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Assembly of the Bolivarian Conference

From Feb. 24-27 the Assembly of the Bolivarian Conference took place in Lima, Peru. Present for the occasion were the Custos and those responsible for the animation of mission/evangelization, formation, and JPIC. The total number of people present was 21. The President of the Conference, Br. Mauro Vallejo, gave his speech on the different activities of this past year with a summary of the expenses incurred as well as the current economic situation of the Conference. Also, the interprovincial secretaries of missions/evangelization, Br. Allirio Urbina and of Formation/Studies, Br. Daniel Castillo, also gave their speeches. The Minister General did send a letter which was read and handed out to each participant. The Definitor General, Br. Nestor I. Schwerz, presented the project of the General Definitory for the animation of the Order for the next six-year period; he, likewise, presented the handbook for the *Moratorium* and the different mandates of responsibility of the Conference and Entities. Through both dialogue and reflection, it was thought to be important to motivate the Friars through a project of animation and *Moratorium*.

The Seminar in Iquitos discussed about the Franciscan presence in Amazonia. The Proposals that were made through group discussion in specific and plenary assemblies for the future journey of the Conference are as follows:

-In the next Assembly of the Conference from March 2-5, 2011, in Quito, Ecuador, there will be a revision of the Statutes of the Conference. The topic of Amazonia will be resumed and a plan of action will be drawn up for the next three years when elections will take place for the next president and other services.

-In each Entity, greater awareness will be raised on the project of Amazonia. From Feb. 14-17, 2011, there will be a gathering in Bolivia to raise awareness at the level of the Conference about this project. It will be coordinated by the Interprovincial Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization with representatives from the Franciscan Family and the Laity.

Coordinated by Br. Alirio Urbina, Interprovincial Secretary of Evangelization, the plan for a website will go ahead with the participation and collaboration of all the Entities.

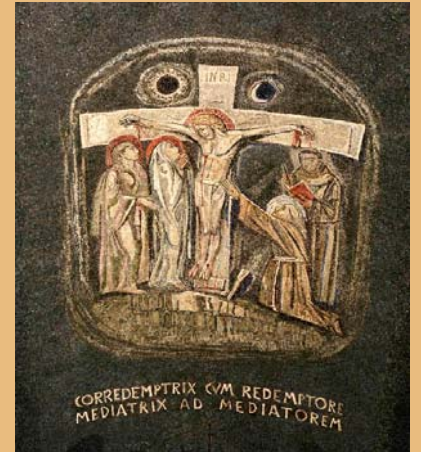
From Aug. 16-21, 2011, the Interprovincial Secretariat for Formation and Studies will coordinate a course in Quito, Ecuador; it will be for Formators of the Conference and will be centered on the themes of Continental Congress for Formators as proposed by the SGFS for 2011. Such a course in the Conference foresees a lot of sharing on these themes. Therefore, it will do an in-depth study in view of the preparation necessary for such a Congress.

Two suggestions to be taken into consideration for the Assembly of 2011 are: 1) a formative meeting for the simply professed with a concrete missionary experience in the Peruvian Amazonia and 2) a formative meeting with the treasurers/bursars of the Entities with the possibility that the General Treasurer of the Order himself will also be present.

St. Anthony College, Ven. Br. Gabriel M. Allegra, OFM

Keeping in mind the unique structure of the house, since 1988 the Fraternity of the International College of St. Anthony has been structurally divided in two units: the first one, "the Mother House", is for the Friars called by the Minister General at the service of the then *Pontifical Athenaeum Antonianum* (today called the *Pontifical University Antonianum*) as well as for other activities established by the General Administration of the Order. The second unit, the Fraternity of the College of Friars Students, "A Filial House", is for the Friars called to study in Rome. The latter, after the General Chapter OFM in Assisi of 2003, was canonically erected by the current Minister General at the Congress of Definitors General of July 16, 2003, as an independent fraternity, bearing the name of a Franciscan International Fraternity *Ven Br. Gabriel M. Allegra, OFM*. As of the Academic Year 2009-10 (FGA), there are 100 Friars abroad of which 21 work for Africa, 30 for America, 12 for Asia, and 37 for Europe and 4 students are guests. To know more go to www.antoniano.org/fga

Felix Alleluia!



“Dear brothers and sisters, again, it is Easter! Let us come out of our tombs; and with the strength of the Risen Christ, let us proclaim the Gospel of life to the whole world. It is Easter! Let us rejoice in the Lord! It is Easter! Christ is Risen, Alleluia! Alleluia!”
(*Easter Letter of the Minister General 2010*).

[Click here](#) for his Easter Message!

Agenda of the Minister General

► **01-05 April:** Holy Week.

► **06 April:** Participating at the Elective Chapter of the Province of St. James of Compostella in Spain.

► **08 April:** Participating at the Chapter of Mats in France.

► **10-21 April:** Visit to the Provinces of Cono South: St. Francis Solanus, St. Michael, the Assumption of the BVM in Argentina, and of the Most Holy Trinity in Chile.

► **26-27 April:** Participating at the Assembly of the Russian Federation in St. Petersburg.

► **30 April:** Participating at the Congress of JPIC in Poland.

Peru - Seminar in Iquitos



“ The Franciscan presence in the Amazon” was the theme of the Seminar organized by UCLAF in Iquitos, Peru, with 36 participants. The goals of the seminar were: becoming better acquainted with the Amazonic reality; recalling the reality of Franciscan presence in Amazonia since the XVI century up to this day; and finding both criteria and elements for an integral project of Franciscan Mission in Continental Amazonia according to the General Chapter of 2009. After having looked at the recent journey made by the Order regarding this theme, Br. Thomas Martin (Spanish missionary for 30 years in Amazonia) gave a presentation, offering us many elements of reflection and personal experience. A day was set aside for visiting some communities (Caserios) along the Amazon River. In the meantime, different missionaries

who live and work there shared their experiences as well. Some of the conclusions of the brief final document expressed:

* The need for leadership at the service of Franciscan missionaries already inserted in the Amazonic reality and at the service of brothers, sisters, and Entities of the Franciscan family of Latin America. The goal is to create a renewed interest and commitment for the missions in Amazonia with the possibilities of new missionary vocations. Such an initiative would serve to create a common vision of presence and action in the Amazon, in order to facilitate a network of solidarity, information, and the sharing of experiences and forms of collaboration.

* The need for formative courses for the missionaries present in the Amazonic regions, in the different OFM Entities, and in the Franciscan family at the level of initial and ongoing formation. As part of the preparation for a formative course are UCLAF, the Master of Evangelization in Petropolis, Brazil, the Formation and Missionary Center in Cochabamba, Bolivia, and other Institutes.

* The desire to create one or more new fraternities in the Amazonic region with characteristics already indicated at the first Seminar in Manaus.

These fraternities then would be more “INTER” (i.e. Interprovincial, International, and open to different ways of collaboration), an integral project, a new form of evangelization, a defense of environmental justice, and an option for both the native peoples and the poor.



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Spain – Celebration of the IV Centenary of the Death of St. Francis Solanus



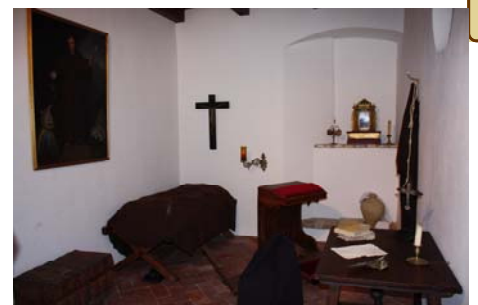
On Feb. 26, 2010, the Minister General

Br. Jose Rodriguez Carballo, ofm, accompanied by his personal secretary Br. Francisco Javier Arellano, ofm, went on a pilgrimage to the Franciscan Betic Province in Montilla, Cordoba, where they visited the house (today converted into a Church) where St. Francis Solanus was born. Prior to this visit, they made their way to the Convent of our Lady of Loreto in Seville to the renovated cell occupied by the Saint during which he prepared himself for both priestly ordination and ministry. The Minister General blessed the cell in the presence of the whole fraternity there as he exhorted the brothers to continue to set on fire that

missionary ardor which urged St. Francis Solanus to go *inter gentes* and *ad gentes* and proclaim to all that “there is no other Almighty than God”. The Minister General also visited the Monasteries of the Poor Clares and Franciscan Conceptionist of Montilla (Cordoba), encouraging them to follow the way of life they professed with boldness and creativity, especially now because they are about to celebrate their centuries-old existence.

Afterwards, he celebrated the Eucharist with all the Franciscan family during which he presented a brief profile of St. Francis Solanus. He encouraged all those present to go out as the early missionaries of the Order did *inter gentes* and *ad gentes* without hindrance and proclaim with their ardor the Good News of Jesus of Nazareth. At the conclusion of the celebration, the Minister General handed out the medal of the 8th Centenary of the

Foundation of our Order to the Vicar General, the Pastor, and the Mayor of the City.



F R A T E R N I T A S

New Franciscan Bishop



Vatican City, Feb. 27, 2010 – Benedict XVI has appointed Br. José de Jesús González Hernández

as Prelate Bishop of Jesus Mary in Nayarit, Mexico. His terri-

tory of jurisdiction has a surface of 25,000; a population of 146,000; 134,000 Catholics; 27 priests; 72 religious; and 1 permanent Deacon. The appointed bishop was born on December 25, 1964, in Etzatlán, Mexico; he made his solemn profession in 1992; and in 1994 received priestly ordination both in the Province of Sts. Francis and James in the same country. He was both Rector and Pastor of the Cathedral Church of Inhambane in Mozambique prior to his appointment as Bishop.

Assembly of the Brazilian Conference

From March 1-5, the Assembly of the OFM Conference of Brazil (CFMB) took place with the participation of all the Ministers Provincial, Custos, and representatives of the Interprovincial Secretariats for Missions/Evangelization and Formation/Studies. Furthermore, two Friars at the service of the missionary project in Amazonia and the SFO National Minister were also both invited. An entire day was dedicated to the study of the document, *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel*. After a time of reflection on the first part of the document, the General Definitor, Br. Nestor I. Schwerz, presented the project of the General Definitory for the animation of the Order for the six-year period; he also spoke about the handbook on *Moratorium*, the mandates pertaining to the Conferences and those to the Entities. The Minister General also sent out a letter which was read and distributed to each participant. Even the Interprovincial Secretaries of Formation/Studies and Mission/Evangelization presented their speeches with real initiatives and projects to be proposed for the future. The SFO National Minister made his presentation, sharing information about the Secular Franciscans in Brazil and expressing the desire to undertake a path of collaboration in the areas of both formation and studies. His presence was very fraternal and appreciated. During the subsequent days, the Ministers and Custos resume the following reflections on different themes and mandates:

a. AMAZONIA: The Conference has already an interprovincial project of presence in Amazonia, in Roraima since 1993. The current fraternity is

doing well. The local bishop and the people are very grateful and appreciative for all that the Friars have done and are doing. The possibility of investing on encouraging vocations and fostering collaboration with the Laity is being considered. For the month of September, a new fraternity will be opened in the outskirts of Manaus, which is a great city; it is another interprovincial, missionary fraternity in the Amazonia, presented by the Conference as a sign for the eighth century of the foundation of the Order. In addition to the Custody of St. Benedict which is heavily involved in the Amazonic regions, other Entities, such as the Province of St. Anthony, the Custody of the Seven Joys, and the Province of the Immaculate all have Friars involved in this project as well.

b. At the requests of others, **a reflection was done together on each mandate** dealing with formation for both Guardians and treasurers/bursar, a therapeutic fraternity for Friars in difficulty, the need to support the Masters in Evangelization, projects of interprovincial collaboration in local missions, etc. These mandates, moreover, will be carried out through phases and initiatives with the involvement of the Entities and Conferences.

c. In the area of Formation, the Conference will push forward 1) a formative process called "Reliving the gift of Vocation" for Friars with 25 years of religious life and who have experience with the Franciscan places in both Italy and the Holy Land; 2) a formative itinerary with missionary experiences for Friars who are solemnly professed 7-10 years; 3) spiritual exercises for Friars

Our Lady of Guadalupe in Central America and Panama

From Feb. 7-14, 2010, both the Minister General and Br. Julio Cesar Bunader, Definitor General, visited the Franciscan Province of "Our Lady of Guadalupe" in Central America (Guatemala, Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, and Haiti). The Minister Provincial, Br. Saul Flores Interiano, welcomed them together with the Provincial Definitors and the Friars of the "St. Bonaventure" Fraternity in the city of Guatemala.

In order to facilitate the Friars' meeting with the Minister General, two Chapters of Mats for the solemnly professed were organized with one unfolding in Guatemala and the other in Nicaragua. A third meeting took place with the Assembly of Formators and their Candidates in Guatemala. By using the final document of the Chapter of 2009, *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel*, the central themes for the life and mission of the Friars Minor were discussed in a fraternal atmosphere; they also touched upon the reality of the different regions of the Province with a special emphasis on Haiti. Two special moments involved visiting and praying with the brothers of the Provincial Infirmary as well as the sick hospitalized in the "Social Works of the Holy Brother Peter." Particularly special was the visit of the Minister General to the monasteries of the Poor Clares of both Guatemala and Nicaragua; other sisters of other monasteries also were in attendance. Another special meeting took place with the Franciscan family at the "Center of Spirituality"; he also met with the Bishops and the Apostolic Nuncio, Msgr. Paul Richard Gallager, all in Guatemala.

of simple profession in preparation for solemn profession; 4) a course for Formators, Vocation Directors, Guardians, and Moderators of Ongoing Formation. In the area of the Secretariat for Missions and Evangelization, the Conference is especially committed to the mission in Amazonia, seeking to involve, at the same time, different Entities. There have been regional and national meetings for a more active youth ministry.

Big and Small News

► **Perugia, Italy: Formation Meeting on Social Themes.** It has been three years since the Seraphic Province OFM of Assisi – through the commission of JPIC and with the collaboration of both the SFO and YouFra – has been organizing formation meetings on social themes. The meetings are open to all and advertised especially through the distribution of leaflets at different Universities of Perugia. During the first year, an overview was presented of those themes dear to the Social Doctrine of the Church, such as the human person, the family, the economy, and political commitment. The second year dealt with the rapport between economy and the human person. This year, however, we will speak about immigration from the biblical, juridical, social, and political perspective. Also, during this presentation, there will be a round table discussion with representatives of some of the main political parties of the Province of Perugia. For more information visit the website: www.ofsumbria.it

► **Foundation of Russia and Kazakhstan:** St. Francis Foundation is preparing to celebrate its annual assembly at the end of April in St. Petersburg. In view of this important gathering, the Minister General invited two of his delegates to assist the Council of the Foundation and to assess together the situation and condition in which three Fraternities in Russia live and two in Kazakhstan. Currently, they are experiencing problems, especially the lack of personnel. The Minister General will be present at the Assembly to spur the Friars onward in those countries where small Catholic communities are reorganizing. Currently, there are 20 Friars Minor in the Foundation serving in seven parishes, one school in Novosibirsk, a center for the disabled, an acupuncture clinic in Almaty, a center for the elderly and homeless in Ussurisk, a center for street children in St. Petersburg, and another small center for the disabled in Taldikurgan. For the *implantation Ordinis*, there are three young autochthonous Friars in the Fraternity of St. Petersburg. There is still, nonetheless, much work to be done. The Foundation demands a great deal of energy.

► **A Presentation of the Volume by André Vauchez, *Francesco d'Assisi*, Einaudi, Torino 2010** will be on Thursday April 15, 2010 at 17:00 at the Oratory of the Immaculate Conception in the Basilica of Holy Mary in Aracoeli in Rome. For further information go to: sssmf@antonianum.eu

► **40 years of Franciscan sources:** Discussion Meeting on the occasion of the publication: *François d'Assise. Écrits, Vies, Témoignages* will be on Thursday, April 29 at 15:30 at the Pontifical University Antonianum in Hall A. For further information, write to: sssmf@antonianum.eu

► On March 1, 2010, **the three-month long session of formation** began with 4 Missionary Capuchins (one from India, another from Poland, and two from the Democratic Republic of Congo). At the same time, we are working to renew the program according to the wish of the Minister General and his Definitory. We began this year a series of Franciscan Conferences in the House of Notre Dame in order to contribute to missionary awareness and evangelization. The first Conference was on peace and fear led by an Anglican tertiary, Mark Barwick; the second will be led by Gwénéolé Jéusset on Islam. Who are our Franciscan Experts on Missiology? This is an appeal to all the Provinces to send the names of the Friars who are experts on Missiology and who have worked on a Franciscan Theology of Mission. Please kindly send this information to Br. Damien Isabell to lawrence.isabell@yahoo.com

► **Course on Ongoing Formation in the Province of the Holy Family in Egypt:** Around 70 Egyptian Friars came together from March 1-4, 2010, in Alexandria, a land with a rich tradition in the sciences of the spirit, especially in the search for God. The purpose of the gathering was to study in-depth the document of the General Chapter of 2009, *Bearers of the Gift of the Gospel to Evangelization and Dialogue*. While the presentation of this capitular document was presented by Br. Vincent Zungo and Br. Roger Marchal, both Definitors General, Br. Vidal Rodriguez, Secretary General for Formation and Studies offered an in-depth study on Evangelization, entitled, “Forming for the Missions”. A presentation on Formation to Dialogue was done by Br. Rubén Tierrablanca, who is currently part of the fraternity of Istanbul. Two particular icons, *Welcoming the Incarnate Word* (cf. Mt 2, flight into Egypt) and *Francis meeting with the Sultan Malik al-Kamil* (Damiatta 1219) both shed light on the path of renewal for the Egyptian Province. Specific goals were set in the area of Evangelization as well as in the daily challenge to dialogue with both Muslims and the Coptic Church.

► **The XXIII Day of Theology:** During the week of March 8-12, the XXIII Day of Theology was celebrated at the Theological Institute of Murcia OFM in Spain. The theme of the gathering was “Science and Theology”. These theological days are a reference in the field of theological reflection of Southeast Spain.

It is worthy of mention that there is a good collaboration between the OFM Theological Institute and the University of Murcia. Both Institutes have been collaborating for years for the development of publications and conferences, thus offering an opportunity to rediscover the role that **Theology** must have in the Public University of Spain. With this goal in mind the OFM Theological Institute has sought to do an in-depth study on a theme that is as timely as that of Interdisciplinary Dialogue. In this way, Science and Theology can go hand-in-hand. As a way of assessing the message of salvation, both must find a common ground without, however, canceling each other out, but seek to make their contribution through reflection and right judgment.

For this purpose, professors of Franciscan Formation present during these days were D. Vicente Llamas, professor of physic and greatly knowledgeable of the metaphysic of the Franciscan Bl. John Duns Scotus and Fr. Luis Oviedo, professor of theological anthropology at both the *Antonianum* and Gregorian Universities of Rome.

Also in attendance was Miss Fatima Masot Conde, professor of physics from the University of Seville; she spoke of the implication of quantum mechanics on the vision of the world. Miss Anne Runehov, a professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Copenhagen, likewise gave a presentation on the challenge that Neurological Studies pose to Theology. The inaugural Conference of these days were led by José Antonio Lozano Teruel, a professor of the department of Biochemistry at the University of Murcia; he presentation was on the theme of evolution. In short, A great number of professors and students attended these days of study, especially the professors and students of the Faculty of Physics and Biology from the University of Murcia.

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- Redactor: Robert Bahčič
- <http://www.ofm.org/fraternitas>
- E-mail: rbahcic@ofm.org