Protocol itself, Schematismum Ordinis Fratrum Minorum and the new born periodical bulletin. The personnel of the Office was made up of the director, Br. Alberto Lopera, Br. Enrique Howaniezc (Pulaski, USA), Br. Rafael Velandi (Venice, Italy), Br. Sergio D’Urso (Venice, Italy) and Br. Sdenko Maric (Herzegovina, Bosnia). The title of ‘Fraternitas’ was given to the new publication to underline the fundamental aspect of Franciscanism and the desire to be an instrument of fraternity for the whole Order. The Latin words taken from the unapproved Rule, “Quicumque sint et invenerint fratres ostendant se familiariter inter se”, were used as a sub-title.

The Director of the Protocol Office was responsible for the content of *Fraternitas*, but the work of coordination of the whole office made the task very arduous. The situation was resolved with the arrival in the Curia of Br. Dario Pili (Sardinia, Italy) who dedicated himself full-time to *Fraternitas*, enriching it with graphic paging.

Latin was the language used and Br. Hermes Peters (St. Mary Mediatrix, Belgium) and occasionally Br. Ignacio Omaechevarría (Cantabria, Spain) and Br. Desiderio Kalverkamp (Immaculate Conception, Brazil) collaborated in the correction of the texts and style.

Fraternitas is recognised as the first of the fruits of the 1967 General Chapter. It was strongly wished for by the Minister General, Constantine Koser, for the purpose of developing links between the Fraternities within the Order while respecting the freedom and the differences with which God had created each person.

Small/Big news

- **The grace of our origins** is the title of the letter for the establishment of the Eighth Centenary of the Foundation of the Order of Friars Minor. In the letter, in addition to the presentation by the Minister, you will find the Project, the celebration Iter and an indication of some preparatory activities for the Centenary. The document is being sent out to the Provincial Curias for distribution to the Fraternities of the Order.
- During the Tempo Forte of December 2004 the

Definitory General defined the composition of the **Executive Committee for Evangelisation and Mission** of which Br. Nestor Schwerz and Br. Vincenzo Brocanelli (General Secretariat for Evangelisation) already form part. They are joined by Br. Carlos Santos (Asia), Br. Raphael Sghiet and Br. Marcel Tshikez (Africa), Br. Stefano Ottenbreit and Br. Nikola Vukoja (Europe), Max Hottle (USA) and Emilio Eslayola (Latin America).

- **Br. Giovan Giuseppe Califano** (St. Francis of Assisi,

Italy) has been appointed Vice-Postulator General.

- **Br. Tarcisio Colombotti** (St. Charles Borromeo, Milan, Italy) is the new Guardian of the Grottaferrata Fraternity.
- Br. Bogdan Fajdek** (Immaculate Conception, Poland) was appointed Vicar, **Br. Romain Mailloux** (Three Companions, France-Belgium) Bursar and **Br. José de Jesús Borges**, (Portugal), Vice-Bursar of the same Fraternity.
- **Br. Stefano Siarkiewicz** (St. Hedwig, Poland) is assigned to Grottaferrata as a helper to the Bursar's Office and for the Dispatch Office.
- **Br. Andrzej Kulba**, (St. Hedwig, Poland) is assigned provisionally to the Fraternity of the College of St Anthony (Rome) as assistant in the Sacristy.
- **Br. Simão Laginski** (Immaculate Conception, Brazil), was appointed Guardian of the Fraternity "Notre Dame de Nations" (Brussels, Belgium).
- The **University of St. Bonaventure** of Medellin received accreditation of high quality for the Faculty of Psychology from the Ministry of Education on the 13th October 2004. The programme of studies at the Faculty were recognised as the most valid in the area of the Department of Antioquia and eighth in the whole of Colombia. To achieve the said objective, the Franciscan University worked for three years, not only at the improvement of the academic quality, but also in attention to the projection of services in favour of the local, regional and national community. This academic institute, in the course of its 33 years in existence, has formed more than 2,800 psychologists.
- The General Definitory elected **Br. Mario Favretto**, OFM, Definitory for COMPI on the 13th January 2005, in substitution for Br. Francesco Bravi, recently elected Vicar General of the Order. Br Mario from the Province of St. Anthony of Padua (Venice, Italy), was born in Lorenzaga (Treviso, Italy) on the 1st December 1954, the son of Erminio and Giulia Tubiana. He entered the Order in 1974, made solemn Profession on the 5th October 1980 and was ordained priest on the 19th June 1982. Minister Provincial of the Venetian Province for the six-year period 1998-2004, he is, at the moment, the Visitor General to the Seraphic Province of St. Francis (St. Mary of the Angels,

Italy). With the election of the Definitory for the Italian Conference, the government of the Order, guided by the Minister General, Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, returns to its original "plenum" of 9 Definitors.

- **Br. Luis Cabrera**, Definitory General, is the new Director of the Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in substitution of Br. Rodrigo Peret who returns to Brazil at the end of January.
- The General Definitory approved the establishment of the new Franciscan Transalpine Conference, **COTAF**, which includes the Provinces and Custodies which belonged to the French-Belgian Conference (COPEF) and to the Central European Conference (MEFRA). In addition, it extended **COMPI** which now includes the Conferences of Ministers Provincial of Italy and Albania.
- The date for the official opening of the 1st stage of the **VIII Centenary of the Order** has been set for the 29th October 2005. The celebration, at which the General Definitory will be present, will be held in Assisi and will coincide with the International Congress of Novice Masters. Each Province will celebrate this moment within its own territory in accordance with the indications of the document "The grace of our origins".
- A course of **Spiritual Exercises** on the topic of "The Greeting of Peace revealed to Francis", open to Friars and Laity, will be held in "Le Stuoie", the House of Welcome, St. Mary of the Angels, from the 20th to 26th February 2005. The guide for the course is Br. GianMaria Polidoro, OFM, of the Assisi Province, who has been occupied with peace since 1982. He went to the US President, Ronald Regan, and to the Kremlin in 1984, to propose the path of dialogue as a way out of the cold war. In 1997 he founded "Assisi Pax International", an association which works in the perspective of peace by overcoming the concept of non-war and theorising about a "civilisation of peace", fruit of a positive vision of reality to be carried out through listening, meeting, dialogue and collaboration. Inscriptions for the course close on the 30th January 2005. For further information contact:

Br. Massimo Lelli Tel. +39.075.8044608, Fax +39.075.8044256, eMail: lestuoie@assisiiofm.org sito <http://www.lestuoie.it>

New Visitor General

- **Br. Paul Miki Murakami** (Prov. Holy Martyrs of Japan) Assistant Visitor for the Friars of the Holy Name Prov. of New York (USA) who are in Japan.

Agenda of the Minister General

- **26th January – 1st February** – Spiritual Chapter "John of Montecorvino" in Assisi and meeting with the Friars of the Foundation of St. Francis in Russia-Kazakhstan at LaVerna (Italy).
- **from 2nd to 5th February** – Visit to the Custody of the Caribbean (Santo Domingo)
- **from 10th to 12th February** – Visit to the Province of St. James of the Marche (Italy)
- **from 20th February to 2nd March** – Visit to the Provinces of the Holy Gospel and of Sts. Francis and James (Jalisco) (Mexico)

FRATERNITAS - OFM - Rome

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