

L-AĦBAR



PROVINĊJA FRANĠISKANA TA' SAN PAWL APPOSTLU, MALTA. No. 129 1.12.2007

*L-isbaħ xewqat
ta' Milied
kien u qaddis
u s-Sena 2008
tkun ta'
paċi u ġid!*



Visitator General in Malta

Austin McCormack OFM, Visitator General to the Maltese Franciscan Province, recently was on his first official visit in Malta since his appointment to the post of Visitator and President of the upcoming Provincial Chapter. The aim of the visit was that of paving the way for the Chapter and preparing an agenda for its proceedings.

Fr. Austin had various meetings with the Minister Provincial and the Definitors. During his visit Fr. Austin also presided over the counting of the results of the straw ballot for the election of the new Minister Provincial. From Malta Fr. Austin left for Rome, where he is currently attending the

ikompli f'paġna. 25



Cardinale Betti receives the Cardinal's hat



Pope Benedict XVI presided over the solemn ceremony of the public Consistory at St. Peter's Basilica on Saturday 24th November 2007. Immediately after the introductory hymn, Pope Benedict XVI read the formula for the creation of 23 new Cardinals, among whom was Brother Umberto Betti, OFM, who, deeply moved and in tears, received the Cardinal's hat. The "celebrating" continued at the General Curia, where the new Cardinal, accompanied by his fellow Friars from the Province of Tuscany, not only met the government of the Order and the Fraternity of the General Curia but also the many guests present. Among those present were Cardinals: Giovanni Battista Re (Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops), Cláudio Hummes, OFM (Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy), Carlos Amigo Vallejo, OFM (Archbishop of Seville, Spain), and Alexandre José Maria dos Santos, OFM (Archbishop Emeritus of Maputo, Mozambique). Also present were Bishops Nikola Eterovic, General Secretary of the Synod of Bishops and Archbishop Marco Dino Brogi, OFM.

The Guardian, Br. Robert Bahcic, welcomed all to the Curia and the Minister General, Br. José Rodríguez Carballo, greeted all those present and renewed his best wishes to Cardinal Betti in the name of the whole Order. Cardinal Re, during a brief address, said he had chosen to come to this "celebration", despite the fact that he had other invitations, because he wanted to thank Cardinal Betti publicly for his precious contribution to the Second Vatican Council and also for his long and generous service to the Church. Each of the 23 new Cardinals, among them Cardinal Betti, received the Cardinal's ring from Pope Benedict XVI on Monday 26th November 2007.

SALUTO AL CARDINAL UMBERTO BETTI, OFM

Fr. José Rodríguez Carballo, ofm
Ministro generale

Eminenza Reverendissima,

la Fraternità della Curia generalizia L'accoglie oggi in festa e dà a Lei, agli Eminentissimi Signori Cardinali Giovanni Battista Re, Cláudio Hummes, Alessandro Do Nascimento, Carlos Amigo De Vallejo, agli Eccellentissimi Arcivescovi e Vescovi, al Ministro provinciale ed ai Confratelli della Toscana e a tutti gli illustri e graditi Ospiti, il più cordiale "benvenuto"!

Ancora una volta la Chiesa, attraverso la sovrana decisione del Papa, onora con la Porpora cardinalizia un Frate minore.

Siamo perciò riconoscenti al Santo Padre Benedetto XVI per averLa chiamata a far parte del Sacro Collegio cardinalizio, premiando il lungo, impegnativo e intelligente servizio da Lei reso alla Chiesa, particolarmente nel campo teologico, con il Suo illuminato ed apprezzato insegnamento, con la direzione dell'allora Pontificio Ateneo "Antonianum" oggi Pontificia Università, e successivamente della Pontificia Università Lateranense.



La Sua saggezza e la Sua competenza teologica sono consegnate in modo speciale alla storia del Concilio Ecumenico Vaticano II, che si avvale della Sua preparazione culturale, insieme a quella di altri giovani teologi, tra i quali mi è doveroso ricordare il Sommo Pontefice Benedetto XVI che oggi Le ha conferito l'altissimo segno di distinzione quale è appunto la dignità cardinalizia.

Ma anche a Lei, Eminenza carissima, l'Ordine nostro, tramite il suo Ministro Generale, oggi dice la sua ammirazione e il suo plauso, perché ha saputo esprimere appieno, pur nel disbrigo di prestigiosi compiti, il vero volto del Francescano che "*in sapientia et doctrina*" loda l'Altissimo Signore, fonte di ogni sapienza, e restituisce a Lui, per la sola sua gloria, i doni ricevuti e impiegati per il bene dei fratelli.

A nome dell'intero Ordine, a nome dei suoi moltissimi alunni, a nome di quanti hanno attinto dalle sue labbra la ricchezza della divina Sapienza, io Le presento le nostre felicitazioni, il nostro augurio.

Le assicuro la nostra preghiera, e formulo l'auspicio che la Porpora con cui oggi l'onora il Santo Padre, sia segno di nuova speranza per l'intero Ordine dei Frati Minori che si appresta a celebrare l'VIII Centenario della sua Fondazione, nel vivo desiderio che i Frati minori siano dovunque e sempre esempio di luce e di fraterna solidarietà.

A tutti rinnovo il cordiale ben venuto e auguro una buona continuazione della festa fraterna!

“Verbum caro factum est” (Jn 1, 14).

TO ALL THE FRIARS PEACE AND GOOD

**Jose’ Rodriguez Carballo, OFM
Minister General**

In the Holy Night of the Birth of Jesus the Christ, the beauty of God was lodged in a stable, the grace of God came to the flesh and blood of mankind. The Son of God chose the heart of night in order to empty Himself (Ph 2,7) and what was a sign of sadness and death was transformed into a bright

Christmas Eve because the Word was made flesh (Jn 1, 14). Silence was broken for ever and the Word, descending from the bosom of the Father (cf. Adm 1, 18), began the new song of the New Humanity.

Rejoice, brothers, because a Son has been born to us. He is the promised Messiah, the Lord, from whom we awaited salvation. Rejoice even more, however, because the Child who was born for us is the Son of God. Rejoice, you who believe, because what you were waiting for

happened that night and His unexpected arrival multiplied the joy: God became one of many, He wished to dwell in the midst of His people, He took on our human condition (cf. Ph 2, 1-7). This not a night of silence, but of the Word. Such was the communication of God with mankind that this New Man is God of God and Light of Light, without ceasing to be a true man.

In this holy night, in unity with all mankind and with all the poor of the earth, I wish to approach, with respect and reverence, the mystery of Bethlehem, that

poor Crib where God communicated Himself and became Good News for all; and I humbly ask the Most High, Almighty and Good Lord to grant us, together with our joy and internal recollection, the grace to contemplate, in wonder, this mystery of love, to mumble in amazement a prayer of

thanksgiving and to sing a cry of glory and peace for all who love the Lord.

1. “In the beginning was the Word...” (Jn 1, 1)

In the holy night of Christmas, the Wisdom of God became our Word of life. The Word, as the collaborator of the Father in the work of creation from the beginning, guided mankind so that they could understand the great mystery of salvation. God educated His children over time and always spoke to them as a Friend does to His friends (cf. Dei Verbum 2) with different languages and signs so

that mankind may understand that God is the God with us... Immanuel (cf. Mt 1, 23).

In the beginning, God created everything so that it would speak of Him, for the world was made through Him, in Him all things were created (Col 1, 16). At the order of God, through the power of His Word, beings took on existence and became reality, even to becoming human beings, the crown of creation. The work of creation having been completed, mankind was prepared to read the message left by the Creator in creatures, as in a book.



However, God also spoke to us in history, a history of salvation made up of events of grace and experiences of sin, so that believers could realise that it was in the life of His people that God had become a travelling companion to all. He established a Covenant with mankind, a word given in the form of a pact, in which God guaranteed his help and company. And when the people forgot their covenant with their God, the voice of the prophets, the echo of the divine voice, would call for fidelity to God the Creator, to the God of history: Come back to me with all your heart... out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel (Jl2,12 and Mic 5,1).

2. "The Word was made flesh..." (Jn 1, 14)

In the fullness of time, the whole of creation shook as if in child-birth, for time and creatures had reached their fullness and maturity. God made His nest in the womb of the poor Immaculate Virgin Mary in order to give us the Life which engenders all life. The Word was life and that life was the light of men (Jn 1, 4). And in the silence of things, the Word came to His home, the true light which enlightens all men shone in the darkness of the universe (cf. Jn 1,9) and, in the cold of night, God warmed the heart of all humanity.

From that time on, the language of God had to be that of weakness and poverty, of littleness and fragility. From that time on, mankind would only see a defenceless Child wrapped in swaddling clothes, a crib, some shepherds who believed beyond appearances, a star, they would see Mary offering us the Child in her arms, and Joseph, like a new Abraham, protecting the little child; humble faith that contemplates, adores, reflects, lives and celebrates; the simple would speak, those of no importance would be exalted to the confusion of the important; the everyday would have the power to humanise the heart of stone, because the Word became flesh and God became Gospel.

In Jesus, God does not speak in images, but through His Son; He no longer saves through intermediaries, but in a person, for Jesus is the only Mediator, personal and tangible presence of the thrice Holy God. Jesus is someone with whom we can relate, someone to listen to, someone to follow, someone to love, for we have heard and we have seen with our own eyes, we have watched and touched with our hands, the Word, who is life (1Jn 1, 1).

At this time of grace, let us contemplate His glory and we will see a very human God who, in the child of Bethlehem, we feel invited to be "like God". And in the contemplation of the divine Word, we will learn to listen to the multiple words of humanity (cf. The flavour of the Word, p.5), for God also speaks to us today in humanity. Indeed, God speaks especially in the poor, in weakened and needy humanity, in those who suffer, in the disfigured faces of all lepers, for the Son of God not only wished to become man among men, but made Himself poor among the poor, weak and needy, the suffering and disfigured servant. The poverty of Christ appears in a marvellous human aspect, it is the sign of His friendship, of His being a relative of humanity. And we Friars are a presence of this God who made Himself one with all the poor of the world. Given that the Glory of God is the person who lives (cf. St. Ireneus, Against the heresies, Book 4, 20,5-7), let us not rest until mankind lives for God and finds meaning and Life in the Word.

3. "God spoke to us in His Son... the radiant light of God" (Heb 1, 1)

In this night, bright as the day, God the Father spoke to us in the "Son". The Word of God, made flesh in the fullness of time, is an admirable revelation of divine paternity to which it is only possible to respond by accepting, in faith, the grace of filiation in Christ Jesus. The Divine Child of Bethlehem is not just one more among the prophets or teachers, He is the "Beloved Son", the Word made Good News. We can, therefore, understand why God has remained silent and has nothing more to say to us, because He has told us everything at one and the same time in this Word alone, who is the Son (cf. St. John of the Cross, Ascending Mount Carmel, Book 2, chap. 22).

God falls silent and speaks to us in the recently born child, God hides Himself and manifests Himself in the littleness. When it seems that all stays silent, we can, perhaps, listen to the babbling of a Child who speaks to us in the intimacy of life, in the heart. When it seems that all has lost its meaning, the Word of Life can echo with greater strength, helping us to find the Way and the Truth. If we seek a word to say, we must first listen, persevering in prayer, to the Word made flesh, to the God made Gospel. Then the silence will break into a thousand pieces, and the sense-less too, and the voices of heaven will sound again, singing

“Glory to God” (cf. Lk 2, 14), because the Saviour, the Messiah, the Lord, has been born for us.

How important it is, brothers, to approach the careful and prayerful listening to the Word each day! How much strength is received from this God who makes Himself tangible and human! What a great mystery the Word is! Let us fix our eyes and life on the Child of Bethlehem alone, on the Word of God who came to visit us, and we will find there much more than we asked or desired. Let us combine our profound gratitude to a God who loves us in such a human way with the practice of love which brings us close to each other and to share: “Then will your light shine like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed” (Is 58,8).

4. “Talk of Jesus was always on his lips...” (1 Cel 115)

We well know the particular affection that our Brother Francis had for this feast of the Birth of the Son of God. It was, for him, the “Feast of Feasts, when God was made a little child and hung on human breasts” (2Cel 199). He professed a special taste and affection for the letters of the Holy Gospel, which are spirit and life, and for the name of the Child of Bethlehem (cf. 1Cel 86). The life of our seraphic father was an Epiphany of the Gospel for the men and women of his times. Francis was a most faithful imitator of Christ, a spirited herald of the great King, impassioned with Jesus of whom he spoke to everyone and whom he saw in everyone. Francis made himself an evangelical man (cf. 1 Cel 86) and the words of the Good News were lived and practised by him, down to the smallest detail. Brothers, what do we say to the world about the Word which was born in the humility of our flesh? What do we say about Him, whom we love?

Have you, like Francis, contemplated Christ, born of the Virgin Mary and made Gospel for the poor, with your own eyes? Then the true light which enlightens life has shone for you; you have received grace on grace, because you drew close to Him who is the fullness of grace. If you have drawn close to Christ, you have come close to the temple of the sanctity of God, and if you have accepted Him through faith, then you also have been born this night with Christ, for you have not been born of flesh or blood, but of God (cf. Jn 1, 13-16). Let you, my brother, praise and bless, with me, the

Lord who came down from heaven, and the Word made flesh, because He wanted to share our weak and mortal condition with us, because you are of Christ and live in Christ. Praise the Lord, because you have known His love. What do we say about God? Is our life a blessing, a speaking well of God?

If mankind wishes to silence God, a song of praise will have to be raised to break that silence. If some desire that God should not be adored in this Child of Bethlehem, we will have to repeat untiringly that there is no one Almighty except God (cf. LtOrd 6-9). The Gospel cannot be silent; Jesus, recently born in this night, causes a power of faith to pour out within us believers and pushes us to live the Gospel, to gaze on it in our hearts and to announce it in word.

Conclusion

Dear Brothers, the fullness of time has come through the birth of the incarnate Word. The entire creation has entered into a feast, for the First-born of all creatures has been born and all things are now made new in Christ. The voices of mankind, which received a message from God, have cried out on glimpsing this moment of the birth of God made man. And if the silence becomes difficult, God will be born each day in order to invite you, through His Word, to follow Him so that your life may enter into the logic of the gift which He has given you.

I ask you not to sleep this holy night, to break the silence about God joyfully and with the capacity to attract others to this God who is love, who has loved us very much, and who has revealed this love in His Son who was born for us. I ask you to break the silence and to give an ardent response of love to Him who has loved us so much. I ask that our life may always bless the Lord. I ask you to cry out, with the people, the songs of our land which speak of the birth of the Word; or to pray with the Church so that it may never tire of singing the glory of this night: O wonderful exchange! The Creator of human nature took on a human body and was born of the Virgin. He became man without having a human father and has bestowed on us His divine nature (Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, Ant. 1 of Evening Prayer I) .

Let us rejoice and congratulate each other, brothers. I wish you a Happy Christmas from my heart and may the blessing of the Seraphic Father accompany us always.

CANONICAL VISITATION AT THE SERVICE OF THE GROWTH OF THE INDIVIDUALS AND OF THE ENTITIES

Meeting of Visitators 2007

**José Rodríguez Carballo, ofm
Minister General**

The Canonical Visitation is regulated by the *Code of Canon Law*, by our *Constitutions and General Statutes*, by the *Statutes for the Canonical Visitation and Presidency of the Provincial Chapter*, as well as by other documents of the Church. It pertains to the Minister to carry out the Canonical Visitation either personally or through Delegates (cf. SSCV 1). During the Canonical Visitation, the Visitor “represents the Minister and acts in his name (SSCV 8 §1). Even though it may have special legal connotations, the Canonical Visitation must, however, be carried out in the spirit which Francis indicated for visits to the Friars.



The Canonical Visitation in the mind of St. Francis

St. Francis considered the visitation of the Friars to be one of his main obligations. When he could no longer visit them because of the “sickness and weakness” of his body (*2LtF* 3), he opted to write letters and send “messengers” to continue serving them and offering them “fragrant words” of his Lord (*2LtF* 2-3).

Aware of the importance of such visits and of such service or ministry, he wrote in the *First Rule*: “Let all the brothers who have been designated the ministers and servants of the other brothers assign their brothers in the Provinces and places where they may be, and let them frequently visit, admonish and encourage them spiritually” (*RnB* 4, 2). The same advice is found in the *Approved Rule*, with other shades of meaning which seem important: “Let the brothers who are the ministers and servants of the others visit and admonish their brothers and humbly and charitably correct them” (*Rb* 10, 1).

We can, from the context in which these texts are found, take some important

indications about the time, objectives and way of carrying out the visit to the Friars as Francis wished. Leaving aside the indications of time, for in this case it is made for the elective Chapter, let us look at the objectives and the way in which to carry out the Visitation.

The **objective** of the visitation is dual: we could call one positive and the other negative. Francis expressed this dual objective with the words and expressions “serve and offer the fragrant words of my Lord”, “encourage”, “admonish” and “correct”.

It is important to underline that the first objective of the visitation is what we could well call *to evangelise* the Friars by communicating to them the “words of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life (*Jn* 6, 64)” (*2Ltf* 3). The Visitor, during the Visitation, has constantly to recall the Gospel which the Friars promised to observe faithfully (cf. *Rnb* 1; *Rb* 1,1). In addition, the Visitor has to *animate*, i.e., to communicate spirit and life so that the Friars may live according to the spirit (cf. *Rnb* 5,7) in obedience to the will of the Lord. In other words, the Visitation has to foster growth in the life of the spirit in the Friars and “to urge one and all to progress from the good to the better (cf. *GGCC* 213)” (*SSCV* 3). This is the first service that the Visitor has to give to the Entity visited, keeping in mind the text of Paul (cf. *2Cor* 2, 14-15) on which that of Francis is based, the Visitor evangelises the Friars and reveals the presence of Christ in their midst by being, he himself, a good ‘fragrance’ of Christ.

The visitation of the Friars is, then, a privileged way to evangelise the Friars and to animate them in the impassioned following of Christ, an aspect that is particularly important at this time when tiredness and resignation have nestled in the hearts of many Friars, but is, at the same time, a propitious moment for the Visitor himself to be evangelised.

But given that Francis was very aware of the presence of sin in the fraternity, he could not but point out other objectives of the visitation which seek the conversion of the Friar, and therefore, he spoke of “admonishing” and “correcting (cf. *Rnb* 10,1)”. The Visitor cannot be indifferent to the sin of the Friar, but must admonish and correct the Friars who have sinned (cf. *GGCC* 213), remembering that “the care of the Friar’s soul has been entrusted” to him (*Rnb* 4,6) during the Visitation. Silence before sin will make him an accomplice in the sin and, as such, culpable of the loss of the Friar.

Regarding the way to carry out the Visitation, Francis used very clear expressions. The Visitor has to “admonish” and “correct” (cf. *Rnb* 10, 1) in humility, without pride or vainglory (cf. *Rb* 10, 7), without being “disturbed or angered at another’s sin or evil” (*Rnb* 5, 7), with familiarity and kindness (cf. *Rb* 10, 5), and always moved by charity towards and love of the Friar (cf. *Adm* 11, 2; 25). The Visitor must never forget that, above all, he is a brother, and that the other Friars, though sinners, have to see the merciful face of the Father in him (cf. *LtMin* 9-12). At the same time, he has to do it “diligently” (*Rnb* 5, 5), without sparing effort or time. Tenderness has to be combined with rigour, charity with clarity, during the Visitation.

What is asked of the Visitor

1. Preparing and celebrating the Canonical Visitation

For the Canonical Visitation to give the above mentioned fruits and to be lived by the Friars as a real *kairos*, it has to be prepared and celebrated suitably.

Preparing and carrying out the Visitation well by the Visitor implies: *Being well informed* of the religious and social ambience in which the Friars you must visit live and work. In addition to investigating the present conditions of the life and mission of the Friars, it would be good to know the history of the Province you are to visit, for it could be conditioning the present life and mission of the Friars. This aspect seems to be well taken up by our *General Constitutions* when it indicates that for the Visitor “it will be his concern to learn the circumstances of the Friars” (*GGCC* 213; cf. *SSCV* 3 §1).

Being disposed to *dedicate the time necessary* to it: “The Visitor, in carrying out

his task, is to act with due thoughtfulness, not visiting places too quickly” (SSCV 14 §1). To fix too short a time for this service could lead the Friars to think that the Visitation is simply a process to be completed. The Friars need to be heard and that requires time.

Evaluating the life of the Province and of the Friars. The *Statutes for the Canonical Visitation and Presidency of the Provincial Chapter* speak of a “careful evaluation” of the government of the Province and of the life of the Friars (cf. SSCV 1).

This evaluation, besides being a careful examination, has to be carried out in the light of the process the Order is going through. This requires the Visitor to know the said process and, concretely, the *Priorities for the six-year period*, (the key for reading how to live our identity and to understand the expectations of the world” (*May the Lord give you peace =LgP 4*), as well as the project *The Grace of our Origins*, which serves us as a guide for the preparation and celebration of the VIII Centenary of the foundation of the Order.

Knowing the legislation of the Order well (The *Statutes for the Canonical Visitation and presidency of the Provincial Chapter*, the *General Statutes* and, of course, the *General Constitutions*) and the Particular Legislation of the Province (*Particular Statutes*).

Preparing and carrying out the Visitation on the part of the Province means: Placing itself in an attitude of listening and openness to what the Spirit will say to the Friars through this fraternal and legal mediation; this includes, among other things, praying, individually and in fraternity, for the success of the Visitation.

Allowing itself to be questioned by the Visitor who accompanies the Visitation with his exhortations.

Entering into a process of growth and, therefore, of conversion in order “not to domesticate the prophetic words of the Gospel in order to adapt them to a comfortable style of life” (*LgP 2*).

Speaking with sincerity, “according to the truth and with charity”, confidently” (cf. SSCV 25 §1), of both the negative and positive aspects.

Overcoming the “I” in order to enter into a dynamic of “we”, passing from the individual project to the fraternal project, and from the provincial project to that of the Order.

There should be a climate of freedom in that each one should be able to express what he considers would serve the building of fraternity (cf. SSCV 23).

Making available: all the books which are the object of Visitation; information about the Province which could help the Visitor in his task (cf. SSCV 18) and the reports of the provincial offices (cf. SSCV 19).

2. Carrying out the Canonical Visitation, in an attitude of conversion

Having placed these presuppositions, the Visitor has, above all, to do everything possible for the Visitation to look towards a *renewal of the quality of life* of the Friars in the Province, “to foster and strengthen their Franciscan spirit” (GGCC 199) and “to promote the spirit of fraternity and the observance of our Rule” (GGCC 213) and General Constitutions in such a way that there may be “a renewed commitment to holiness” (*Vita Consecrata = VC 39a*) by assuming the “urgency to be “born again” (*Jn 3, 3*) on both the personal and institutional levels” (*LgP 2*).

The quality of life affects the whole person in all his dimensions: personal, fraternal and missionary.

Regarding the personal dimension, the quality of life requires walking in authenticity, in transparency, in truth with oneself. Quality of life is incompatible with a “double life” or with the consequences which follow from the “cellophane culture” and superficiality; it demands work on profound levels, on the level of the sentiments, of attitudes, which are, of course, transformed into behaviours. The Visitor cannot be content with “mere external fulfilment”, but must carefully examine to see if this fulfilment is manifested, or not, by attitudes animated by a faith which “involves all we are, our history, body, mind and emotions” and “is the absolute source of our joy and

our hope, our discipleship of Jesus Christ and our witness to the world” (*The Lord speaks with us on the Road* = LSR 18).

The Visitor, starting out from the concrete situation of the Friar, will have to help him to get moving in order to live his obligations as a Friar Minor faithfully and responsibly or not to go backwards in a process already begun. This means that the Visitor cannot be content with examining the work each Friar is doing, but will have to go into the life of the Friar, with respect but without being passive: his living of the commitments received by profession (cf. the life of the vows), his personal and fraternal prayer, his affections, etc. In this way, the Visitation will be a powerful moment of spiritual and vocational *accompaniment* of the Friar. It is also important, in this context, that the Visitor should discern what is the best place for each Friar. Vocational fulfilment is not in opposition to human development, but rather is one helped by the other. Besides, looking at the quality of life of each Friar involves paying particular attention to his ongoing formation and to the dangers of individualism and activism, into which the Friars can often fall.

Regarding the fraternal dimension, the quality of life presupposes, for us Friars Minor, interpersonal relationships based on familiarity (cf. *Rb* 6,7), equality (cf. *GGCC* 41), mutual forgiveness (cf. *Fraternal Life in Community* = *FLC* 26), respect for and acceptance of diversity (cf. *GGCC* 40), profound communication (cf. *VFC* 29-34) and the cultivation of human virtues which characterise a “healthy” relationship with others (cf. *GGCC* 39; *FLC* 27). It presupposes placing the fraternities in an attitude of constant discernment (cf. *LgP* 7) and that the Friars, *mendicants of meaning* (cf. *LSR* 6), feel they are in a process, presenting themselves to others through the truth of their seeking, through the truth of their questions.

Regarding the evangelising or missionary dimension, the quality of life demands testimony and consistency (cf. *GGCC* 103), constant seeking of new forms of evangelisation and new presences (cf. *VC* 12), ongoing and initial formation suitable to the historical situations which we are living (cf. *OF and RFF*) and a solid intellectual and pastoral preparation (cf. *Ratio Studiorum* 28-30). It also requires options of life and mission in harmony with our being *minors*: “*minors with the minors of this earth*” (*LSR* 30), so that nothing can obstruct the epiphany of the other among us (cf. *LSR* 28), never forgetting that only a satisfied thirst is transformed into a message (cf. *LSR* 17), which demands profound adhesion to Christ (cf. *LSR* 25) and an intense prayer life.

As can be seen, the quality of life presupposes “leaving the world”, i.e., leaving the mentality of the world in order to commit oneself to the discipleship of Christ, to put down roots in Christ by living the *Priorities of the Order*, which are nothing more than the priorities expressed in the *Rule* and the *General Constitutions*. In other words, the quality of life necessarily presupposes fidelity to what we promised at profession: “To observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, with nothing of one’s own and in chastity” (*Rb* 1,1) in order “to follow the footprints of Jesus Christ more closely” (*GGCC* 5 §2).

I think it is necessary to insist on this fidelity. A Visitor cannot fold his arms and do nothing in the face of the grave faults against what was promised at Profession, as infringements against the vows or against fraternal life can be. But not only this: A Visitor cannot remain silent in the face of attitudes of mediocrity and, even less still, justify them. We would do good to remember all that the Final Document of the Pentecost 2003 Chapter says to us. “We cannot domesticate [or allow others to do so because of our silence] the prophetic words of the Gospel in order to adapt them to a comfortable style of life” (*LgP* 2), to a mediocre life. Rather must we constantly call the Friars to conversion and awaken in them the sense of gospel urgency to convert and believe in the Gospel that we have professed (cf. *Mk* 1, 15), of beginning afresh from Christ, which, among other requirements, entails “finding one’s first love, the inspiring spark that first gave rise to the following” (*SAFC* 22c).

In this context, I think it is necessary and urgent that the Visitation should make “a renewed reference to the Rule” (*VC* 37b) in so far as it is “a journey of discipleship” (John Paul II, *Message to the Chapter* 2003, 2) and *an open and*

incomplete book which is completed “in our fidelity to God and the world” (LSR 8).

In this sense, the Visitation can be the first step that will lead us to the “re-foundation” of the Order, a task that I feel is urgent at the dawn of this third millennium and when we are approaching the VIII Centenary of the foundation of our Order.

Visitation, a moment of grace to construct the local and provincial Fraternity

It is frequently heard that our Order is a federation of Provinces, the Province a federation of Houses and the houses a federation of individuals. I do not want, at this moment, to judge the truth or not of this affirmation. But I am convinced that individualism is a fairly frequent disease in the religious life and also in our Order.

The Canonical Visitation should have, as one of its prime objectives, the construction of a real local and provincial Fraternity. There should not be either a Fraternity that does not respect the person, or people whose project of life does not respect the fundamental option for us of life in Fraternity.

The Priorities for this six-year period, in order to achieve a solid construction of the local and provincial Fraternity, forcibly stress the importance of the *Fraternal Life Project* and the *Provincial Life Project* as instruments for “going forward” (*pro* = forward and *iacere* = launch), of progressing in the life we have embraced and centring ourselves on the essential elements of our *forma vitae* (cf. *LgP 2*).

Besides, the Extraordinary General Chapter asks us *to take care of fraternal life* (cf. LSR 31) by bringing about fraternities where all the Friars really feel they have “the same rights and the same obligations, they are fraternities of equals” (cf. GGCC 3,1; LSR 60); fraternities in which there is “accompaniment and maternal care” (LSR 32), particularly during the first years after profession (cf. LSR 53) and at the time of aging (cf. LSR 54), sensitive times in which special accompaniment by the Guardians is required; fraternities with a clear sense of belonging to the Province and the Order, overcoming provincialism and particularisms (cf. LSR 57). To do this it is important to support and push inter-provincial initiatives in both formation and evangelisation (cf. LSR 54. 57. 59). It is very necessary to pay attention to communications among the Friars: an unrestricted communication, like the Samaritan woman had with Jesus (cf. LSR 17), a profound communication on the basis of our poverty, which leads to “sharing the joys and difficulties of being Friars” (LSR 31). It is also necessary that the fraternities – local and provincial – be creative, that they seek and cultivate moments of dialogue in accordance with their culture and particular needs (cf. LSR 11. 32). The *methodology of Emmaus* is an excellent method for sharing and celebrating life in the light of the Word. The local Chapter also is a suitable instrument for sharing the faith and fraternal life (cf. LSR 31), without forgetting ongoing formation which continues to be another privileged instrument for caring for, constructing and strengthening communion of life in fraternity (cf. LSR 16. 53-57). The Visitor must be very attentive in order to see if an Entity can respond to the demands, both legal and of life, which our legislation points out, in order to discern if it is a case of *re-structuring* and, in the case of being affirmative, how to bring it about.

For the *project* to achieve this end, it must respond to the charismatic identity (in our case, Franciscan) and to the “needs” of the person that desires to grow within this identity. The project must respond to three fundamental questions: Who am I / are we? Of whom do I/we wish to be and what do I/we wish to be? What does God want of me/us at this concrete moment that we are living as a local and provincial Fraternity?

At the heart of the Project lies the will to “begin again always”, to discern in order to “distinguish what comes from the Spirit and what is contrary” (*LgP 7*), to progress and to seek, to examine the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel (cf. *LgP 6*) in order to opt for new paths of creative fidelity (cf. *LgP 3*). A local or provincial Fraternity that does not have this attitude runs the risk of coming to a halt, of repeating itself, of losing, little by little, the contagious joy of faith. The Visitor has to work in order for the fraternities, local and provincial, to feel that they are

mendicants of meaning (cf. *LSR* 6) at all times.

The *Fraternal and Provincial Life Projects* must also assure some “minima” without which it would not be possible to speak of a Franciscan life. These minima are:

- Quality of prayer life (personal and of the fraternity) and of the celebration of our faith, especially of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.
- Quality of fraternal life and all that this entails, as we have said previously.
- Consistency with our profession as “minors” and with the needs of present-day mankind in the options of the local or provincial Fraternity.
- On-going formation, as a path to conversion.

The Visitor must carry out a “careful evaluation” of all these elements and make concrete proposals which, in communion with the options of the Order, would have the Friars grow in their sense of charismatic identity and creative fidelity (cf. *VC* 37). An Entity, local or provincial, which ends the visitation as it had begun it, is the greatest example of a visitation that was badly prepared and ever more badly carried out, it is the optimum example of the lack of life.

Everything certainly does not depend on the Visitor, but it is also certain that he could do a lot to set the Friars and the lethargic Entities in motion and to accelerate the march of those that have an attitude of listening to the signs of the times (cf. *LgP* 6) and of giving a gospel response to a world like ours that is “hungry for meaning, just like Francis and Clare did in their time” (*LgP* 2).

The Canonical Visitation, a moment of grace to construct the worldwide Fraternity

The Friar Minor enters into forming part of the worldwide Fraternity through profession. Although the Province is the place where his legal incardination into the Order is made concrete and where the majority will live and carry out their mission, the Province can never be understood as an end in itself or as an institution on the margins of the Order.

The Canonical Visitation can be a privileged moment for helping the Province to go out of itself and to open up to solidarity with the other Friars and Entities of the Order. I would like, in this context, to underline the following:

It is important to present the Projects and needs of the Order to the Province, especially the missionary projects. We Friars have to grow in the sense of belonging to the Order and the Provinces have to grow in solidarity with the Order on all levels: through personnel, economic aid and new ideas for a greater creative fidelity. In this sense *The Particular Statutes for the Canonical Visitation* point out, among other objectives, the need “to foster awareness of being participants in the life and activity of the entire Order among the Friars” (SSCV 3 §1).

It is also fundamental to present the itinerary of Order during recent years in order to grow in the sense of belonging. There are Entities that run the risk of making a parallel path on the level of formation (on-going and initial) and on the level of options for evangelisation. This would be extremely dangerous for both the Order and the Entities. How are the instructions of the Order in the fields of life, formation and evangelisation put into practice in the Entity visited? The Canonical Visitation is a propitious moment to carry out a serious evaluation in this direction. It is important to keep in mind what *The Particular Statutes for the Canonical Visitation* affirm in this respect: “Bring it about that each one complies more fully with what is laid down in the documents and laws of the Church and Order” (SSCV 3 §1).

The future of the Order lies in interprovincial collaboration on all levels: formation and studies, *ad gentes* missions and popular missions, in situations of fracture and in common projects (General Chapter 2003, *Conclusions* 16). The Canonical Visitation must help the Friars to become conscious of this requirement so that opportune decisions in this direction can be taken during the Chapter.

Given that the present and future of the Order is brought into play in formation, the Visitor must pay special attention to it. It is not without reason that *The*

Particular Statutes for the Canonical Visitation also point out the need, as an objective of the Visitation, "to promote initial and ongoing formation at the scientific, ministerial and professional levels" (SSCV 3 §1; cf. 28).

Since we have been called to evangelise, the Visitation must be a privileged time to evaluate how the mission of the Order is carried out by the Province (cf. SSCV 27).

Besides, it cannot be forgotten that the Order, in this case the government of the Order, needs to know the reality in which the Friars live and the reality of the Entities in order to fulfil its "ministry" of animation. It is very important, therefore, that the Report of the Visitation be realistic and that it should contain, at the same time, proposals for the future. I would like to remind you that, in this context, the Visitor is the "representative of the Minister General and acts in his name" (cf. SSCV 8 §1), he is not the representative of the Minister Provincial before the General Curia. Be consequent in this. The greatest service you can give to the Province visited and to the Order itself is to make a clear *Report* in which the positive aspects and negative aspects of the life and mission of the Entity visited are pointed out clearly (cf. SSCV 21). In this way, the Letter that the Minister General writes after the Visitation will respond to the needs of the life of the Province and will not be a pious exhortation that leaves everything as it was found. It is not a question of creating "a good impression". It is a matter of helping the Entity visited to grow and progress and this entails "correcting", when necessary, and "encouraging" everyone in everything so that they may pass from the good to the better (cf. SSCV 3 §1). The Report can help the Friars of the Province to grow in fidelity.

Conclusion.

Dear Brother Visitors, I wish to conclude this intervention by thanking you for having accepted this service that is, undoubtedly, delicate and very important. The Minister General and his Definitory, on appointing you to this office, have placed great confidence in you. The Friars of the Entities that you will visit also expect a lot from your service. I am convinced that you will not dash these expectations.

Please greet all the Friars you meet on behalf of the Minister and Definitors. You may rely on my prayers that ask the Lord to enlighten you and give you the gift of wisdom in order to fulfil your service.

"May the Lord bless you and protect you..."

Cardinal Urges Religious to Get Blogging Real Christian Message

ROME, Benedict XVI's vicar for the Diocese of Rome expressed his hopes that religious men and women increase their use of information technology, and thus take advantage of what he called a new form of apostolate.

Cardinal Camillo Ruini spoke to the religious at the Pontifical Urbanian University during the diocesan gathering of the Union of Major Superiors of Italy, which represents 1,287 communities and 22,000 religious in Rome.

According to the Roman diocesan weekly *RomaSette*, Cardinal Ruini said: "A priest from Novara told me that the theme of 'Jesus' is very much discussed by youth in blogs. The focus, though, comes from destructive books that are widespread today, and not from Benedict XVI's book 'Jesus of Nazareth.'"

"What will the idea of Christ be in 10 years if these ideas triumph?"

The 76-year-old prelate admitted, "I don't understand the Internet, but especially young religious ought to enter blogs and correct the opinions of the youth, showing them the true Jesus." "The teaching emergency is central in Benedict XVI's concerns," the cardinal said. "For him, education in the faith coincides with service to society, because to form someone in the faith means to form the human person."

"Simply giving motivations for living defeats nihilism and gives value to the human person, a value that is based on Christ himself, the fact that God became a man." The cardinal asserted that an educator's testimony and content can matter more than pedagogical techniques.

Silta mill-Omelija tal-Ministru Ġeneral lil Vizitaturi Ġenerali

16.11.07

We Friars Minor of the XXI century are called to be visible and credible signs of the presence and love of God in the midst of our world, as Francis and Clare were. We Friars Minor are called to be disciples and missionaries of Christ, as the Latin American Episcopal Conference at Aparecida reminded us, by being mystics, prophets and deacons, focusing ourselves on Him, placing our hearts on Him, for He alone can keep the freshness and authenticity of our first love constant and lead us to share His mission completely.

During this third stage of our progress towards the VIII Centenary of the foundation of our Order, we are called on to celebrate the gift of our vocation. This, among other things, implies banking on a strong spirituality based on an intense life of prayer as a pedagogy of sanctity within our life and in its radiation in favour of the people of God. Do not be afraid to propose to the Friars you meet during the Canonical Visitation the highest ideal of the Christian and franciscan life: sanctity.

It is the best way to celebrate the gift of our vocation, just as the Project 'The Grace of our Origins' invites us. It is the only way to follow Jesus Christ more closely, just as we promised on the day of our profession.

- *Go, then, my dear Brother Visitors, greet all the Friars with the greeting of peace which the Lord revealed to Francis (cf. Test 23) on behalf of the Minister and Definitory General.*
- *Go, and always show the merciful face of the Father to the Friars entrusted to you. If they have sinned and ask pardon, give it to them, and if they do not ask for it, offer it to them, as St. Franciscan wished (cf. LtMin 9-12).*
- *Go, and invite all the Friars, after the example of the Samaritan woman (Jn 4, 4ff) and of the disciples of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24, 13ss), to grow as they journey through a daily encounter with the Word, through a progressive deepening of their faith. Invite them to satisfy their thirst for fullness in order to be apostles of Him who is the fountain of living water (cf. The Lord speaks with us on the Road = LSR 17).*
- *Go, and untiringly invite the Friars to return to the Gospel so that their lives may recover the poetry, the beauty and the enchantment of our origins (cf. LSR 14) and, in this way, they may celebrate, through word and life, the gift of their vocation.*
- *Go, and, at the opportune and inopportune time, motivate the Friars to build contemplative fraternities of minors on mission; fraternities where the joys and the sorrows of our life are shared; fraternities where the Lord occupies first place in the heart and life of each Friar; fraternities seriously committed to evangelisation and the cause of humanity.*
- *Go, dear Brothers, and may the intercession of Mary Immaculate, Queen of our Order, of our father St. Francis and the blessing of the Lord accompany you. Go, fear not, The Lord is with you (cf. Is 41, 10).*



Communication from the General Definitory November 2007

The “Tempo forte” (T.F) of the month of November was held from the 5th to the 17th. As in other years, the meeting of the General Visitators with the Government of the Order, held from the 12th to the 16th, was inserted into the “tempo forte”. 17 Visitators were present. All the members of the Definitory took part in the Academic Act in honour of Bl. John Duns Scotus at the P.U.A. in the morning of the 8th of November. Some representatives of the Definitory participated in the 60th Anniversary of the P.A.M.I.

In addition to the usual topics dealt with, the following specific matters were examined profoundly during this T.F.:

- Proposal for a Chapter of Mats of Franciscan Friars (Assisi, 16th to 19th April 2009), up to now the only common initiative of the Franciscan Family for the year of the VIII Centenary;
- Restructuring of the Province of St. Thomas in India;
- Restructuring of the Province of St. Benedict in the Congo;
- China Project;
- Sudan Project;
- Franciscans International

1. Sharing:

In accordance with practice, the Friars of the Definitory

shared their various visits, meetings and celebrations with the Friars of the different Entities since the last TF. They then evaluated the events in which they had participated, in full or in part, as the Definitory: A Seminar on Christian-Islamic dialogue (Rome, Curia OFM); European Congress of JPIC (Frankfurt); UFME (Sarajevo); Congress of Educators (Cordoba).

2. Reports:

The reports sent by the General Visitators, who had finished their service, were studied and evaluated.

They concerned the following Entities: Fraternity of “Notre Dame des Nations” in Brussels; Australia (Province of the Holy Spirit), Singapore-Malaysia (Dep. Custody of St. Anthony), New Zealand (Foundation of St. Andrew); Brazil (Province of St. Francis).

3. Appointment of Visitators:

Visitators were appointed for the following Entities: Br. Iniazio Dellazeri, of the Province of St. Francis in Brazil, for the Autonomous Custody of The Seven Joys of Mary in Brazil; Br. Peter Williams, of the Province of

Great Britain, for the Province of Santa Barbara in the USA; Br. Francisco Frasneda, of the Province of Murcia in Spain, for the P.U.A; Br. Marie Sevrin of the Province of the Three Companions (France/ Belgium), Assistant-Visitator for the P.U.A; Br. Carlos Folgado López, of the Missionary Province of St. Anthony in Bolivia, for the Province of St. Michael in Argentina; Br. Guillermo Rodríguez Rico, of the Province of the Holy Gospel in Mexico, Assistant-Visitator for the Province of Santa Fe in Colombia.

4. Meetings:

The programmes of meetings with the newly elected Ministers and Custodes of Autonomous Custodies (14th to 22nd January 2008) and with the Presidents of the Conferences (12th to 14th May 2008) were prepared, presented and confirmed. The Definitory recalled - as was established during a meeting with the Guardians of the Houses dependent on the Minister General - that there is a meeting of the above mentioned Houses in Rome for community prayer, scheduled for St. Isidore's College on the 10th May 2008 (the Vigil of Pentecost).

5. General Chapter:

Assisi, 23rd May to 21st June 2009:

The Definitory chose and appointed Br. Francesco Patton, of the Province of St. Vigil, Trent, Italy, as the Secretary for the next General Chapter of the Order.

6. Personnel:

The need to make changes in the personnel was seen following the Visitation made to the Houses dependent on the Minister General. In the perspective of the move from Grottaferrata to St. Isidore's, the Definitory took new proposals for the organisation of the fraternity into consideration. The period of office in the fraternity of the Penitentiaries of St. John Latern having been completed, the Guardian (Br. Antonio Giacomello), the Vicar (Br. Gerardo Zapanta) and the Bursar (Fr. Germano Corró) were confirmed for a second three-year period.

7. Meetings with the Offices:

In accordance with normal practice, the Definitory met the Director of the Development Office (Fund Raising) on this occasion and were informed about the developments in the work and about future prospects. Br. Moises Gutierrez Rivas presented different initiative which he wishes to carry out with the approval of the Order's Government, to the Definitory.

8. Finances:

18 different requests for finances from various Entities of the Order were examined. The Definitory also looked at the budgets for 2008 prepared by the Bursar General. Decisions on them will be made during the next session, in December.

9. Administrative matters:

More than 80 matters concerning the issue of decrees, ratifications, dispensations, clarifications, etc., were examined.

10. Various:

a) The new agreement between the Apostolic Vicariates of Tripoli and Benghazi in Libya and the Order of Friars Minor were signed by the Bishops of Libya, Msgr. Giovanni Martinelli (of Tripoli) and Msgr. Silvestro Magro (Benghazi), and on behalf of the Order, by the Minister General and the Minister Provincial of Malta, Br. Paul, whose Province legally takes care of the Friars who work in Libya.

b) The Administrative Council of the Jubilee Fund, composed of three Ministers Provincial, has been chosen and appointed; they are: Br. Michael Coops (Prov. of the Immaculate Conception of the BMV - England), Br. Pedro Ruano Santateresa (Prov. of St. Gregory the Great - Spain), and Br. John O'Connor (Prov. of the Most Holy Name of Jesus - USA)
c) The next, and final "tempo forte" of this year. is scheduled for **17th to 21st December**.

Br. Ernest Karol Siekierka
Vice-Secretary General

The year 2007: Let us dare to live the Gospel!

What we have lacked (and lack), perhaps, was the courage to live the PRESENT with coherence...; to live and express in eloquent and significant ways, the fresh news of our charism in our days. And we have we projected ourselves even less towards the FUTURE...! Despite that, the Church has reminded us strongly: "You not only have a glorious history to remember and to speak about, but a great history to build" (VC110). One of the more serious crises that the religious life risks today is that of staying completely outside history because it does not erect bridges of constructive dialogue with our brothers and sisters of our times or intuit their deep demands. A typical example of backwardness, that is evident now more than ever, is that of fraternal relationships. We well know that the fraternity is a constitutional value (not optional) of our charism. We are tired of the Church and the Order telling us so. Real, honest and fraternal relationships are an absolute challenge to the world in which we live.

ĊIRKULARI MILIED 2007

Nitthejjew għas-Sena 2008

Prot. 0711\102

Gheziez Huti f' San Frangisk,

Il-Mulej jaghtikom is-sliem!

Għaddiet sena oħra, u propju f' dawn il-granet bdejna ngħixu mill-ġdid l-Avvent Mqaddes, żmien li jwassalna għall-festi tal-Milied u s-Sena l-Ġdida 2008.

Is-sena 2008, se tkun sena mhux tas-soltu, għax matula se ngħixu l-esperjenzi ta' Viżta Kanonika minn Viżitatur Ġenerali, Kungress Nazzjonali tal-Hajja Kkonsagrata u Kapitlu Provinċjali. Għalhekk l-Avvent u l-Festi tal-Milied ta' din is-sena, għandhom ikunu thejjija xierqa għal dawn il-mumentanti ta' responsabilita' li ser ngħixu flimkien matul is-sena 2008. Kemm il-Viżta Kanonika, il-Kungress Nazzjonali u l-Kapitlu Provinċjali, jitolbu minna rieda tajba, disponibiltà u tama shiha fir-rieda t'Alla. Quddiem ir-rieda ta' Alla, ilkoll kemm ahna rridu nkunu umli bizżejjed li nħossu l-ħtieġa li dejjem hemm x'intejbu fl-imġieba tagħna bhala ahwa frangiskani.

L-Avvent ifakkarna fis-sabar li kellu jgħaddi minnu l-poplu Lhudi waqt li jistenna il-miġja tal-Messija. İlkoll nafu li hafna drabi l-poplu Lhudi kien jitlef sabru u jitlef kull tama fil-wegħda tal-Messija. Imma min baqa' jittama u jemmen, meta wasal il-waqt, Alla wettaq il-wegħdiet tiegħu.

Hekk ukoll ahna, dejjem nittamaw f'hajja ahjar bhala ahwa frangiskani. Imsieken ahna meta naqtgħu qalbna u nintelqgħu fi bruda shiha lejn dak kollu li għandu x'jaqsam mal-hajja tagħna bhala reliġjużi. La Alla sejhilna biex nimxu warajh fuq l-eżempju ta' Frangisku t'Assisi, żgur li qatt ma jonqos jaghtina dak kollu li neħtieġu.

Il-lejl imqaddes tal-Milied ifakkarna fl-umilta' kbira ta' Alla, meta għoġbu jsir tarbija bhala u jitwieled f'ghar tal-bhejjem għas-salvazzjoni tagħna. *"Imwieled fqir u mqieghed f'maxtura"* S. Klara. Dan Alla li jista' kollox, il-bidu u t-tmiem ta' kollox, għall-imħabba lejna l-bnedmin dgħajfa, ma stmerrx jiehu s-sura tagħna l-bnedmin.

Hekk ukoll jeħtieġ li nkunu lesti numiljaw ruhna kontinwament jekk irridu ngħixu ta' veri ahwa frangiskani. Sidna Ġesu' Kristu, biex resaq lejna bhala Feddej, čekken lilu nnifsu, sar tarbija u ma qgħadx ifittex dak li hu daqs Alla. Għalhekk quddiem ix-xbihat ta' Ġesu' tarbija fil-presepji tagħna, nitolbu l-grazzja ta' l-umilta' għax b'hekk biss nistgħu nersqu dejjem aktar lejn xulxin u ngħixu ta' veru ahwa.

Awguri u jalla l-veru spirtu ta' Ġesu' Bambin jibqa' magħna tul is-snin ta' hajjitna kollha.

Mahruga mill-Kurja Provinċjalizja

Il-Belt Valletta

Illum, 1 ta' Diċembru 2007

Fra Paul Galea, OFM
Ministru Provinċjal

Fra Marcellino Micallef, OFM
Segretarju tal-Provinċja

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little "extra".- <i>The heart is happiest when it beats for others.</i>- Some people complain that there are thorns on roses, while others praise thorns for having roses among them. |
|---|

L-Avvent

Anton Farrugia, OFM

Bhalma l-festi ta' l-Għid ġew estiżi bi żmien li jtul 50 jum (*Għid il-Hamsin*) u bi żmien tar-Randan, 40 ġurnata ta' preparazzjoni għalihom; hekk ukoll il-festi tal-Milied huma estiżi f'ciklu ta' żmien li jagħlaq bil-festa tal-Magħmudija tal-Mulej u b'erba' ġimghat ta' preparazzjoni: ż-żmien ta' l-Avvent.

Il-kelma *Avvent* għandha oriġni pagana assoċjata mal-fehma li l-allat, ta' kull sena, kienu jżuru lid-devoti tagħhom. Insibuha wkoll fil-protokol tal-Qorti Imperjali b'referenza kemm għall-jum li fih persuna kienet tassumi s-setgħa ta' mperatur, kif ukoll għall-jum meta dan stess kien jagħmel li jagħmel żjara uffiċjali xi mkien. Barra minn hekk ta' min ifakkar li l-Imperatur kien jassumi titli assoċjati ma' l-allat. Fil-fatt l-Imperatur Kostantinu kien ħareġ muniti li jfakkru jum il-hatra tiegħu bil-kliem: *Adventus Divi Augusti* minquxa fuqhom.

Iż-żmien ta' l-Avvent issawwar fil-Knisja bil-mod il-mod, bejn ir-IV u s-VI seklu. Lejn tmiem ir-IV seklu u fis-seklu ta' wara fil-Gallja (Franza) u fi Spanja, l-Insara dehrilhom li kien mehtieġ żmien ta' tliet ġimghat qabel il-festi tal-Milied sabiex dawk li jkunu ser jirċievu l-Magħmudija fl-Epifanija jkollhom ukoll thejjija xierqa bħal fi żmien ir-Randan.

F'Ruma, l-Avvent

jibda' jissemma minn nofs is-seklu VI l-quddiem kif jixhdu l-appendiċi tas-Sagramentarju *Gelasjan* kif ukoll dak *Gregorjan* u aktar tard il-*Veronese* fejn fihom insibu talb *in Adventu Domini* li jestendi minn 4 sa 6 ġimghat qabel il-Milied. Minn dawn is-6 ġimghat ta' preparazzjoni li għandna nsibuhom fil-liturgija Ambrożjana ta' Milan, illum baqa' biss 4.

Nistgħu nġhidu li fil-liturgija tal-Lvant ma jeżistix. Insibu minflok żmien iqsar ta' preparazzjoni għall-Milied, bħal meta fir-Rit Bizantin, fil-Ħadd ta' qabel il-Milied issir it-tifkira tan-nies qaddisa, ibda minn Adam sa Ġużeppi r-raġel ta' Marija, li għixu skond il-qalb ta' Alla. Fir-Rit Sirijaku, nsibu hames ġimghat imsejha tat-thabbir tal-Feddej, iddedikati lil Żakkarija, lil Elizabetta fiż-żjara li għamlitilha Marija lil Ġwanni l-Battista fi twelidu, lill-Madonna u lil San Ġużepp.

Iż-żmien ta' l-Avvent għandu karatteristika doppja. Mhux biss huwa żmien ta' thejjija għall-Milied li fih infakkru l-ewwel miġja tal-Mulej fil-milja taż-żmien, imma din it-tifkira tgħina ngħixu l-istennija tat-tieni miġja tiegħu fil-glorja fl-ahhar taż-żmien. Dan hu mfisser tajjeb hafna fit-testi liturġiċi ta' l-Avvent fejn jispikkaw il-Profeta Iżaija u San Ġwann il-Battista.

Ir-riforma liturġika

mitluba mill-Konċilju Vatikan II, fasslet iż-żmien ta' l-Avvent fuq firxa ta' 4 ġimghat li nistgħu naqsmuhom f'żewġ partijiet. L-ewwel parti, sas-16 ta' Diċembru, tenfasizza t-tieni miġja tal-Mulej fil-glorja f'kontinwità ma' l-ahhar Ħadd tas-sena liturġika li tiċcelebra s-solennità ta' Kristu Sultan. Hawnhekk ta' min jgħid li kemm fil-mużajk ta' l-abside tal-knejjes ta' Ruma kif ukoll f'dawk ta' Ravenna, eżattament fuq is-sedja taċ-ċelebrant, insibu dik li tissejjaħ l-*Etimasia* jiġifieri s-sedja vojta tal-*Pantocrator*: biex tfakkar lil insara fi Kristu li għandu jerga jiġi fil-glorja biex jagħmel haqq mill-ħajjin u mill-mejtin. It-tieni parti ta' l-Avvent, mis-17 sal-24 ta' Diċembru, tenfasizza pjuttost l-ewwel miġja tal-Mulej kif jindika tajjeb it-tieni prefazju ta' l-Avvent.

L-ewwel qari tal-Quddies tal-Hdud ta' l-Avvent jirreferi għall-Profezija Messjanici, speċjalment dawk ta' Iżaija imma anke ta' Ġeremija, Baruk u Sofonija. Fit-tieni



qari, l-Ittri ta' San Pawl, San Pietru, San Ġakbu u lill-Lhud jagħmlu referenza kemm għall-ewwel kif ukoll għat-tieni miġja ta' Kristu. L-Evangeli ta' l-ewwel Hadd jirreferi għall-aħħar żminijiet, dak tat-tieni u tat-tielet Hadd għall-Ġwanni l-Battista, r-raba' Hadd għat-thabbira tal-Mulej lil Ġużeppi (Sena A) u lil Marija (Sena B) filwaqt li fis-Sena Ċ liż-żjara tal-Madonna lil Santa Eliżabetta. Din l-istess struttura tematika, nsibuha wkoll fil-Liturgija tas-Siġhat, kemm fis-siltiet mehuda mill-Kotba mqaddsa kif ukoll dawk tal-

Missirijiet Qaddisa tal-Knisja.

L-Avvent huwa x-xahar tal-Madonna *per ecclenza*. Il-Kolletti tal-Quddies tas-17, 19, 20 u 23 ta' Diċembru huma testi marjani li juru l-ko-operazzjoni unika ta' Marija fil-misteru tal-Fidwa tagħna. Tajjeb li aktar milli fix-xhur l-oħra tas-sena, nfakkru lil Marija f'dan iż-żmien imqaddes ta' l-Avvent b'xi att ta' qima li jista' jsir quddiem ix-xbieha tagħha kemm fir-IV Hadd kif ukoll fit-8 ta'



Diċembru, solennità tat-tneissil tagħha bla tebgħa.

Francis and Jesus at Christmas

Norbert Ellul-Vincenti, OFM

As Advent arrives, can Christmas be far behind?

We may be put off by the heavy preparations all around us, by our forced enrollment into the sea of merriment and spending that traditional spates of consumerism have brought about without asking for our consent. But when Christmas comes, we are caught up in a general desire to be good to everyone else, to forget old scores and to share our joy with the unfortunate.

It is not a bad thing, once a year, to have this strong injection of social responsibility and human brotherhood (sisters certainly included there).

It is a time when we think of those in our own

country, first of all, who suffer from various cause and from no causes, from illness and weakness, from broken families and vanished elder members, from ill-luck and badly planned operations and botched plans.

Solidarity is a word we may not be able to write correctly, but human beings have always recognised human tears and screams of pain as colourless, creedless and indistinguishable wherever they may arise.

An therefore we think of the thousands, perhaps millions who suffer unjustly throughout Europe and the whole world, unemancipated women, the neglected children, the

tortured prisoners, the imprisoned protesters, the "vanished" ones, the homeless, the refugees, the ignorant and simple who do not yet know what's hit them and never will.

The Babe in the Crib smiles for them as well, and raises his hand in blessing, expecting the rest of us to make a change for the better possible in a cruel world. It is a call to those of us who have been placed in a position where we can help. It is up to us to change circumstances in such a way that the weak and suffering may be relieved.

For our Maltese society, polarised as it is, and as it has been for the last thirty or forty years, a

measure of reconciliation and understanding would seem to be required so that our society may be bolstered by principles of justice and that everyone may receive a fair deal.

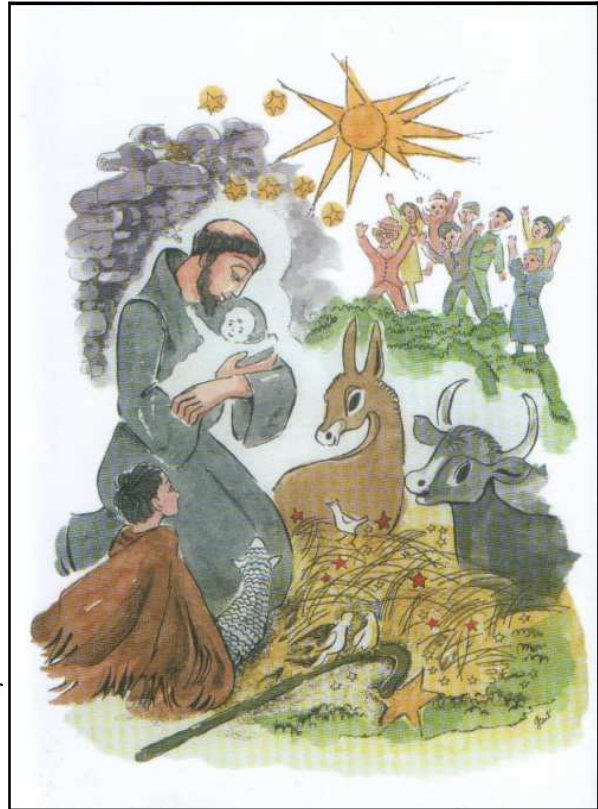
Perhaps a firmer warning should go out to criminals and those who enter private homes to burgle or who beat up the infirm and elderly. A society that believes in itself cannot allow such things to happen without doing its utmost to punish culprits and dissuade others from trying the same game. More love, more fun, less pain and less cruelty. More smiles and fewer scowls all round.

For those of us with a solid Christian basis for their Xmas celebrations, this is a time for an examination of our

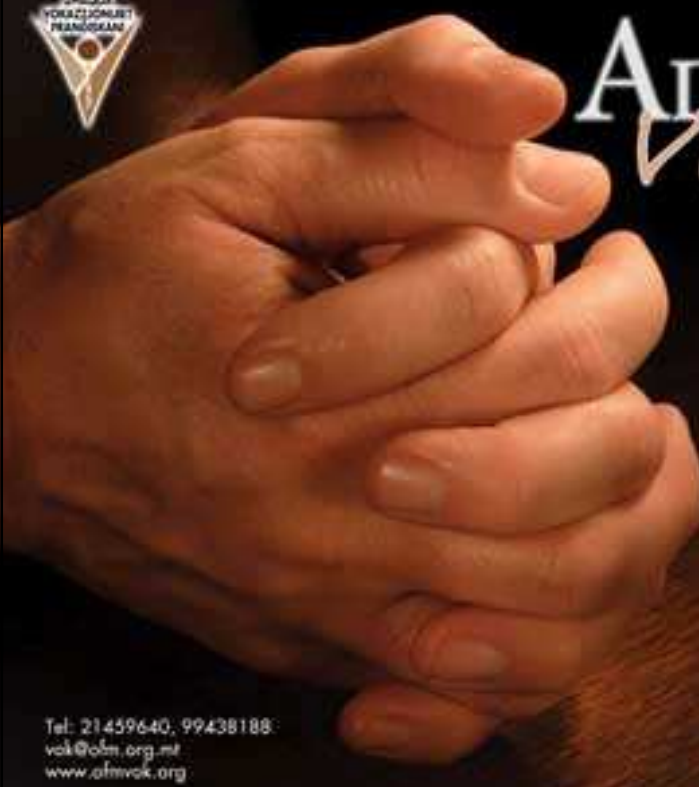
Christianity, and for discovering better ways of making it tell in our lives.


For Franciscans it is an even more meaningful time because it brings to mind all the Father Francis stands and his particular celebration of Jesus at Greccio as the culmination of a lifetime of following in Jesus' footsteps.

May Christmas enlighten our minds and



bring us closer to Francis and Jesus.





ADORAZZJONI VOKAZZJONALI

Il-Gimgha, 14ta' Dicembru 2007
Post: Knisja Sta. Marija ta' Gesu
(ta' Giezu) - Valletta
Hin: 6.15pm - Quddiesa
wara Adorazzjoni

~

*Ingħaqdu magħna halli
inkompli nitolbu għal aktar
Vokazzjonijiet*

~

għal aktar informazzjoni ikkuntattja lil P. Joseph:
Patrijiet Franġiskani, Triq San Pawl,
Rabat RBT 1245, Malta

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St. Elizabeth: her meeting friars and spiritual guidance

Ivan Matić, OFM

INTRODUCTION

The celebration of the VIII Centenary of the birth of St. Elizabeth offers us the possibility of reflecting on some important points of her life and spiritual experience, which could also enlighten our spiritual journey.

In this number of *Koinonia* we pause over her meeting with the Friars Minor. The other point for reflection will be that of her spiritual guidance or spiritual direction, which strongly marked the life of St. Elizabeth in her spiritual growth towards sanctity.

The meeting of St. Elizabeth with the Friars Minor helps us to review the relations which today, after eight centuries of the history of the Franciscan family, are defined in a very clear way in our various documents and which show a long and real experience of communion of life between the Secular Franciscans and religious. The most beautiful expression which speaks of our communion and of our common mission is found in the Rule of the SFO, where one can read:

“In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church”.

The second point we will reflect on regards the spiritual guidance of St. Elizabeth. This reflection is born of the need to understand what importance spiritual guidance had in her life and the reason why this spiritual guidance, entrusted at first to a Friar Minor, Br. Ruggero, should have been passed to her master Conrad of Marburg.

St. Elizabeth accepted spiritual guidance with humility and in obedience. She thus leaves us a powerful example of the



need for and the importance that spiritual guidance or direction has in the faith journey of each Christian. It must be stressed, however, that the role of the spiritual Assistant should not be confused with that of a spiritual Director: it is a matter of two very different roles.

THE MEETING WITH THE FRIARS

The Friars Minor arrived in Germany for the second time in 1221 as their first mission failed in 1219. They were 25 Friars who undertook the mission once again under the guidance of Br. Cesario da Spira, a German Friar. Their presence quickly spread and already in 1225 they had 18 different foundations. These foun-

dations were very simple and situated, usually, beside small churches which served as centres of preaching and presence among the people for the Friars. And so, in 1225, the Friars also reached Eisenach, the capital of Thuringia.

At that time, St. Elizabeth was married and lived with her family in the castle of Warburg in the city of Eisenach. She was 18 years old. She was fascinated by the ideals preached by these simple and poor Friars and, as a sign of gratitude, and admiration, she received them and gave them a small chapel.

The preaching of the Friars Minor to the people, after the example of Francis of Assisi, consisted of the exhortation to live a life of penance, that is, to abandon the mundane life, to practise prayer and mortification, and to take part in the works of mercy. Francis himself described this style of life in his *Letter to all the Faithful*.

Elizabeth chose one of them, Br. Ruggero, as her spiritual guide in the same year. Giordano of Giano, in his chronicle of the foundation of 1262, there entered the Order

“A lay Brother, Ruggero, who later became the master of the spiritual life of St. Elizabeth, taught her guard her chastity, humility and patience, to make prayer vigils and to dedicate herself assiduously to works of charity” (*FF* 2352).

The testimonies about the friendship which characterised the relations of Elizabeth with the Friars Minor and about franciscan living are very evident and undeniable in the early sources. We will point out just a few references:

- It happened that Elizabeth donated a chapel at Eisenach to the franciscan Friars.
- She spun the wool for the habits of the Friars Minor.
- When she was expelled from her castle, she, alone and abandoned, had the Franciscans sing the *Te Deum* as a thanksgiving to God.
- On Good Friday, 24th March 1228, having placed her hands on the stripped altar in the franciscan chapel, she made her public profession. She donned a grey habit of a peni-

tent as an exterior sign.

- Her four maid servants, interrogated during the process of canonisation, also assumed the grey habit. This “vile tunic”, in which Elizabeth wished to be buried, signified that religious profession had conferred a new identity on her.
- She placed the hospital of Marburg (1229) under the protection of St. Francis, canonised a few months previously.
- The anonymous author of Zwettl (1236) affirmed that “she donned the grey habit of the Friars Minor”.

These testimonies are corroborated by other sources which illustrate the penitential life of Elizabeth, such as the Rules and other franciscan documents; the *Memoriale Propositi* or ancient Rule of penitents; the analogies and conformities between Elizabeth and Francis.

Elizabeth knew St. Francis through the accounts of the Friars and so we can see that the main spiritual journey for her, as it was for Francis, was that of a continuous evangelical conversion and the merciful service of the poor and weakest people.

Her care for the poor and sick, especially the lepers, seeing the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in them, are attitudes which she learned from franciscan spirituality and which led her to live her life of nobility, of a woman, spouse, mother and widow, with the gospel intensity of one who was fully in the world, but not of it. It is for that reason that she continues to inspire men and women through her example of prayer, continuous conversion, humility and poverty: key virtues of the penitential life.

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

Reflecting on the spiritual guidance of St. Elizabeth, a question comes spontaneously to mind: why did the spiritual direction pass from Br. Ruggero to a new spiritual director and confessor, that is, to Conrad of Marburg?

This change of spiritual director can be explained by the words we find in both

the *Unapproved Rule* (1221) and the *Approved Rule* (1223) of the Friars Minor.

In Chapter XII of the *Unapproved Rule* we find: "Wherever they may be or may go, let all the brothers avoid evil glances and associations with women. No one may counsel them, travel alone with them or eat out of the same dish with them. When giving penance or some spiritual advice, let priests speak with them in a becoming way. Absolutely no woman may be received to obedience by any brother, but after spiritual advice has been given to her, let her do penance wherever she wants".

In the *Approved Rule, Chapter XI*, we can read:

"I strictly command all the brothers not to have any suspicious dealings or conversations with women, and they may not enter the monasteries of nuns, excepting those brothers to whom special permission has been granted by the Apostolic See; and they may not be godfathers to men or women, so that scandal may not arise among the brothers or concerning them on account of this".

These quotations help us to understand why the spiritual guidance of St. Elizabeth passed from the Friars to Conrad of Marburg. But who was this Conrad of Marburg? The *Anonimous Franciscan* says that he was a secular priest. He was a teacher, preacher of the crusades and a counsellor to king Louis IV. He was a collaborator, counsellor, confessor and spiritual director of St. Elizabeth. Under his spiritual direction she established herself in Marburg. Conrad also exercised his authority of visitator with prohibitions and punishments and this can only be explained if the first profession of Elizabeth and the perspective of the Rule of penance that existed at that time are taken into account.

We can trace what Elizabeth thought of her spiritual director, Conrad of Marburg, in some quotations we find in his letter to Pope Gregory IX, a letter which bears the date of the 16th November 1232, almost a year after the death of the Saint. The letter was written by command of Pope Gregory IX himself, in order to have a testimony about the life, miracles and spirituality of St. Elizabeth from her spiritual director.

We find the following affirmation about the service and dedication of Elizabeth to the poor and sick in the letter:

"She had the custom of visiting personally all the sick twice a day, in the morning and in the evening, She took direct care of the most repugnant. She fed some, procured a bed for others, carried some on her shoulders and was lavish in many other services for the good".

We find this affirmation of Conrad about her character and desire to live according to the franciscan charism: "To begin, however, a project blossomed in her soul: she asked me, with many tears, to allow her to beg for alms from door to door. I having firmly prohibited it, Elizabeth replied: 'I will do it, because you cannot prohibit me!'"

After the death of her husband Louis in the chapel at Eisenach in the presence of the Friars Minor on Good Friday 1228, Elizabeth made a promise to observe the evangelical councils. Conrad also wrote about this very important fact in the life of St. Elizabeth:

"One Good Friday, when the altars were stripped, Elizabeth placed her hands on the altar in the chapel of her city, where she had received the Friars Minor, and, in the presence of some Friars, family members and children, she renounced her own will and all the vanities of the world, as well as all that the Saviour in the Gospel advised us to abandon".

In the biographical sources we find that St. Elizabeth made two distinct professions in two different ways which were used at that time. In the first, when her husband was still alive, Elizabeth placed her hands in those of her spiritual director, Conrad, who received her profession, and then, in the second, after the death of her husband, she made a more solemn profession of greater commitment in the chapel of the Friars Minor, placing her hands on the altar in the presence of her spiritual director and confessor, of the Friars Minor and of other people.

Speaking of St. Elizabeth's prayer life, her confessor Conrad left us a truly exemplary testimony:

"I affirm before God that, though dedicated to such works of the active life, rarely have I seen a woman as contemplative as Elizabeth. Some religious women

and men noted very often that, when she came away from her private prayer, a wonderful light emanated from her face and, like rays of the sun, radiated from her eyes”.

FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF ST. ELIZABETH

Elizabeth died at the early age of 24 years on the 17th November 1231 and was canonised on the 27th May 1235 by Pope Gregory IX in the church of St. Dominick in Perugia. It is interesting to note that she was the third person of the Franciscan Family to be canonised by this Pontiff. St. Francis of Assisi was canonised in 1228 and St. Anthony of Padua in 1232.

In the Bull of Canonisation, “*Gloriosus in maiestate*”, of 1235, Pope Gregory IX exalted the following virtues of the Saint: love for penance, spiritual poverty, hatred of sin, dedication to the works of mercy, love for justice and peace, and patience in the face of suffering and of the trials of life. In addition, the Pontiff stated in the same Bull:

“O happy woman! O admirable matron! O sweet Elizabeth, called ‘the satiation of God’, who was found worthy of the bread of angels through feeding the poor! O illustrious widow, fertile stock of virtue, who, making every effort to acquire through grace what could not be obtained by means of nature, defeated the cruel enemies of the soul with the shield of faith, with the armour of justice, with the sword of the spirit, with the helmet of salvation and with the pole of perseverance”.

The celebration of the VIII Centenary of the birth of St. Elizabeth is a propitious occasion for deepening our awareness of our common franciscan charism and of our spirituality. On the basis of this awareness the main invitation which comes to us from the example of St. Elizabeth is, above all, that of placing Jesus Christ at the centre of our life and of loving, following and serving Him with all our heart.

Another invitation is that of living in the spirit of continuous evangelical conversion and, in humility and mercy, dedicating ourselves to the service of the most poor and needy. We also, after the example of St. Elizabeth, feel the need to unite contemplation and action: “*Mariam induit,*

Martham non exuit” (“She wore the clothes of Mary, without taking off those of Martha”). In addition, St. Elizabeth shows us the demand and the need to have, in our journey of faith, a qualified spiritual guide who accompanies us in our own personal journey towards sanctity.

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude these reflections with the words of the Presidency of the CIOFS, which we find in the letter sent to all the brothers and sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order on the occasion of the VIII Centenary of the birth of St. Elizabeth. In that letter a strong appeal was made to all the Secular Franciscans to pay particular attention to:

- “St. Elizabeth, as one of the first “spiritual daughters” of St. Francis, who produced “*worthy fruits of penance*”. Like her, we must heed the admonition of St. Francis to become men and women of mercy, living the charism of **poverty, humility, contemplation** and, above all, of **ongoing conversion**. Elizabeth was able to incorporate all of these virtues into her life, virtues that continue to distinguish the brothers and sisters of penance to this day”.
- “St. Elizabeth, as a concrete and exemplary model of the apostolic mission to which we are all called. Her complete giving of self to her marriage and family life, to the temporal tasks associated with governing her country, and to the poor, the sick (especially, lepers) and the marginalized of her time, is an example for all of us and a reminder to feel constantly challenged by the spirit of St. Francis who calls us to be in the world without belonging to it”.

1. *SFO Rule*, 1.
2. Cf. *Letter to the entire Franciscan Family of the CFF*, 17th November 2007.
3. *Ibidem*.
4. Cf. LINO TEMPERINI, *Santa Elisabetta d’Ungheria secondo le fonti storiche*, Roma 2006, p. 14.
5. *Ibidem*, pp. 14-15.
6. *Ibidem*, p. 15.
7. *Ibidem*, p. 16.
8. *Ibidem*, p. 79.

informazzjoni



ikompli mill-ewwel pagna
Congress for Visitors
General, organized at the
General Curia of the Order
of Friars Minor.

Austin McCormack
OFM was Minister
Provincial for the English

Franciscan Province of the
Immaculate Conception for
nine consecutive years. He
is currently Guardian and
parish priest at the
postulant house in Chil-
worth, Surrey. He has just
retired from his post as

lecturer at the Franciscan
International Study Centre
in Canterbury. He is
expected back in Malta for
the official canonical
visitation, which is to start
in the middle of January
2008.

FESTI TAL-MILIED 2007

**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**

**Ghall-Ahwa kollha tal-Provincja
Is-Sibt, 22 ta' Dicembru 2007
Fil-Kunvent Santa Marija ta' l-Anġli
10.30 am**

**Ghall-Ġenituri u Qraba
Il-Hamis, 27 ta' Dicembru 2007
F'Porziuncola Retreat House
6.00 pm**



mid-djarju tal-ministru provinċjal

Kummissjoni Djoċesana Hajja ikkonsagrata

Nhar is-Sibt, 11 ta' Novembru, fl-10.00 am, attendejt il-laqgħa tal-Kummissjoni Hajja Konsagrata li ssir fil-Monasteru ta' Hutna l-Klarissi. Din id-darba ha sehem ukoll Mons. Arcisqof Pawlu Cremona O.P. Bdejna b'nofs siegħha Adorazzjoni animata minn hutna l-Klarissi.

Fl-intervent tiegħu, Mons. Arcisqof, huwa tkellem mill-importanza tal-Hajja ikkonsagrata fil-hajja tad-Djoċesi. Huwa nnifsu ha l-inizjattiva biex tkellimna dwar l-Ordo Virginum, lil Dahlia, xebba kkonsagrata mill-Gordan u li qegħda impjegata fic-CAK. L-Arcisqof wera ix-xewqa li tkun haġa tajba li fid-Djoċesi jitwaqqaf dan l-Ordo Virginum li jikkonsisti f'xebbiet li jikkonsagraw lilhom infushom lil Alla bla ebda rbit ta' hajja religjuża.

Wara tkellem P. Paul Chetcuti, S.J. li bhala President tal-KSMR (Kunsill tal-Provinċjali) tana hafna dettalji dwar il-Kungress Nazzjonali tal-Hajja kkonsagrata, li se jsir bejn Marzu u April tas-sena 2008. Bhas-Sinodu Djoċesan, id-Dokument finali jrid ikun frott ta' diskussjonijiet fil-komunitajiet wara tlett sessjonijiet ta' konferenzi.

Jiltaqgħu l-Provinċjali Frangiskani

Nhar it-Tnejn, 12 ta' Novembru, mexxejt il-laqgħa ta' l-Aħwa Provinċjali Frangiskani fil-Monasteru tal-Klarissi. Tajna merbħa lil P. Samuel Chetcuti, OFMConv., bhala il-Ministru Provinċjal il-gdid ta' hutna l-Konventwali. Tkellimna dwar il-festa tal-qaddisin frangiskani li se niċcelebraw fic-CAK, il-Hamis, 29 ta' Novembru, fis-5.45 pm. Mons. Arcisqof aċċetta l-istedina li jingħaqad magħna. Il-lejla se tkun tikkonsisti f'mument ta' riflessjoni dwar ir-Regula, kelma mill-Arcisqof u tiġdid tal-wegħdiet. Bhala tifkira lill-Mons. Arcisqof, iddeċidejna li kull Provinċja toffri donazzjoni ta' LM100

b'risq id-Dar tal-Kleru. Fl-aħħar nispiċċaw f'bibita flimkien.

Tlett Ijiem Seminars Provinċjali minn Fr. Fabio Attard, SDB

Bhala thejjija għal Kapitlu Provinċjali 2008, bhala Provinċjal ħadt sehem fis-Seminar li kien imqassam fuq tlett ijiem fid-Dar ta' l-Irtiri, Porziuncola House, Bahar ic-Ċagħaq.

Mexxa Fr. Fabio Attard, u nista ngħid li kulhadd baqa' sodisfatt mill-mod kif mexxa. Tajjeb ukoll kien il-mument tat-talb permezz tal-power point. L-attendenza kienet tajba hafna. Il-ħsieb huwa biex minn dawn il-laqgħat tkun tista' titfassal l-aġenda tal-Kapitlu. Bhala *post mortem* tas-Seminar, Fr. Fabio ser jerga' jiltaqa' mad-Definitorju u l-Kummissjoni Thejjija Kapitlu, nhar l-Erbgħa, 12 ta' Dicembru, Porziuncola Retreat House, mill-5.00 p.m. 'il quddiem. Nirringrazzja lil dawk kollha li b'xi mod jew ieħor taw is-sehem tagħhom.

xi trid minni
Mulej?

Data: 7-9 Dicembru 2007
Post: Dar ta' l-Irtiri Porzjankola, Bahar ic-Ċagħaq
Età: minn 14-il sena l-fuq.

għal aktar informazzjoni
ikkuntattja lil
P. Joseph Magro OFM

Patrijiet Frangiskani
Triq San Pawl
Rabat RBT 1245
Malta

Tel: 21459640,
99438188

Irtir
Vokazzjonali

www.ofmvok.org :: vok@ofm.org.mt

Laqgħa ta' l-Assistenti Internazzjonali ta' l-Ordni Frangiskan Sekular

Mit-3 sat-8 ta' Diċembru 2007, ser tiġi organizzata laqgħa għall-erba' Assistenti Ġenerali ta' l-O.F.S.. f' Porziuncola Retreat House, Bahar iċ-Ċagħaq.

Għal din il-laqgħa ser jieħdu sehem Samy Iru-daya O.F.M. Cap. (President); Fr. Ivan Matic, O.F.M.; Fr. Martín Pablo Bitzer O.F.M. Conv. u Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, T.O.R.

L-għan ta' din il-laqgħa hu li jippjanaw l-attività tagħhom għas-sena d-diehla. Huma ser jil-taqgħu ukoll ma' l-assistenti spiritwali tal-fraternitajiet OFS ta' Malta, li ser issir l-Erbgħa, 5 ta' Diċembru 2007.



L-O.F.S. jiccelebra Santa Elizabetta fil-Knisja tagħna tar-Rabat.

Din is-sena, il-Kunsill Nazzjonali OFS organizza l-festa tal-patrona Santa Elizabetta, nhar il-Ġimgha, 16 ta' Novembru 2007 fil-knisja tagħna tar-Rabat.

Ikkonċelebraw it-tliet Ministri Provinċjali flimkien ma' P. Godfrey Zarb, OFM Cap., Direttur Nazzjonali u P. Godfrey Micallef, OFM. Mexxa P. Samuel Chetcuti, bħala l-Ministru Provinċjal il-ġdid ta' ħutna l-Konventwali. Fl-omelija huwa tkellem dwar l-attwalita' tal-hajja ta' Santa Elizabetta. Wara saret bibita fil-kunvent. Ħafna kienu dawk li ammiraw is-sbuhija arkitettonika tal-Kunvent.



Franciscan Medieval Chronicle Translated into English



Noel Muscat, OFM, is presenting the first ever English translation of The Chronicle of the 24 Ministers General of the Order of Friars Minor. The translation features the first part of this voluminous Chronicle, and is dedicated to the theme of the life of Saint Francis and his early companions.

The “Chronica XXIV Generalium Ordinis Fratrum Minorum” is a voluminous history of the Franciscan Order from the time of its foundation by Saint Francis to the Minister General Leonard di Giffoni (1373-1378). The year 1378 marked the beginning of the Great Schism (which lasted till 1417), when two popes were elected, Urban VI in Rome and Clement VII in Avignon.

The author of The Chronicle of the 24 Generals of the Order of Friars Minor is today considered to be brother Arnald of Sarrant. The Franciscan scholars of Quaracchi who edited this work in the third volume of “Analecta Franciscana”, say that he came from France and was a member of the Franciscan Province of Aquitaine, since he includes his own name in the list of Ministers of that Province. Arnald of Sarrant is also considered to be the author of the “De Cognatione S. Francisci” (The Kinship of St. Francis), which paved the way for the famous “De Conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Iesu” (Book of Conformities), published at the very end of the 14th century by Bartholomew of Pisa. In the Book of Conformities, brother Bartholomew of Pisa says that Arnald came from Sarrant, that he was Minister of his province for a long time (circa 1361-1383), and that he collected and wrote whatever information he found regarding Saint Francis. Luke Wadding explicitly indicates Arnald of Sarrant as the author of the Chronicle of the 24 Generals. For a complete text of the translation of this Chronicle, go to the Franciscan Studies section under the sub-heading “Franciscan Texts”, <http://www.ofm.org.mt>

VIŻTA KANONIKA

21 - 22 ta' Jannar: S. Marija ta' l-Angli

23 - 24 ta' Jannar: Porziuncola

25 - 29 ta' Jannar: Sliema

30 ta' Jannar - 3 ta' Frar: Hamrun

4 - 6 ta' Frar: Ghawdex

7 - 10 ta' Frar: Valletta

11 - 14 ta' Frar: Rabat

Ittri ta' apprezzament

Sebastian Camilleri, OFM irċieva diversi ittri ta' apprezzament għall-kiteb tiegħu *Aspects of Authentic Church Teaching*.

SEGRETERIJA TA' L-ISTAT TAL-VATIKAN

The Holy Father has received your letter together with a copy of your book and he has asked me to thank you. He appreciates your thoughtful gesture.

His Holiness will remember you in his prayers and he invokes upon you God's blessings of joy and peace.

Mons. Gabriele Caccia
Assesor

IL-PRIM MINISTRU TA' MALTA

Qiegħed nibgħatlek din in-nota qasira biex niringrazzjak għall-ittra li baġtli fil-21 ta' Meju 2007 u għal kopja tal-publikazzjoni tiegħek *Aspects of Authentic Church Teaching*.

Nieħu din l-opportunita' biex niringrazzjak ukoll għal ħidma impenjattiva tiegħek matul is-snin fost l-emigranti Maltin ġewwa l-Awstralja. Ahna lkoll għandna d-dmir li nirrikonoxxu dan is-sehem kbir li nies ta' vokazzjoni bħalhekk ikkontribwew tul is-snin.

Inselli għalik

Lawrence Gonzi
Prim Ministru

MGR. SYLVESTER MAGRO, OFM
Peace and Good.

Thank you sincerely for sending me your invaluable book *Aspects of Authentic Church Teaching* which I highly appreciate.

Today the People of God need too be nourished by the "truly authentic teaching of the Church". This is not only right, but also their aspiration. Your book is a good signpost in this direction.

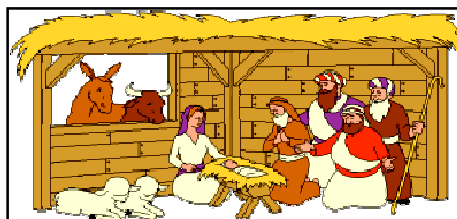
For decades we have been inundated by so much "enlightened teaching" which proved to be nothing more than the personal idea of the author very often in contrast or in direct opposition to the Magisterium.

Repeatedly the present incumbent of the Chair of Peter, Benedict XVI, insists upon the serious duty of those who write or teach, that they present the authentic Church doctrine.

Thank you once more.

May the Lord grant you his peace.

Fraternally yours in St. Francis
Mgr. Sylvester Magro, OFM,
Bishop of Benghazi



FESTA TAL-QADDISIN FRANĠISKANI 2007

Flimkien irriflettejna r-Regula permezz ta' *power point*, u kant franġiskan. Mons. Arċisqof qasam magħna dawn ir-riflessjonijiet dwar l-attwalita' tal-karisma franġiskana. Qalilna biex "*inkunu xhieda ta' vera hajja ta' ahwa f' dinja mahkuma minn tant firdiet. Fuq l-eżempji ta' Franġisku, naghmlu lil Kristu ċ-ċentru ta' hajjitna. Bhal Kristu nipriedkaw fil-qosor l-imhabba t'Alla u l-kruha tad-dnub. Mill-ekoloġija Franġiskana naslu għar-realta' ta' Alla, hallieq tal-holqien kollu*".

B'tifkira lill-Mons. Arċisqof, il-Provincji u l-Kongregazzjonijiet Franġiskani flimkien offrejna donazzjoni ta' LM700 b'risq id-dar tal-Kleru. Wara komplejna nieħdu xi haġa ta' l-okkażjoni u ngħidu kelma flimkien. Hija hasra li mill-Provincja tagħna konna biss tmax preżenti. Mhux ta min jitlifhom okkażżjonijiet bħal dawn, fejn nistgħu nisimghu dejjem kelma ta' ġid.

Jirraporta l-Ministru Provincjal, P. Pawl Galea, OFM



NEKROLOĠJU

2 ta' April 2007

PATRI NERIK CASSAR,

mill-Imsida. Wettaq il-ħidma pastorali tiegħu fil-kunventi Tas-Sliema, Rabat u l-Belt. Kien Mastru, konfessur u qeda b'impenn it-tqarbin tal-morda. Ta xhieda ta' ferħ ukoll fil-mumentu ta' mard li minnhom għadda. Miet fid-Dar tal-Kleru, Birkirkara. Età 83 sena, reliġjuż 68 sena, saċerdot 58 sena.

11 ta' Ottubru 2007

PATRI ĠUŻEPP BENEDITT XUEREB,

mill-Għarghur. Ministru Provinċjal (1985-1990), Definitur, Lettur Provinċjali, Gwardjan tal-kunventi tal-Belt u tar-Rabat, Kappillan tal-Parroċċa tas-Sacro Cuor f'Tas-Sliema, Surmast ta' l-istudenti. Qeda lill-Ordni bħala President tal-Kulleġġ Internazzjonali ta' San Bonaventura fi Grottaferrata, u Segretarju tal-Pontificio Ateneo Antonianum. Kien Assistant Nazzjonali ta' l-Ordni Frangiskan Sekular. Traduttur ta' diversi fonti tal-Hajja ta' San Frangisk, Santa Klara u Sant' Antnin. Miet fid-Dar tal-Kleru, Birkirkara. Età 72 sena, reliġjuż 55 sena, saċerdot 47 sena.

21 ta' Awissu 2005

PATRI VINĈENS GALEA,

mill-Belt. Wettaq diversi ħidmiet fil-Provinċja. Kien Definitur, Gwardjan, Għalliem, Surmast

ta' l-Istudenti u mfittex għad-direzzjoni spiritwali. Hadem ħafna fill-Parroċċa tagħna f'tas-Sliema fejn ha ħsieb ukoll il-bini taċ-Ċentru Parrokkjali Sant'Antnin. Miet fl-isptar San Luqa. Età 72 sena, reliġjuż 64 sena, saċerdot 56 sena.



Indrizz ġdid ta' John Muscat, OFM: Provincial House, San Pedro Battista, Quezon City, Filippini.

Tifkira Solenni ta' hutna li telqu qabilna

Nhar is-Sibt, 24 ta' Novembru ċelebrajna flimkien it-tifkira ta' l-aħwa tal-provinċja li daħlu jistrieħu fis-sliem ta' dejjem.

Diversi patrijiet ħadu sehem fil-quddiesa konċelebrata li saret fil-kappella tal-provinċja li tinsab fiċ-ċimiterju ta' Marija Addolorata u li tmexxiet mill-Ministru Provinċjal Paul Galea, OFM.

F'kelmtejn li għamel, huwa radd il-ħajr 'l Alla għad-don ta' l-aħwa li għexu l-vokazzjoni frangiskana sa' l-aħħar u li għandhom jibqgħu dejjem ta' kuragg għalina biex aħna wkoll ngħixu bil-fedelta' kollha, is-sejħa frangiskana li aċċettajna.





FRATERNITAS

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And the Word was made Flesh

Let us rejoice and be glad, Brothers. I wish you a Happy Christmas and may the blessing of our Seraphic Father accompany you always.

BR. JOSÉ RODRÍGUEZ CARBALLO, OFM

MINISTER GENERAL

Blessed John Duns Scotus on the VII Centenary of his death

The celebration of the VII Centenary of the death of Blessed John Duns Scotus (1308-2008) was initiated at the PUA (Rome) with a solemn academic act on the 8th November. The centenary will be commemorated throughout the world with a series of cultural events, thanks to which it will be possible to deepen our knowledge of the figure, sanctity and doctrine of the man. It is hoped that our University may be able to organise, among other initiatives, a "Congress of review" on our Subtle and Marian Doctor or – as John Paul II liked to call him – the Doctor of the Immaculate (Discourse to the Scotus Commission, 16th Feb. 2002, *AOFM* 2002).

(From the discourse of the Minister General, Great Chancellor of the PUA)

Khartoum (Sudan) – The Fraternity of St. Francis of Assisi

The new OFM Fraternity was officially presented to the Diocese of Khartoum by Card. Gabriel Zubeir Wako during the closing Eucharist of the II Diocesan Synod on the 10th October 2007.

The members of the "St. Francis of Assisi" Fraternity – Br. John Lemi and Br. Peter Tindo (Sudan); Br. Leopoldo Mičić, Croatia; and Br. Melito Pinili, Philippines – had reached the Sudan in the month of July, guests of the Major Seminary of "St. Paul" in Khartoum at first and then, from the 1st of August, of the Diocesan Centre for Catechesis in Kobar.

The beginning of the new Fraternity was marked by two important events: the meeting with the Archbishop of Khartoum and the "Life Project of the Fraternity". In addition to being very welcoming and generous to the Friars in the Sudan, Card. Wako showed them the priorities of his Diocese and invited them to live and follow them. With the help of the General Definitor, Br. Amaral, the Fraternity, which is described as a Contemplative-Fraternity-in-mission, drew up an essential programme for living as Friars Minor and for acting as such in the new context into which obedience has placed it.

Libya – Visit of the Minister General

The two Apostolic Vicariates of Tripoli and Benghazi had a visit from the Minister General, accompanied by the Moderator General for the missions, Br. Vincenzo Brocanelli. It was an event of "historical" importance as the last Minister General to visit Tripoli was Br. Leonardo M. Bello, in 1936, and no Minister General had ever been to Benghazi.

The Minister General, during the first day, visited the Vicariate of Benghazi, which, in February 2006, was attacked and sacked by a group from a movement of violent anti-establishment activity. The Bishop, Msgr. Silvestro Magro, OFM, was able to show the Minister General the restoration, thanks to foreign help, of the Church and House of the Vicariate which was completely burned out. The Minister General met the four Friars who work in the Vicariate and who come from the Provinces of the Philippines, Egypt and Poland, and later in the evening, the community of Sisters who

work in hospitals. The visit to the Apostolic Vicariate of Tripoli took place the next day. Here the Bishop, Msgr. Giovanni Martinelli, OFM, and his Vicar General, live in the same House as the Friars, who come from the Provinces of the Philippines, Egypt and India.

The Minister General met the Friars to listen to them and to know their fraternal and missionary life, and to reflect together with them on their future and then, in the afternoon, there was a meeting with all the ecclesiastical personnel of the Vicariate and with the Sisters who work in Tripoli.

The visit concluded with a solemn concelebration which saw an important participation of faithful, among whom were noted the Ambassadors of Spain, Italy and Argentina, groups of Focolarini and many religious.

The visit of the Minister General reinforced the links with the two Apostolic Vicariates, which were entrusted to the care of the Order of Friars Minor by the Holy See. At the moment, the Church in Libya is made up exclusively of foreign faithful, present in the country because of work or study, and is animated entirely by Friars Minor in the person of the Bishops and priests who work there.

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary and Thuringia

The first year of the VIII Centenary of the birth of the Holy Patroness of the Secular Franciscan Order and Third Order Regular (1207-2007) concluded with a solemn Eucharist presided by Msgr. Domenico Sorrentino, Bishop of Assisi-Nocera Umbria-Gualdo Tadino on the 17th November. The Franciscan Ministers General concelebrated with him. The National Council and the CIOFS, which had concluded a week of work under the guidance of the Minister General, Encarnaciòn del Pozo, in Assisi in those days, were also present at the celebration.

Great work was done during this first year of the VIII Centenary to bring about a recognition of the spirituality of St. Elizabeth. A very interesting exhibition entitled "Elizabeth of Thuringia – a European saint" was prepared in the castle of Wartburg in Thuringia (Germany), where St. Elizabeth lived. A catalogue of 624 pages and a book of 624 pages with the Acts of the presentations by various experts was also prepared.

See: www.elisabeth-wartburg.de.

A very beautiful and instructive game for knowing the life of the Saint can be found on the following page: <http://www.ekkw.de/elisabethjahr/spiel> (The game – Spiel - is in German only).

The House of the General Curia is 60 years old

On the 29th of November 1947, after almost 5 and a half years of work, which began on the 31st May 1942 with the blessing of the foundation stone by the Minister General, Br. Leonardo M. Bello, His Eminence Card. Clemente Micara, Protector of the Order, solemnly inaugurated the new Curia of Via Santa Maria Mediatrice on Gelsomino hill in the presence of the Minister General, Br. Pacifico M. Perantoni, and surrounded by the General Superiors of the Franciscan Family and of other Religious Institutes, by all the Ministers Provincial of Italy, by the Teachers and Students of the Antonianum, by the workforce, artists and other numerous workers who, during the difficult war period, had worked tirelessly to build this imposing structure. The first "Curial" Friars from the Via Merulana transferred to the new quarters of the General Curia on the same day in order to continue their work in the service of the entire Order.

Spain – New Faculty of Fundamental Theology

The new Faculty of Fundamental Theology in Murcia, affiliated to the University Antonianum in Rome, was inaugurated on the 23rd of October. The Minister General gave the inaugural address of the academic year under the title of *The Faculty of Fundamental Theology at the service of the Church and society*. The Eucharist was presided by the Cardinal Archbishop of Seville, Br. Carlos Amigo Vallejo, and

concelebrated by Cardinal Br. Claudio Hummes, various Bishops and numerous priests, among them the Ministers Provincial of Spain. Numerous civil and academic personalities of the city also attended. The new Faculty is supported by a Foundation which depends on the Conference of Ministers Provincial in Spain. See: <http://www.itmfranciscano.org/>

Rome – Meeting with the Franciscan Religious of the Active Life at Aracoeli

A meeting between the feminine Franciscan Religious Institutes linked to the Order of Friars Minor and the Minister General OFM, under the aegis of the General Curia of the Friars Minor, the Roman Province of Sts. Peter and Paul of the Friars Minor and of the 'Centro Culturale Aracoeli', in preparation for the Centenary of the foundation of the Order of Friars Minor, was held on the 3rd of November 2007.

A solemn Eucharist presided by the Minister General was celebrated in the Basilica of St. Mary in Aracoeli at 17.00, following a conference given by Prof. Giuseppe Buffon OFM, entitled *Feminine Franciscan Congregations in the XIX century: history and challenges*. An intervention by Br. Marino Porcelli ofm, Minister Provincial of the Friars Minor of Lazio, which appealed for practical collaboration with all Feminine Franciscan Institutes which had their origins in the Basilica of Aracoeli, brought the meeting, in which 300 Sisters from about 60 different Institutes participated, to a close. At the moment there are 394 feminine Institutes affiliated to our Order with about 110,000 members and 9,500 Houses in 36 countries.

Spain – I Congress of Franciscan Educators

The I European Congress of Franciscan Educators, coordinated by Br. Joaquín A. Echeverry, Animator General of Educational Pastoral Activity, by the directors of Spanish Franciscan Colleges and by Br. Antonio Herrera C. of the Betica Province, President of the Organising Committee, was held in Cordoba (Spain) from the 1st to the 3rd of November. 440 people, between franciscan religious and teachers from our colleges, were present. Representatives of 32 out of the 46 franciscan educational centres in Europe participated. Religious and teachers of other Spanish Franciscan Congregations and some representatives from Latin America also participated.

The Minister General, the Cardinal of Seville, Br. Carlos Amigo Vallejo, the Bishop of Cordoba, Don Juan Antonio Asenjo, and a representative of the Municipal Government of Cordoba presided over the opening ceremony. Also present were: the General Definitors Br. Miguel Vallecillo, Br. Luis Cabrera and Br. Jacab Várnai, the Secretary General for Evangelisation, Br. Néstor Schwerz, the President of the Spanish-Portuguese Conference, Br. José María Arregi, the Rector of the University Antonianum (Rome), Br. Johannes B. Freyer and the Provincials of Seville, Granada, Valencia and Murcia.

In his inaugural address, the Minister General spoke about "franciscan pedagogy". The Minister General presided at the Eucharist on the 2nd of November.

The members of the Congress, in addition to reflecting on the challenges which education in a Catholic and franciscan key presents in Europe today, got to know the beautiful city of Cordoba, part of the patrimony of humanity.

See: <http://congresoeducadoresfranciscanos.org/>

Croatia – Fraternal Visitation and National Elective Chapter of the SFO

The Minister General of the SFO, Encarnación del Pozo, and the Assistant General to the SFO, Br. Ivan Matić, OFM, visited the National Fraternity of the SFO in Croatia, met with the Ministers Provincial, the Auxiliary Bishop of Zagreb, Msgr. Valentin Pozaić, and the members of the National Assembly of the Croatian You.Fra from 5th to 8th October 2007.

They also participated in the National Elective Chapter. The National Minister, Mato Batorović, and his Council were elected in the afternoon of the 6th October. Antica-Nada Čepulić was re-elected as International Councillor.

The National Fraternity of the SFO in Croatia is made up of 5 Regional Fraternities, with about 4,200 professed members and 106 local Fraternities. The National Fraternity of You.Fra has 5 Regional Fraternities with about 2,000 members.

First Address-book of Educational Centres of the OFM

There are 104 Provinces, 6 Autonomous Custodies, 12 Dependent Custodies, 1 Federation and 20 Foundations, 4 of which depend on the Minister General, in the Order. 65 of these Entities have educational centres in 47 countries. The American Continent is where most of the Centres are found, followed by Europe, then Asia and Africa.

The number of Educational Centres in the Order is: 791 between Universities, Faculties, Colleges, Schools and Non-Formal Educational Centres, including the Schools of Christ in Bolivia, the pre-schools in Japan and the various primary schools in some African countries. 7% of all the Friars of the Order work in the field of Educational Evangelisation, which is the third largest area of evangelisation, after parishes and sanctuaries. ([PDF](#))

Spain – Fraternal Visitation and Assembly of the National Council SFO

Benedetto Lino, Counsellor to the Presidency CIOFS and Br. Ivan Matić OFM, Assistant General to the SFO, participated in the Assembly of the National Council of the Spanish SFO, held in Madrid from the 25th to 29th of October 2007.

The Assembly had a period of formation with reflections on the nature and identity of the SFO, on the profession of the Secular Franciscans (Benedetto) and on the active presence of the SFO in the Church and society (Br. Ivan). After a fraternal dialogue there were reports from the Regional Fraternities and from the National Executive Council. While the Assembly continued its work, Benedetto and Br. Ivan made themselves available to some Brothers and Sisters who had shown a desire to speak with them personally.

The National Fraternity of Spain has about 4,150 professed members in 243 local and 17 Regional Fraternities.

The Sixtieth Anniversary of the PAMI

The sixtieth anniversary of the foundation of the International Pontifical Marian Academy, with its headquarters in the International College of St. Anthony (Rome), was celebrated in the Pontifical University Antonianum on the 10th November. The PAMI was founded in 1947 and its first President was Br. Karlo Balić. Br. Pavao Melada, Br. Gaspar Calvo, and the present President Br. Vincenzo Battaglia, followed him in the presidency. Present were: Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Minister General OFM and other authorities, among them, Msgr. Slawomir Order, Postulator for the cause of beatification of the Servant of God John Paul II. A book which the PAMI dedicated to the memory of John Paul II was presented during the academic act. A Eucharist, presided by the Minister General OFM, was concelebrated in the Basilica of St. Anthony after the academic event.

Franciscan Bookmark

The Salimbene Chronicle of Adam da Parma, Latin text prepared by Giuseppe Scalia, translation by Berardo Rossi, OFM. MUP Editore, www.mupeditore.it/; pp. 1970.

For the first time, the integral and complete edition of the *Chronicle*, with text in Latin and a translation in Italian opposite, is available to all readers.

The Salimbene Chronicle of Adam (1221-1288), better known as the Salimbene of Parma, stands out among all the medieval testimonies because of its fascinating mixture of history, in the broadest sense of the word, of reports on the daily quarrels between the towns of the Padana plain, of comment on and defence of the intrigues

and malicious gossip against the Order of Friars Minor, in which Salimbene had made his vows against the will of his father.

Big/small news

* **Br. Aleksa Benigar:** The centenary of the entrance of the Servant of God Br. Aleksa Benigar (1893-1988) into the Order of Friars Minor was celebrated on 7th September last. He was received into the Croatian Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, in Zagreb, on the 7th September 1907.

In the context of this happy occasion, it was decided to transfer the mortal remains of the Servant of God from the public cemetery of Zagreb, where he was buried on the 7th November 1988, to the crypt of the church of St. Francis – Kaptol in Zagreb.

Having obtained the necessary permissions from the civil and diocesan authorities, as well as that of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, the rite of the recognition of the mortal remains of the Servant of God and of the solemn transfer was held on the 28th September 2007 in the presence of many Friars and numerous devotees of Br. Aleksa. A sculpture representing the Servant of God, by Fr. Bonaventure Duda, was placed at the entrance to the crypt. Many faithful now go to the tomb to pray and confidently request his intercession before the Lord.

* **Centenary of the birth of the Ven. P. Allegra:** It is one hundred years since the birth of the Venerable Servant of God Br. Gabriele M. Allegra, a professed priest of the Order of Friars Minor (the Sicilian Province of the Most Holy Name of Jesus), born in San Giovanni la Punta (Catania) on the 26th December 1907 and died in Hong Kong (China) on the 26th January 1976. The regular Causa for the beatification and canonisation of this distinguished apostle of the Word and ardent witness to the charity of Christ was begun in 1984 and happily achieved the recognition of the heroic virtue of the Servant of God in 1994 and of a miracle attributed to his intercession in 2002. Let us trust that the mutual relations between the Holy See and China may favour the celebration of the rite of beatification of this man, truly enamoured with China and its noble cultural traditions.

* **A new source for knowing St. Francis:** The study seminar *Palaeography, philology and history at the service of Thomas of Celano: the Umbrian Legend*, held in the Higher School of Medieval and Franciscan Studies of the Pontifical University Antonianum in Rome on the 26th October, confirmed the existence of a new source for knowing St. Francis, that is, *The Umbrian Legend*, thanks especially to the discourses of Attilio Bartoli Langeli, Carlo Paolazzi and Giulia Barone. Note having been taken of the validity of the edition offered by J. DALARUN, *Vers une résolution de la question franciscaine. La Légende ombrienne de Thomas de Celano*, Fayard, Paris 2007, which is attributed to Thomas of Celano, and seeing its importance for understanding better the entire hagiographic dossier concerning St. Francis, it is now hoped that it will be accepted into the different translations of the Franciscan Sources (the chronicle of the seminar will be inserted at www.antonianum.eu)

* **Gathering of Visitators General in Rome:** The annual meeting of the Minister and Definitory General with the Visitators General of the Order was held in the General Curia from the 12th to the 16th of November. 16 Visitators participated in the five-day meeting.

* **The Vatican Post-office issued a stamp to commemorate the VIII Centenary of the Patroness of the SFO and TOR:** The Vatican City Post-Office has issued a stamp showing a stain-glassed window of the magnificent Gothic church of St. Elizabeth in Marburg (Germany), built in 1235.

Agenda of the Minister General

01-07 December: Visit to the Province of the Word Incarnate (Togo) and the Province of Our Lady Queen of Peace (South-Africa).

12-15 December: Visit to the Franciscan Federation of Morocco.

17-21 December: Tempo forte of the General Definitory (Rome).



FESTI U BIRTHDAYS

DIĊEMBRU

10 Fra Lorrie Zerafa	1 Fra Alfred Sciberras
25 Fra Noel Muscat	3 Fra Noel Muscat
26 Fra Stephen Sciberras	4 Fra Marcellino Micallef
26 Fra Stephen Magro	11 Fra Ġwann Micallef
27 Fra Ġwann Schranz	17 Fra Charles Tonna
31 Mons. Sylvester Magro	17 Fra Ray Scicluna
	19 Fra Godfrey Micallef
	29 Fra Pietru Pawl Meilak
	31 Fra Sebastian Camilleri

JANNAR

7 Fra Karlu Tonna	7 Fra Kerubin Galea
8 Fra Arturu Azzopardi	8 Fra Adrian J. Cachia
16 Fra Marcello Ghirlando	Fra Mark Ciantar
20 Fra Sebastian Camilleri	9 Fra Charles Grech
27 Fra Julian Sammut	15 Fra Kamillu Aquilina
	31 Fra Sandro Overend

Awguri u Xewqat Sbieh!



F' DIN IL-HARĠA

Novembru 2007

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L-AĦBAR

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