

We are a Fraternity in the Risen Christ

From the Message of the Minister General to the Order on the occasion of Easter 2005

The Order of Friars Minor is a fraternity (GGCC 1). Our General Constitutions find a theological basis for our fraternal communion in the mysterious relationship which our life has with the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity since we are, through grace, sons of the heavenly Father and brothers of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit (GGCC 38). We learn to live a fraternal life in common from the communion which the divine Trinity is. We Friars learn mutual love and care, which we always wish to have present in the bosom of the fraternity, from the perfect communication of love which we contemplate in the bosom of God. The risen Christ permits us to see ourselves as members of His body: we are sons in Him, we are loved in Him, we are blessed in Him with every kind of spiritual and heavenly blessings (cf. Eph 1, 3). In the Eucharistic celebration of the fraternity, hearing the Word of the Lord and participating in His Body and Blood, we receive Christ and our brothers, we make ourselves of Christ and of our brothers, we make communion with Christ and with our brothers.

“God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son so that everyone who believes in Him may not be lost but may have eternal life” (Jn 3, 16). We have been given this only Son in the mystery of the Incarnation, His gift was fully manifested to us in the mystery of His death and resurrection, His loving sacrifice is perpetuated in the mystery of the Eucharist. And our faith, there where it sees that God the Father has given us the gift of His Son, sees that the same divine love gives us the gift of our brothers (cf. GGCC 40). Thus, in the familiarity of spirit and the mutual friendship of the Friars (cf. GGCC 39) there is manifested, as in a sacrament, the truth of our adhesion to the mystery of the Holy Trinity. In the mutual charity and reciprocal service of the Friars (cf. GGCC 42) our faith in the risen Christ takes shape. In the simplicity of common life, in the building up of the fraternity ‘as a family in Christ’ (cf. GGCC 45), in the cordial acceptance of all the Friars, in the pardon offered and received, the Friars manifest, each day, the truth of their communion with Christ in the Eucharist. (Br. José Rodríguez Carballo ofm).

ITALY – *The Athenaeum Antonianum of Rome becomes a Pontifical University*

The Congregation for Catholic Education informed our Minister General and Grand Chancellor of the granting of the title of “Pontifical University” to the “Pontifical Athenaeum Antonianum” by the Supreme Pontiff on the 18th January 2005. The Franciscan academic institution began in 1887, the year in which Br. Bernardino Del Vago da Portogruaro, Minister General of the Order of Friars Minor, brought to maturity the project of re-founding, in Rome, of a general study centre for the Order. The seat was built in the vicinity of the Lateran and the academic activity of the “Collegium S. Antonii Patavini in Urbe”

was inaugurated with the blessing of Leo XIII on the 20th November 1890. Pius XI declared the Athenaeum Antonianum de Urbe to be canonically erected on the 17th May 1933 and granted it the title of “Pontifical” on the 14th June 1938. The Pontifical University “Antonianum” is a University Centre of the Order of Friars Minor, which, through research, teaching and distribution, offers its service to the Order, the Church and society. On the 9th of March the new Rector Manificus will be appointed and the title of Pontifical University will be celebrated in a solemn academic act.

SANTO DOMINGO - *500 years of the first Franciscan Province in America*

The first Franciscans arrived in America in 1493. The city of Santo Domingo was founded on the left bank of the river Ozama in 1498. A group of twelve Franciscans, with Br. Alonso de Espiner at their head, arrived there in 1502. They set up in the so-called ‘first Christian monastery of America’. A few years later, in 1505, the General Chapter of Pentecost, held in the French town of Laval, formally erected the first Franciscan Province in the New World, called Santa Cruz de las Indias, with jurisdiction over all the territories discovered up to then in the New World. The Franciscan presence quickly spread to the whole area of the Caribbean: Jamaica,

Cuba, Puerto Rico, the east coast of Venezuela and the isthmus of Panama. The Order is present today, not only in the Caribbean, but also throughout the whole territory of Latin America and has 36 Entities with a total of 3,628 Friars. The Minister General, Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, accompanied by Br. Luis Cabrera and Br. Juan Ignacio Muro, General Definitors for Latin America, presided over a celebration in memory of the 500 years of presence in Santo Domingo on the 4th February. Numerous Friars and Sisters of the Franciscan Family, as well as other religious, participated. The Minister General met all the Friars of the Caribbean Custody.

USA – *Meeting of the Friars in a video-conference*

It is, perhaps, the first time in the history of the Order of Friars Minor that a “virtual meeting” was held and probably it will not be the last. A hundred Friars of the Province of Holy Name, New York, participated in a video-conference to discuss key questions about life in Fraternity. The meeting was organised in order to know and listen to the Friar candidates for the office of Minister Provincial at the up-coming Chapter in May. The video-conference, moderated by a journalist, faced up to the topics inherent in the life of the Province and its management. The link-up was carried out thanks to the International Audio Visual inc., a specialised company, which “virtually” united the Friars gathered in 9 different

places. The idea was suggested during a meeting of Guardians and approved by the Definitory with the aim of favouring knowledge of and meeting with the Friar Candidates for Minister Provincial. A tele-camera placed in Whippany (NY) allowed all to see and hear from the inter-linked places. The Candidates had two minutes each to respond to a question and then all the Friars had the opportunity to put questions. The “video chapter” lasted two hours. The initiative was well appreciated as it involved all the Friars in fundamental questions about fraternal life with the future leader of the Province, using the most recent technology available, without having to move very much.

POLAND – *Course of formation for the SFO of Belarus*

The Franciscan Centre for Eastern Europe and Northern Asia of Warsaw, Poland, hosted a course of formation for the SFO of Belarus from the 4th to 6th February 2005. Among the participants were 18 Secular Franciscans from the republic, Benedetto Lino of the Council of the Presidency and Br. Ivan Matic, OFM, Assistant General. The speakers spoke on various topics, Franciscan spirituality, the vocation, charism and mission of the SFO, in addition to providing clarifications on Spiritual Assistance to the SFO.

The Congress was possible thanks to the help given by the National Council of the SFO of Poland which took care of

the organisation of the course. The Polish Secular Franciscans offered clarification to the Belarusian brothers on questions concerning life, formation and the practical organisation of local Fraternities. There are 430 professed Secular Franciscans in 50 Fraternities and two fraternities of Young Franciscans in this Republic of the ex-Soviet Union. Three families of First Order Friars (OFM, OFM^{Cap} and OFM^{Conv}) are also present.

The need to establish a Conference of National Assistants and to provide for those local Fraternities which at the moment are without Assistance was spoken about during the Course.

SOUTH AFRICA – *Assembly of the COMONA and Sub-Saharan Conferences*

The 13 Entities of the Friars Minor present in Africa form two Conferences, the first including the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (COMONA), and the second (Sub-Saharan) including the other Entities of the African continent. The COMONA and Sub-Saharan Conferences met in a common assembly in Pretoria, South Africa, from the 8th to 14th February 2005. The Ministers, Vicars, Custodes and Presidents of 10 Entities were present. The few absences were due to illness or problems of a political and bureaucratic nature. Br. Amaral Bernardo Amaral, Definitory General for Africa, Br. Giancarlo Lati, Bursar General and Br. Nestor Inacio Schwerz, the Secretary General for Evangelisation, participated. The order of the day set out a programme full of tasks: sharing on the reality of each Entity, the presentation of the new General Statutes

regarding the role of a Conference, the project of the VIII Centenary, reflection on the Secretariat for Evangelisation and its new structures, reflection on the globalised economy and on that of the Order, responses to requests coming from the Congress of Formation and Studies, Evangelisation and JPIC, some proposals for the future of the itinerary of the Friars in Africa, the presence of the Church in South Africa and contact with the pastoral experiences and human promotion in the South African Province. The Friars Minor are present in almost half of the continent’s countries with prospects for growth and greater involvement by African Friars. The decision on the establishment of a single Conference for the whole African continent was left open. Finally, a commission to elaborate the new Special Statutes was established.

KOREA - *IX International Council for Formation and Studies*

The IX International Council for Formation and Studies was held in Seoul (Korea) from the 14th to 26th February. The meeting dealt with the topic of “Dialogue for peace” with particular attention to the proposal of formation and studies. Guests of the Province of the Holy Martyrs of Korea, the delegates of the 14 Conferences of the Order, Speakers, translators and those responsible for the General Secretariat for Formation and Studies, were dedicated to

the topic in accordance with the orientations expressed by the Final Document of the 2003 General Chapter. The work looked at the search for common orientations for formative itineraries suitable to living the vocation of Friars Minor to reconciliation and peace in the present-day multi-cultural and multi-religious context. Presentations from some representatives of Asian religious traditions were given during the meeting. The participants visited temples

and formation centres and shared some exhibitions of local culture. During the second week the Council assessed the

situation of formation in the Conferences and in the Order in view of future choices.

ITALY – *Chapter of Foundation “St. Francis of Assisi in Russia and Kazakhstan”*

20 Friars from seven countries, who make up the Foundation of Russia and Kazakhstan, met in Italy to celebrate their Chapter. The Foundation has four Fraternities in this immense territory: St Petersburg, Novosibirsk and Ussurisk in Russia and Almaty in Kazakhstan. The Friars, after a stay in Rome and a pilgrimage to Assisi, gathered on the sacred mountain of La Verna, received by Br. Sime Samac, Definitor General, and the local Fraternity. The group lived two intense days of retreat, 27th and 28th January, during which they were joined by Br. Vadim Bielokorytov, a Kazak novice of the Foundation.

On the evening of the 28th, the Friars met the Minister General, Br. Josè Rodríguez Carballo, who described the journey the Order will make during the coming years on the occasion of the celebration of the VIII Centenary of its foundation. The Minister General officially opened the Chapter of the Foundation in Russia and Kazakhstan on the 29th January, addressing a greeting to Br. Astijus Kungys, Visitor General and President of the Chapter, and

embraced all the Friars. Some Definitors and Br. Vincenzo Brocanelli, Moderator General for the Missions were also present. Br. Carballo thanked the Friars for their presence in Russia and Kazakhstan, exhorting them to fidelity to the Priorities which the Order has for this six-year period. At the end, the Definitor General Br. Sime Samac read the decree of appointment of the President and Council of the Foundation which is made up of: Br. James Edmiston, President, Br. Gracijan Piotrowski, Br. Guido Trezzani and Br. Dominik Kim, Councillors. When the Minister General left, the work of the Chapter continued under the guidance of Br. Astijus until the evening of 2nd February. During the sessions of the Chapter, various important points for the life of the Foundation and Fraternities were examined.

The Chapter concluded with an Eucharistic celebration presided by the Definitor General, Br. Sime Samac, who exhorted all to be bearers of hope for present-day men. During the celebration, each Friar renewed his religious profession.

Franciscan Bookmark

- ETZI Priamo, **Iuridica franciscana** (Monographic course of the history of legislation of the three Franciscan Orders), Edizioni Messaggero (Padua, 2005).

The work identifies the subjects of greater legislative, doctrinal and historical interest of the three Franciscan Orders, defining them in “monographic courses” from which the juridical history of the evolution of the Orders coming from Francis is derived. The author, a Friar Minor from the Province of Sardinia, is a teacher of Canon Law in the Pontifical University Antonianum of Rome.

- PERUGINI Luigi, **The Seven Words of Christ on the Cross** ediz. EDB (Bologna, 2005). Along with the Way of the Cross, the “celebration of the Seven Words of Jesus on the Cross” is still in use in many parts of Italy. Luigi Perugini, OFM, has summarised the experience of years of

preaching in this text, offering an aid to Christians in meditation and prayer on the passion of Christ.

- OPPEs Stéphane, **The memories of Br. Gabriele Allegra ofm, the “St. Jerome” of China**, Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Vatican City 2005). Br. Gabriele M. Allegra (1907-1976), OFM of the Province of the Holy Name of Jesus in Sicily, is the author of the first Catholic translation of the Bible into Chinese. Engaged in the translation from the original texts for thirty years, alone at first and then with the Franciscan Chinese Biblical Study Centre, Br. Gabriele wrote down his efforts in 5 note-books. The editing of the note-books is by Stéphane Oppes, OFM, professor and present Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Pontifical University Antonianum of Rome, where Br. Gabriele Allegra was prepared for his apostolate in China.

Small/Big news

- On the 30th November 2004, the Mexican Minister for Public Education granted the title of Franciscan University of Mexico to the St. Francis of Assisi Higher Institute of León, Guanajuato. The Study Centre belongs to the Province of Sts. Peter and Paul of Michoacán (Mexico). The University will begin its courses from August 2005 with five programmes of License and Doctorate, the first Rector is Br. José Santos Pérez Castillo, OFM.

- Among the choices of presence by the Dutch Friars Minore great importance is given to the spread of Franciscanism in contemporary culture. A concrete example is the commitment to the Chair of spirituality, theology and Franciscan history at the Study Centre of Franciscan Studies of the Catholic University of Utrecht

(KTU). The present Dutch Minister Provincial, Br. Jan van den Eijden, taught Franciscan theology there together with professors Pieter Freeman (Franciscan History), and Willem Marie Spellman (Contemporary Franciscan Spirituality). The Franciscan Study Centre of Utrecht takes care of the publication of the series “Scripta Franciscana”. Br. Jan van den Eijden is Minister Provincial of the Province of the Martyrs of Gorcum in Holland and first President of the new COTAF Conference (Franciscan Transalpine Conference).

- From the 13th to 16th January 2005, Br. Alojzy Warot, Br. Vincenzo Brocanelli, Br. Rodrigo Peret, Br. Alejandro Castillo and Br. Nestor Inacio Schwerz visited the Offices of Franciscans International (FI) in Switzerland. The

meeting was proposed by Br. John Quigley, OFM, director of the Geneva Office, to inform those responsible for the General Secretariats of Formation and Studies, Evangelisation and the Office of JPIC about the activity and commitments of the Franciscan NGO using forms of sharing and collaboration. In addition to Br. John Quigley, Director of the office, there are Br. Jean-Louis Brusset, OFM, some permanent functionaries and a group of young people who offer their voluntary service for one or more years. Some aspects of the work are particularly positive. The office occupies itself in particular with the defence of human rights in Africa, Canada, USA, Asia, Latin America. Franciscans International is engaged with giving a voice to the poor at government institutions represented at the UN. To achieve their objectives, professionalism, organisation and collaboration among the permanent functionaries and volunteers is necessary. FI is a presence of testimony and dialogue with society in the international meeting-place of the UN.

- The Friars Minor of Lazio and the SFO of Rome celebrated the feast of B. Ludovica Albertoni, co-patroness of the city and patroness of the SFO, on the 31st January 2005. The concelebration was held at S. Francesco a Ripa, presided by the Minister General of the Friars Minor, assisted by Br. Ivan Matic, Assistant General SFO, and Br. Aldo La Neve, Minister Provincial of the Friars Minor of Lazio. The local Fraternity of the SFO donated a relic of the Blessed to the Minister General. The Blessed Ludovica lived denying herself of everything, hospitals were her preferred places where she cured the wounds of the flesh and of the spirit. Her body is preserved in the church of S. Francesco a Ripa, in a chapel where a work of Bernini, depicting the ecstasy of the Blessed is located.
- The OFM Province of Puglia and Molise in Italy has planned a cycle of courses of ongoing formation in the Holy Land, which, in the course of three years, offers all the Friars the possibility of a pilgrimage to the Holy Places. The initiative is promoted by the Provincial Secretariat for

Formation and Studies and by the Study Centre “Duns Scotus” of Castellana Grotte (Italy). It takes advantage of the contribution and guidance of the teachers of the Faculty of the Flagellation, Jerusalem, and of the Commissariat for the Holy Land, Puglia. The First Course, held in 2004, had “From Christology to Christ centricism” as a topic, offering deep study of the Duns Scotus Christ centric vision. This year, from the 17th to 31st January 2005 the II Course “From Christ to Mary” was held. This had the mystery of the Immaculate Conception, according to the intuitions of Duns Scotus, at the centre. The III course, which will study the topic of the Church as a “continuation of the Incarnation”, is programmed for 2006. The Acts of each course are published under the care of the Study Centre “Duns Scotus”.

- *Selecciones de Franciscanismo*, a four-monthly review by the Friars Minor of the Province of St. Joseph in Valencia, Aragón and Baleares (Spain) has reached its hundredth number. Writing for the occasion, the Minister General wished to thank the Province for the service given to the spread of the Franciscan charism. He encouraged and asked for the redaction to follow the path undertaken in 1972.

- On the 22nd February 2005, the President of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, Dr. Ivo Sanader, visited the General Curia of the Friars Minor in Rome. The Croatian “premier” was accompanied by some Ministers of government: Bozo Biskupic for Culture, Dragan Primorac for Education, Branko Vukelic for economy; by the Ambassador to the Holy See, Emilio Marin and other collaborators. The group was welcomed by the Vicar General, Br. Francesco Bravi, in the absence of the Minister, by the Definitory Br. Sime Samac and by the Croatian Friars present, who guided him during the visit to the Church of St. Mary Mediatrix and of the General Curia. President Sanader left a bronze bust of Blessed Alojzije Stepinac, Cardinal of Zagreb and Franciscan Tertiary as a gift.

New Franciscan Bishop

The Holy Father appointed Br. Leonardo Ulrich Steiner, OFM, Vice-Pastor of the Parish of Bom Jesus and teacher in the Faculty of Philosophy of the Archdioceses of Curitiba to be Bishop of São Félix in Brazil on 2nd February 2005. Br. Leonardo Ulrich Steiner, 13th child of Leonardo and Carlota Arns Steiner, was born in Forquilha (Santa Caterina) on 6th November 1950. Received into the Novitiate of the Friars Minor of the Province of the Immaculate Conception of São Paulo (Brazil) in 1972, he made temporary profession on the 20th January 1973 and

solemn profession on 2nd August 1976. On finishing his philosophical and theological studies in Petrópolis, he was ordained priest by Card. Paulo Evaristo Arns on the 21st January 1978. Having acquired a bachelors degree in Pedagogy in Brazil, he became Novice Master from 1986 to 1995. After 1995, he specialised at the Pontifical Athenaeum Antonianum, Rome, and received a License and Doctorate in Philosophy. From 1999 to 2003 he was Secretary General of the Pontifical Athenaeum of the Friars Minor.

Agenda of the Minister General

- from 26th February to 3rd March – Visit to Provinces of Holy Gospel and of Sts. Francis and James (Jalisco), Mexico
- from 7th to 19th March - Tempo forte of the Minister and General Definitory (Rome), Italy

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