

# VOX FRANCISCANA

*Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis*



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**YouFra**  
AT WORLD  
YOUTH DAY



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## Celebrating the Rule

*Secular Franciscans and friars from several countries gathered at the Seraphicum in Rome for a CIOFS-sponsored celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Rule. PAGES 9-11. Photos by Robert Stronach.*



## X Latin America Congress

*Secular Franciscans, Franciscan youth, and spiritual assistants converged on Guatemala in January for the X Latin America Congress. Here a wall-mounted congress emblem welcomed participants. PAGE 14-15. Photo by Silvia Diana/Ana Maria Raffo.*



*OFS ACTION  
AROUND GLOBE  
CHAPTERS  
AND MORE*  
Pages 20-23

*'WELL4AFRICA'  
FRESH WATER  
PROJECTS*  
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## COVER

Presidency  
Councilor Ana  
Fruk, OFS, and  
Franciscan Youth  
Coordinator Andrea  
Odak Karlović, OFS,  
mirror the youthful  
exuberance at  
World Youth Day  
in Panama.  
*INSET:* YouFra  
leaders join  
Minister General  
Tibor Kauser, OFS,  
posing among the  
large letters of the  
Panama sign.  
Pages 12-13



**The CIOFS Presidency meets in the home town of St. Padre Pio**

# CIOFS: a meeting and a pilgrimage

*Story and photos by ROBERT STRONACH, OFS*

The spring meeting of the CIOFS Presidency became a pilgrimage. Members gathered in Rome at the Seraphicum (Pontifical University of St. Bonaventure) and boarded a bus to head 180 miles east through the Apennine Mountains to San Giovanni Rotondo in Puglia (province of Foggia and region of Apulia), not far from the Adriatic Sea.

As usual, they conducted the business of the order – reporting on visits to national fraternities, planning for the 2020 General

Chapter, and getting updates from the formation, finance, juridical, JPIC and communications commissions. They also were immersed in the spiritual impact of St. Padre Pio.

In fact, one could not escape the Capuchin saint's influence. His image and likeness were everywhere: on the facades of buildings, on billboards, and in stores and restaurants and hotels.

A life-size statue of Padre Pio greeted Presidency members upon arrival at Hotel Pace, which had sectioned off a portion of its

dining room for the week-long, roundtable meeting. (The Presidency brought its own wireless headphones and transmitters for interpreters and members to use to communicate in English, Italian and Spanish).

Maria Pia Vinelli, whose family operates the hotel, recounted how her parents, Irma and Giuseppe Vinelli, had been caretakers for a house on the land for a family from Rome. Padre Pio was her mother's confessor, and after he encouraged her to find a way to provide lodging for

pilgrims, the couple found themselves with some funds from an inheritance, bought the property and built the hotel. Padre Pio said to call it "Pace," Maria Pia noted.

Stories like that abound in the town where the saint ministered and is now entombed. It is a site of spiritual nourishment, but it is also a place where lodging, restaurant and tourist businesses sprang up to welcome an estimated seven million visitors each year.

*Continued on page 5.*

# CIOFS Presidency



**CIOFS Presidency councilors reported on visits to National Fraternities, Emerging Fraternities and the Latin American Congress.**  
 FROM LEFT: ANA FRUK, OFS; AUGUSTINE YOON, OFS; ANA MARIA RAFFO LAOS, OFS; SYLVIA DIANA, OFS; MICHEL JANIAN, OFS; JENNY HARRINGTON, OFS.



**JPIC Commission reported on progress of drilling water wells in Africa, and presented a showing of "The Saint and the Sultan" movie for Presidency members.**

LEFT: ATTILIO GALIMBERTI, OFS, COUNCILOR AND JPIC CHAIR.

RIGHT: Tibor Kauser, OFS, minister general, and Maria Consuelo de Nuñez, OFS, vice minister general, led discussions on the 2020 General Chapter.



**Presidency members on the Africa Project Team huddled to discuss plans for another formation workshop. Having conducted workshops in English and French, this third one would be aimed at Portuguese-speaking countries on the continent.** CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Jenny Harrington; Michel Janian; Pedro Zitha, OFM, and Silvia Diana.



**Franciscan Youth Councilor Andrea Odak Karlović, OFS, reported on the international YouFra gathering at World Youth Day in Panama, and on hopes for another OFS-YouFra European Congress, this time in Spain, and for a 3rd International YouFra Assembly in Mexico.**

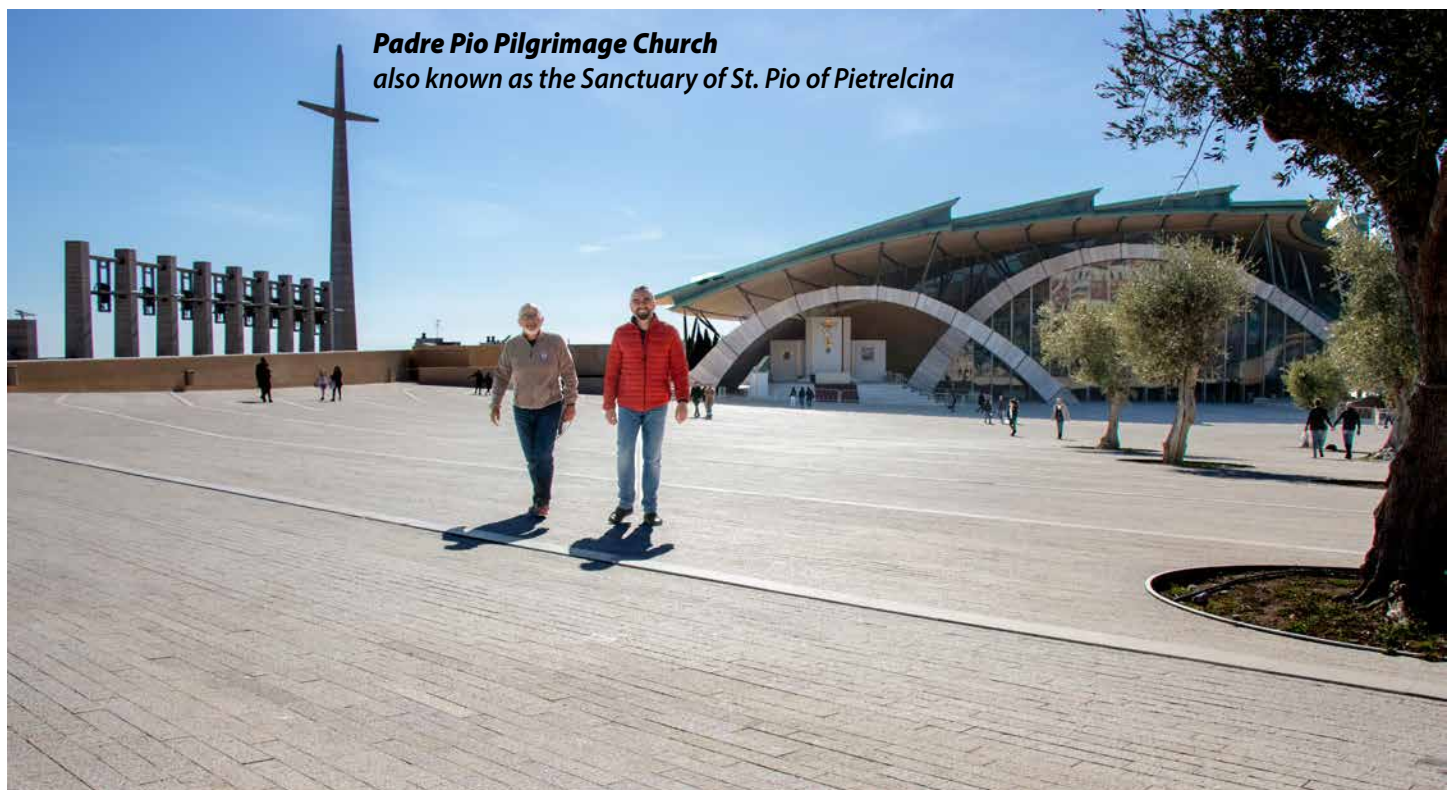


**Statue of Padre Pio inside the Pilgrimage Church.**

A short walk up the street (Viale Cappuccini) from the hotel is the Santa Maria delle Grazie Church, and just beyond to the

left is the newer Padre Pio Pilgrimage Church. A vast sloping plaza draws visitors to the newer structure, with its impressive curves, elongated arches and wall

of glass. It can seat 6,500 for indoor services, with the plaza capable of holding 30,000 people facing the church's outdoor altar. *Continued on next page.*



# CIOFS Presidency

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During the Presidency meeting (March 16-23), the body of Padre Pio was on display in the crypt under the older church. His body rested at eye level, encased in glass, in the center of the room. Visitors could kneel, pray and meditate on all four sides of the tomb. The four general spiritual assistants assigned to CIOFS were able to concelebrate early morning mass right next to the tomb, with Presidency members participating along with some religious sisters, friars and lay people.

One evening Presidency members took a stroll in the other direction, down the street from the hotel, then down a flight of stairs to a lower street to the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, home to San Giovanni Rotondo OFS and YouFra fraternities. The fraternities, along with Puglia OFS Regional Council, national OFS representatives and Puglia Regional Commission for Franciscan Children, welcomed their CIOFS brothers and sisters to an evening of joyful bonding. It began with handshakes, hugs and welcome speeches. Next was a spiritual lecture in the church by university professor Michele Illiceto, followed by pizza, pastries, wine and soda in the parish center. It began with handshakes, hugs and welcome speeches. Next was a spiritual lecture in the church by a university professor, followed by pizza, pastries, wine and soda in the parish center. OFS and YouFra members and friars shared stories, were prone to burst out in laughter, and repeatedly posed for photographs with one another.

*Continued on next page.*



**Body of Padre Pio in the crypt of Santa Maria delle Grazie Church.**

**BELOW: General Spiritual Assistants concelebrate Mass near the tomb of Padre Pio. FROM LEFT: Fr. Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR, Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, Fr. Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv, and Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap.**



**ABOVE AND BELOW: OFS members of Puglia and San Giovanni Rotondo welcome the CIOFS Presidency at St. Francis of Assisi Church in San Giovanni Rotondo.**



# CIOFS Presidency

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The CIOFS Presidency conducted business from morning to night. The day began early with morning prayer and Mass, and ended with evening prayer. During a break, the members were blessed by a visit to Monte Sant' Angelo, which houses the underground Sanctuary of St. Michael the Archangel, and to the tomb of former Minister General Emmanuela de Nunzio, OFS, in Rodi Garganico.

The sanctuary is one of seven related to Archangel Michael that form a straight line from Ireland to Israel. This "sacred line" is often referred to as Michael's sword.

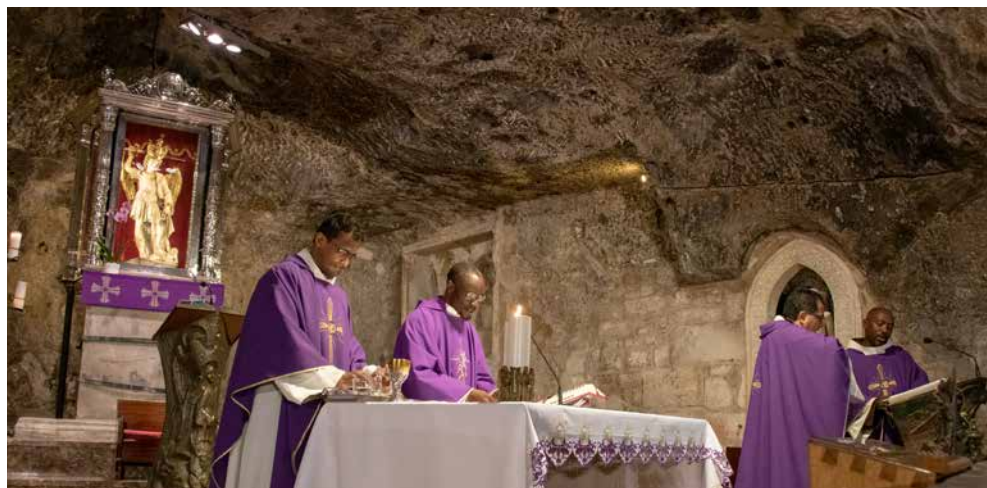
The general spiritual assistants concelebrated Mass in the sanctuary, built inside a grotto or cave.

Several Presidency members who had met Emmanuela were particularly inspired to visit her resting place in a mausoleum. She was the second minister general of the reorganized worldwide Secular Franciscan Order. Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, recalled meeting her for the first time at the newly organized National Hungarian Fraternity in the early 1990s, and then working with her on the Juridical Commission during the administration of Encarnación del Pozo Martínez, OFS. "I learned a lot from her," he said, noting that Emmanuela had been a lawyer who worked tirelessly for unification of the order.

*Continued on next page.*



*Entrance (above) to the underground Sanctuary of Michael the Archangel (above right & below).*



**Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, at Emmanuela de Nunzio's mausoleum.**

# CIOFS Presidency

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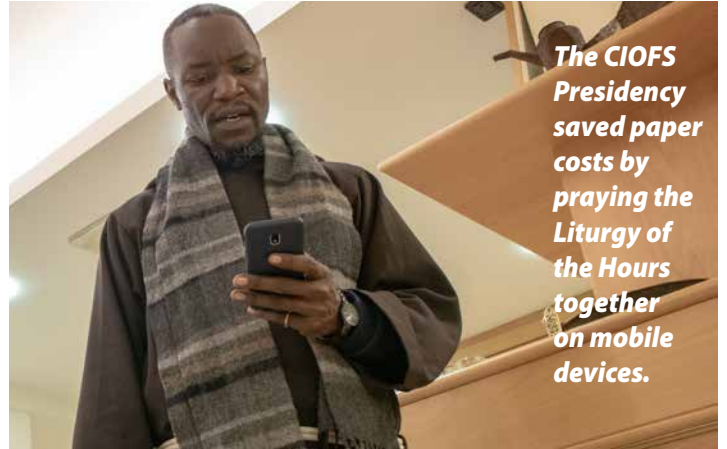
Members of the CIOFS Presidency were looking down at their cell phones and mobile devices during prayers and Mass. They were not being distracted. In fact, they were attentive to the spiritual moment. It was a sign of the digital age – of going paperless (thus helping the environment and saving money from printing).

The liturgy of the hours and the prayers and readings of the Mass were put in e-book form and downloaded to their devices. Even some of the friars were using their devices to concelebrate Mass.

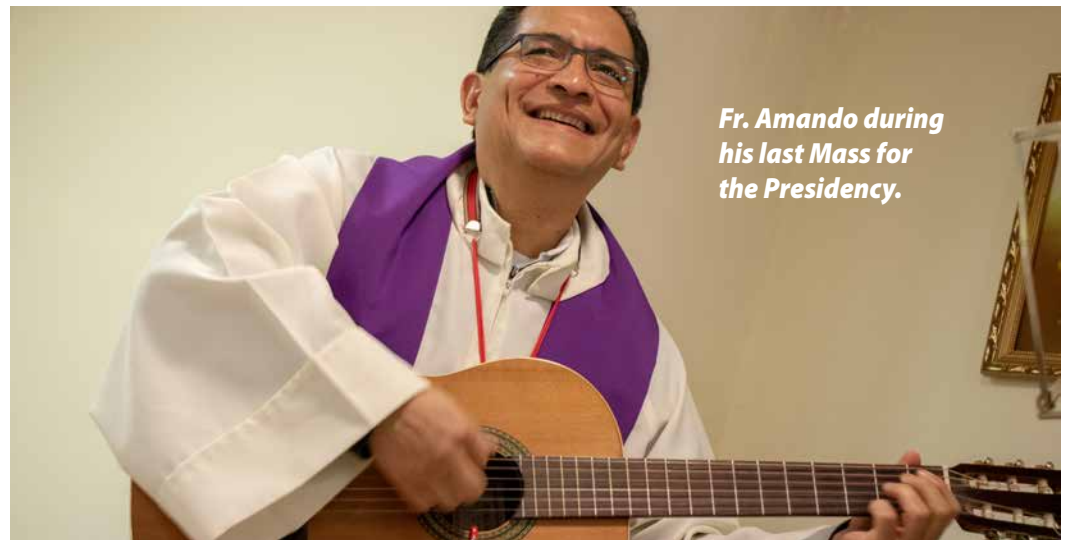
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On the final day in San Giovanni Rotondo, Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, celebrated his last Mass as a member of the Conference of General Assistants, having served 12 years with the Presidency. It was an emotional liturgy. Even though he was the celebrant, he was compelled to pick up his guitar and sing along with the Presidency members. In fact, his face lit up with tearful joy as the members performed a special rendition of a song he had written (“Isabel, Enséñanos a Amar”).

Fr. Amando’s parting sermon focused on “one of the



**The CIOFS Presidency saved paper costs by praying the Liturgy of the Hours together on mobile devices.**



**Fr. Amando during his last Mass for the Presidency.**

most beautiful passages in the Bible” -- the Prodigal Son’s return. The son told his father that he did not deserve to be called his son... but, just like

God’s generosity of love, the father welcomed him back. “Each one of us is the prodigal son without merit before God...but it is important to go back to God.”

He closed with the words of Pope Francis: “There is no saint without a past and no sinner without a future.”

...

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# CIOFS Presidency: **celebrating the Rule**

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The spring meeting culminated in a return trip to Rome to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the OFS Rule with Mass and a series of lectures at the Seraphicum.

The celebration attracted dignitaries and friars and Secular Franciscans from several countries. Among them was **Cardinal João Braz de Aviz**, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. He presided at Mass, along with the secretary of the congregation, **Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM**. Referring to the 40th Anniversary, Aviz reminded the OFS present that this moment is meant to



build our relationship with God. "Feel this love of God and serve this love with your life," he said.

Also participating was papal household preacher **Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap.**, who joined several Secular Franciscan presenters for the lecture series. (His topic was: The living memory of Francis-

can preaching and our role as penitents.)

The lectures highlighted the history and aspects of the Rule. The other speakers were former Minister General **Encarnación del Pozo Martínez, OFS** (who spoke of how the rule is arranged and the present challenges) and former Presidency Councilors

**Benedetto Lino, OFS**, (the history of the rule) and **Michèle Altmeyer, OFS** (spiritual elements of the rule).

But before the standing-room-only crowd could exit the chapel and head to the lecture hall, Cardinal Aviz praised the youth choir, Schola Cantorum Diocesana Corodia (who also had performed at the 2017 General Chapter), and then invited Secular Franciscans to join him in the sanctuary for a photo op.

Joining the cardinal and archbishop on the altar during mass were Deacon Giancarlo Carletti, OFS, and General Spiritual Assistant Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR.

*Photo op with Cardinal João Braz de Aviz during the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Rule.*



# Celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Rule



*A crowd of Secular Franciscans and friars from several countries converged on the Seraphicum on March 24 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Rule. At right is Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS.*

“

We must remember that 40 years ago we received a gift – not only a text, but a confirmation of being part of a family, an organic union and a way of life: a life that is lived in fraternity, a reciprocal life with the members of the Order and the Franciscan Family...Every celebration has its fruits. If a celebration doesn't bring fruits, it is not a true celebration. One fruit is the growth of our gratitude toward God. We must always be mindful that all good comes from God and we must thank God. If gratitude does not grow in our hearts, we have not understood that God is the source of all goodness. ”

*Tibor Kauser, OFS, Minister General*

# Celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Rule



Secular Franciscans are the vast majority of Franciscans. They live immersed in the things of the world, and without their contribution, it is not possible to convert and restore the world to Christ, in its most intimate and vital ways. The laity and seculars are therefore essential. For this reason, the First, Second and Third Orders of St. Francis must rediscover the meaning of the common mission, each coordinating with the other two Franciscan Orders. It is an essential mission in God's plan for Franciscans.

*Benedetto Lino, OFS*



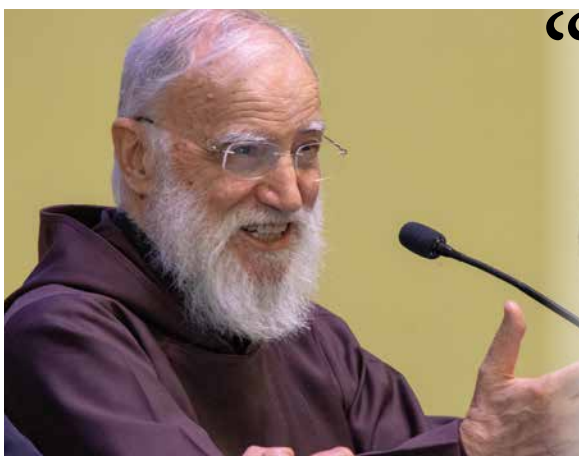
I firmly believe that, based on the experience of these first 40 years, the future of formation in the Order must be oriented towards being. By only doing, without being, the Order will not mature, and gradually regress to a simple and tired routine.

*Encarnación del Pozo, OFS*



All this, that is written in the Rule we professed, is a demanding journey, a response to the crucified love of Jesus. We cannot stop only at an intellectual adherence to the contents of the Rule, we must move on to its concrete implementation. From the Gospel, it means from Christ, to life, and from life to the Gospel. Here the authenticity of our vocation and our commitment is played out.

*Michèle Altmeyer, OFS*



What does the famous word metanoia mean? What is true repentance and true contrition? Literally, the word means a change of thought, of the way of seeing and judging things, a mental revolution. But it is not a question of abandoning a previous way of thinking ... to form a somewhat more spiritual and evangelical one. True metanoia is abandoning one's way of thinking and marrying our way of thinking to that of God -- seeing oneself and one's life as God sees them.

*Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap.*

# YouFra at World Youth Day

## 120 Franciscan Youth gather in Panama



by JUAN ANTONIO FIGUEROA MARRUFO, *YouFra Mexico*

The YouFra International Gathering took place on January 17-21, 2019, the days prior to World Youth Day in Panama. The motto for the gathering was, “We are brothers and sisters following the Teacher, as Mary did.” (cf. Mt 23:8).

This fraternal gathering consisted of 120 brothers and sisters from around the world. They came from Vietnam, Europe, North America, as well as from Latin America. We shared moments of prayer, formation, spirituality, reflection, fellowship and, of course, the Holy Eucharist. The

Eucharistic presiders were the Panama Archbishop José Domingo Ulloa, and the general spiritual assistants for the Secular Franciscan Order.

During the formation moments, various topics were presented. Andrea Karlović, OFS, YouFra international coordinator, gave a talk entitled, “Seventy Years of Commitment to the Kingdom of God,” the journey made by Franciscan youth throughout the years. For another topic we formed work groups and elaborated on the talk given by Judith del Rocio

Vidales, OFS, international counselor for YouFra Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, entitled “Inspired in St. Francis and with Him, We Are Called to Rebuild the Church.” The main presentation was by Tibor Kauser, minister general of the OFS. Tibor reflected on the “Seven Moments of Mary’s Life Found in Sacred Scripture” -- which provided seven principles to guide our lives as Christians and Franciscans.

During roundtable discussions, we learned about different experiences of

YouFra around the world. During one led by Félix Chocojay, OFS, of Guatemala, we discussed the use of social networks to spread the Good News. Francisco Loaiza, OFS, of Costa Rica described how they built a good relationship with the OFS. And all the way from Vietnam, Jerome Nguyen elaborated on how his fraternity faces the challenges they encounter while fulfilling their Franciscan vocation in the Church and in the world.

The Feast of the Nations provided moments of joy,  
*Continued on next page.*

# YouFra at World Youth Day *continued from previous page*

wherein each country had an opportunity to share something representative of its culture. Also, during the Ecological March of Laudato Si, the International Fraternity went on pilgrimage to the parish of St. Anthony of Padua. There we sought to spread the joy of living the Gospel, while also creating a consciousness in those around us to live Laudato Si.

The YouFra International gathering closed with the sharing of Holy Eucharist. The celebrant, Fr. Ignacio Ceja, OFM, a member of the general government of the Order of Friars Minor, accompanied us on behalf of Fr. Michael Perry, OFM, minister general. With friars from different branches of the First Orders and



TOR, we concluded this event with hearts full of renewed conviction to live the Gospel in our youth.

At World Youth Day, with representatives of the general ministers of some of the Franciscan Orders and other young people from around the world,

the International Fraternity entered into dialogue concerning ways to achieve a more effective and profound experience of living Laudato Si in our everyday environment.

Franciscan Youth were part of approximately 400,000 young people from

all over the globe at World Youth Day. Under the guidance of Pope Francis, we meditated specially on the Blessed Virgin Mary's "Yes", and our role in the world as agents of change—topics that were discussed at different moments of fraternal encounter and prayer.



# X Latin America Congress

## OFS, YouFra from 13 Nations Participate

The National Fraternity of Guatemala hosted the X Latin-America Congress from Jan. 28 to Feb. 1, 2019.

Secular Franciscans and Franciscan Youth also came from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Cuba, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

In addition to those 50 participants, there were ten from Guatemala in charge of the congress, along with the National Council, reported CIOFS Presidency Councilors Ana Maria Raffo, OFS, (Latin American and



*Participants display their nations' flags. Photos by Ana Maria Raffo, OFS, & Silvia Noemi Diana, OFS.*

Spain) and Silvia Noemi Diana, OFS, (Latin American South and Portuguese).

Also participating were Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS; General Spiritual Assistants Fr.

Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, and Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM; Emanuelson Matías  
*Continued on next page.*

*"Háganse testigos e instrumentos de su misión"*



**X CONGRESO LATINOAMERICANO OFS - JUFRA**

28 de Enero al 1 de Febrero de 2019 - Guatemala





*A couple of participants play to the camera during one of the Latin America Congress sessions.*



*Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, takes a selfie while others (at right) pose for a group photo during the pilgrimage walk.*



*Continued from previous page.*  
De Lima, international YouFra councilor for South America, and Francisco Loaiza Mena, substitute international YouFra councilor for Central America and the Caribbean.

**The Congress focused on several themes:**

- The OFS Rule “40 years of life.”
- “... Become witnesses and instruments of your mission ...”

- “Challenges of Latin American Youth”

**Workshops covered the following topics:**

- OFS: Conclusions of the 2017 General Chapter.
- YOUFRA: the youth synod and its application today (latin american youfra counselors).
- Spiritual assistants (general assistants).

**Panels included:**

- JPIC: “Citizen commitment, life experiences” Coordinator Emanuelson

Matías De Lima, with presenters Gustavo Benitez, OFS (Paraguay), Ailén Natali, YouFra (Argentina), Felix Chojonay (Guatemala), and Gloria Ribero, OFS (Colombia).

- FAMILY: “The Gospel of the Family: Joy for the World”. Coordinator Silvia Diana, with presenters Fabrizio Martínez, OFS (Uruguay), Washington Lima, YouFra ( Brasil), Irene Chacón, YouFra (Costa Rica), and Luis

Chacón, OFS ( Costa Rica).

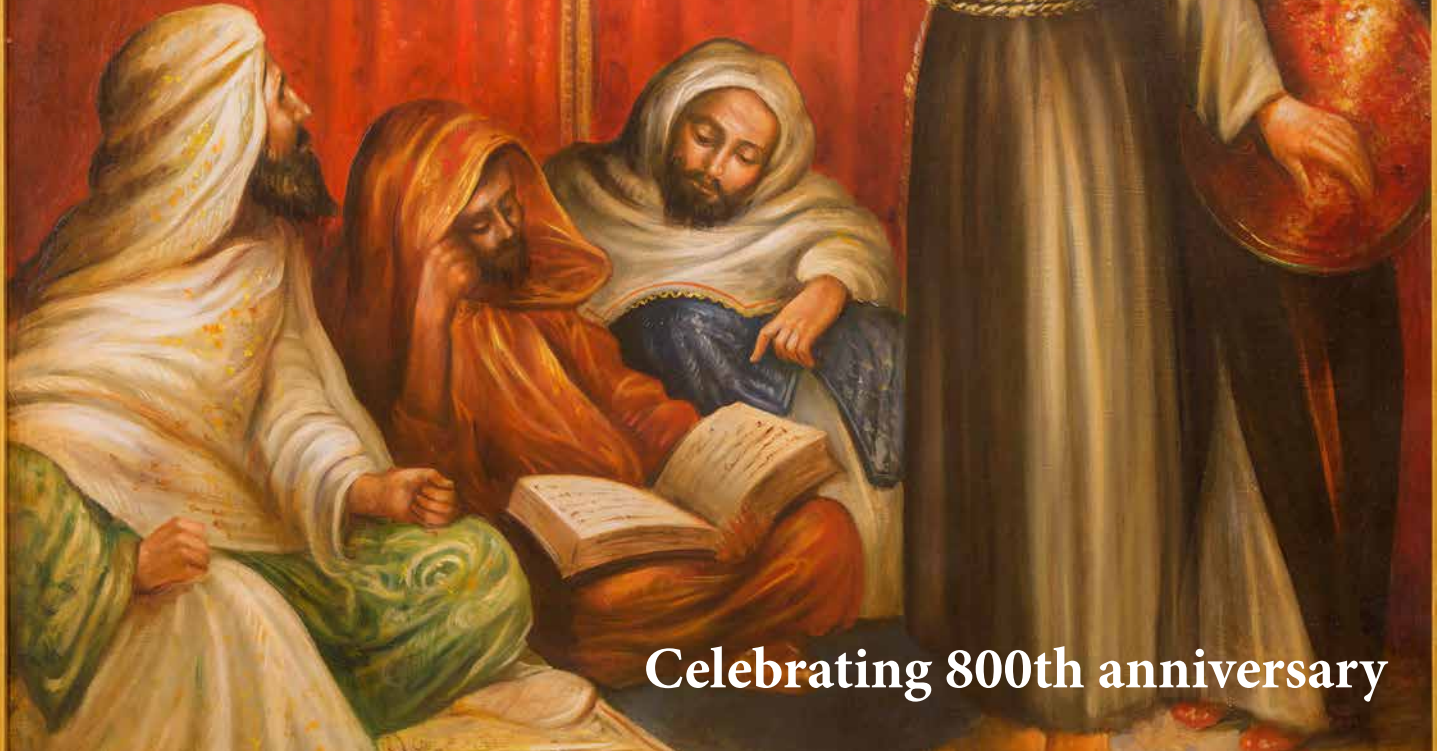
The congress featured a pilgrimage, following the steps of Saint Brother Pedro in Antigua, guided by the provincial minister of the friars minor.

Another meaningful aspect of the congress was that each participant brought baby clothes to be delivered to vulnerable families in Guatemala.

# Francis and Damietta

## ‘The Sultan and the Saint’

After hearing the minister general recount his participation at celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the meeting of Francis and the Sultan at Damietta, CIOFS Presidency members attended an evening screening of the film, “The Sultan and the Saint.” The film was produced in 2016 by UPF, a Muslim association whose purpose is to promote dialogue between the Islam and Christian world. That evening spurred this reflection.



## Celebrating 800th anniversary

*St. Francis of Assisi before Sultan Malik al-Kamil. Painting by unknown artist of 20th century was photographed in the church of Convento de Capuchinos, Cordoba, Spain. iStock/Getty Images.*

By *ATTILIO GALIMBERTI, OFS*

When we speak of the Crucifix of San Damiano and of the mandate that Christ entrusts to Francis, “go and repair my house that is falling into ruin,” it almost always refers, if not always, to the fact that

the Church of that time, at least regarding temporal power and those who administered it, lived in luxury and was certainly not an example of integrity and consistency with the Word it proclaimed. We seldom

speak of the problem of violence, which was very strong in the Middle Ages and involved all strata of society and, therefore, also the Church. The prevailing culture celebrated a way of being, the chivalrous one,

that was a coveted model. Any dispute or conflict found its solution, not in dialogue or agreement, but in armed confrontation that had to end with the victory of one and the defeat and annihilation of



the other. It was almost expected that, whoever had the chance, would arm himself and learn the use of weapons and the chivalrous etiquette associated with it. Francis himself, in his youth, dreamed of becoming a knight and being glorious in combat.

In his encounter with harsh reality in the battle of Collestrada, the romantic aspect was shattered and, instead, Francis experienced the crudeness of body-to-body combat, of the need to kill in order not to be killed, of terrible imprisonment during which time, an endless year, he could reflect on the fact that his friends and companions had been killed while he, because he was rich, had been spared because his parents would be able to pay a ransom.

All this affected Francis deeply and was the starting point for conversion, which provided new and profound meaning for the encounter with the leper and the episode at the Crucifix.

And it is precisely because of these episodes that he embraces Lady Poverty, a poverty that is understood as a quest and as a proposal of a new model for society that rejects money, which is used by the powerful as a means of oppression and power,

and that recognizes equal dignity for all creatures as the work of the Creator, and comes with universal kinship as a direct result.

And if we are all brothers, all God's creatures and his gift – let us remember what he writes in his testament: the Lord gave me Brothers -- then it must be the law of love that should rule the world, and not one of violence and of weapons. Francis, a very practical man, carries out this model in the Fraternity he proposes and lives.

But, as we said, this was a very violent period and it was also the period that the Church and the Catholic world were fully committed to the Crusades; wars unleashed against the Muslims and which, under the motivation of the reconquest of the Holy Land, also hid goals of territorial expansion, of domination of the seas and of great economic profits.

The language that was used to motivate people to adhere to the call is one of incredible violence and harshness, and is exactly the opposite of what Jesus proposes in the holy Gospel and lives in his death on the cross. The

“Quia Maior”, the bull with which Innocent III calls for the Fifth Crusade, the one during which Francis goes to Damietta, promises the cross of glories and eternal salvation to those who will fight and kill unfaithful enemies, and eternal damnation to those who refuse to do so. The battle becomes the test of one's faith. The bull expands a lot on other similar motivations in favor of its own thesis, defining instead the Evil, the enemy camp, and the Good, the crusade.

The culture and institutions of the time are decisively completely opposed to what Francis writes in the Canticle of the Creatures. **And it is in this situation that the message of**

**brotherhood of Francis and his presence among the crusaders in Damietta is inserted**, and that the film *The Sultan and the Saint* analyzes with a “modern” perspective, digging among the psychologies of the various characters, and also analyzing their journey to get to what was a fundamental episode in his journey of faith. That journey was misunderstood for many years -- a point we are increasingly discovering by studying the documents of the time and not just stopping at hagiographies of Francis.

Also in Damietta, in the Crusaders' camp, Francis decisively rejects violence and invites the soldiers not to fight and, on the other side, Sultan



*Continued on next page.*

*“Path of Peace” sculpture of Francis and the Sultan by Mujana Darian, OFS. It resides in the Monastery of the Poor Clares in Oakville, Missouri, USA. Photo by Howard Schroeder, OFS.*



Francis and the Sultan

# Celebrate a great gift

By ANA MARÍA RAFFO LAOS, OFS

This year we joyfully celebrate 800 years of the encounter between St. Francis of Assisi and the Sultan of Egypt Malek al-Kamil, but besides the celebration of this memorable encounter, we are reminded of the great love and mercy that the Lord has for us. He inspired, he sowed in the hearts of these two great and noble men his feeling and the desire for peace that led them to build it. Two men coming from two cultures, two realities, but with the same feeling and desire -- love and peace.

We also come from different realities, from different continents, with different needs, from different origins, speaking different languages. Like Francis of

Assisi, we are also foreigners in these lands. The Lord has given us his love, planted it in our hearts, called us to this beautiful vocation. He made us followers of Saint Francis of Assisi. He has called us to build peace and to make known his infinite love and mercy. We are called to unite and to build. We come to serve him with love, humility and availability.

With this memorable Encounter, let us also celebrate the great gift of vocation. As Secular Franciscan Brothers and Sisters all over the world, the Lord has sown the love in our hearts, His love and His desire for peace. Let us build it day by day, live it faithfully and fulfill our mission in the world.

## The Sultan and the Saint

*Continued from previous page.* Malek al-Kamil would also like to avoid bloodshed, proposing a peace where he concedes Jerusalem and the holy places to the Christian army. However, because of commercial interests, the pontifical legate, commander-in-chief of the expedition, rejects the proposal but then is defeated when, with Damietta conquered, his army heads for Cairo. But the defeat for the Christians is made even more psychologically dramatic when they realize that

they are stuck in a flooded swamp in which they have no way of defending themselves and they could therefore be exterminated. But, they receive bread, water and fodder for the animals from those, whom the aforementioned bull called “beasts, devils and despicable beings.” This was provided to them until they are able to resume their journey and they retreat.

This scenario is the backdrop for the encounter between Francis and Malek al-Kamil, a meeting

of faith, of listening, of mutual respect, a model for us on how to behave when we meet other cultures and religions.

To repeat, listening and dialogue are fundamental. All scholars agree in affirming that Francis’ spirituality and faith were strengthened and completed because of this meeting.

What he wrote when he returned from Damietta is significant in this regard. The statements we find in the Early Rule, in the letter to the Leaders of the People or in the letter to a

Guardian, or in the Praises of God Most High, would not have been possible without this meeting and dialogue.

These are just ideas to help us reflect and deepen our understanding, but above all this is an invitation to continue to live the message that Francis left us in an article of the Early Rule: *...do not argue or have disputes but be subject to every human creature for the love of God and Confess to be Christians...*

May the Lord give you his peace.

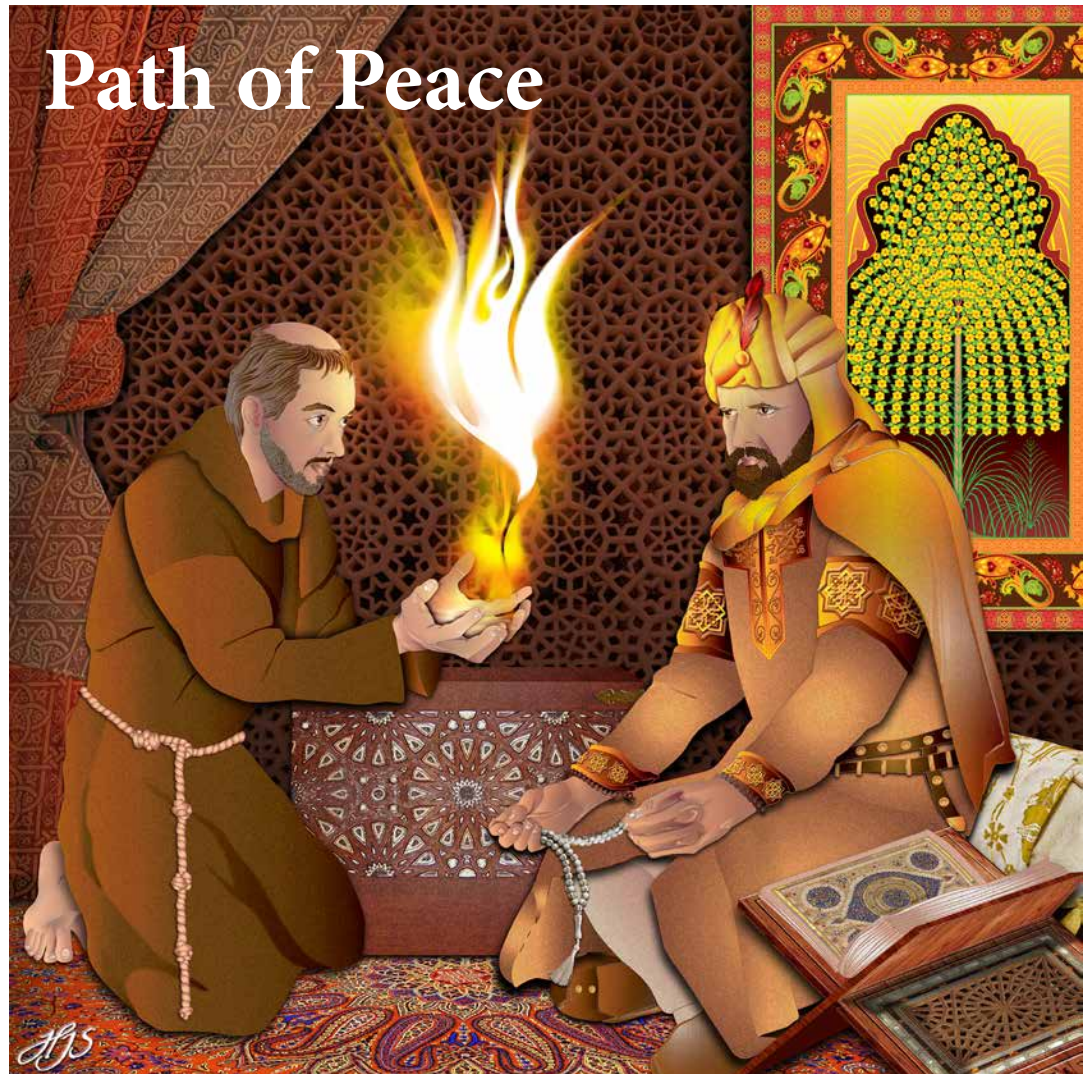
# Francis and the Sultan

By HOWARD SCHROEDER, OFS

Another Crusade was launched to reclaim the Holy Land and Francis could not help but think of launching a crusade of his own. "What if the Holy Land was in our hearts, and each sacred site was fought over in the inner room of our soul?"

Francis and his companion Illuminato braved not only many real dangers in seeking an audience with the Sultan Malik al-Kamil, but also had to climb over a mountain of misperceptions, ignorance, clichés, prejudices and, of course, fear.

Upon arriving and meeting the Sultan, the exchange in their eyes was immediate; this would not be a meeting comparing mere words, for they both came from different books. Francis could not help but marvel at the sincere submission and piety of the Saracens, sometimes to the shame of Christians, yet could the Sultan grasp an even greater revelation of God? Majesty, Honor and Glory and yet also there is mercy, humility and a vastness of Love . . . so much that He joined Himself to us, became one of us, and He



**Path of Peace** © Howard Schroeder, OFS / paintedpsalms.com

sacrificed himself to save us.

Is there room in the human heart for mystery? When the written word stops and the Living Word begins, so does understanding.

Francis had faith that the Trinity would reveal all. He held out the living flame of the Holy Spirit and invited the Sultan to enter into the mystery.

Deep was the light in his eyes that stirred the Sultan's soul.

There was something left whispering in the Sultan's heart that could not be denied, that the true search for peace and holiness often exceeded what both many Saracens and Christians were prepared to give. Until they moved beyond their clinging to the written word and em-

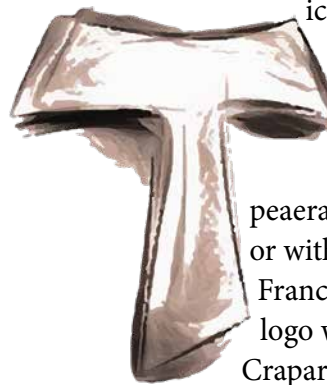
braced the Living Word, the talk of peace would remain the talk of peace instead of living in peace.

The Sultan sent Francis on his way with the greatest regard and insisted he and his band of brothers would always have access to the Holy Land, for he knew that they both caught a glimpse of it as it shimmered in their very souls.

# OFS action around the globe

## USA ADOPTS NEW TAU LOGO

The National Fraternity of United States of America has adopted a new Tau logo design for use in print and on the web.



It boasts a sketchy, wood, brushstroke appearance, and can be used with or without the words, "Secular Franciscan Order - USA." The logo was designed by Luciano Craparotta of Italy.

## VIETNAM TO HOST ASIA-OCEANIA CONGRESS

The 6th Asia-Oceania Congress of the OFS and YouFra will take place in Vietnam in 2020, Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon reported.

With a theme of "Go and Repair My Church," the congress is expected

to attract more than a hundred participants from 17 national fraternities. The congress, which will be held May 20-26, 2020, in the city of Vung Tau, will feature, among other things, talks by the OFS minister

general and vice minister general, roundtable discussion on vocation development, and group discussions on spiritual assistance, JPIC, financing, YouFra, membership administration and communications.

*Vung Tau, Vietnam*

## PORTUGAL ELECTS

The Elective Chapter of the National Fraternity of Portugal was celebrated from November 16 to 18, 2018 in the city of Fatima at the Spirituality House of the OFM Capuchins.

**Rui Jorge de Sousa e Silva**, OFS, was elected minister and international councilor. Vice Minister is Pedro Nuno da Silva Coelho, OFS.



*Pelagia Musoke, OFS*

## UGANDA MOURNS LOSS OF ROLE MODEL

Secular Franciscans in Uganda are mourning the passing in April of their long-time role model, Pelagia Musoke, OFS, reports Presidency Councilor Attilio Galimberti, OFS. Professed some 40 years ago, the 86-year-old Pelagia directed a project to help vulnerable families with school fees from 1987 to 2005, and then started a cooperative credit society to help empower women financially. She started with 10 women; at the time of her death, the credit co-op numbered 360 members.

## VIETNAM SHOWS SIGNS OF GROWTH

The Secular Franciscan Order in Vietnam is showing “signs of healthy growth,” reports Presidency Councilor Augustine Young Hak Yoon, OFS. He and General Spiritual Assistant Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv, made a fraternal and pastoral visit to the Vietnam National Fraternity in November 2018.

With 19 regional fraternities and 248 canonically established local fraternities, Vietnam has 5,603 professed members, plus



*Posing for a photo during the visitation to the Vietnam National Fraternity.*

another 1,615 in initial formation or enquirer stage.

Augustine said 112 local

fraternities had diocesan priests as spiritual assistants while 136 local fratern-

ities were provided with spiritual assistance mostly

by OFM friars.

## ICON ACCOMPANIES VISITORS TO LITHUANIA

Meetings with regional fraternities, national OFS and YouFra leaders, and friars at various levels highlighted the fraternal and pastoral visitation to Lithuania from 14 to 17 November 2018.

The icon of Our Lady, Queen of the Franciscan Family (Regina Familiae Franciscanae) accompanied the visitors -- Dina Francheska Shabalina, OFS, of the Ukraine (delegated by the OFS minister general) and Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap, general spiritual assistant.

Dina arrived with the icon, which had completed its pilgrimage to the Ukraine, and planned to hand it over to Latvia following the visitation. The icon was created in the run-up to the 3rd European OFS-YouFra Congress and started its pilgrimage among fraternities in March 2018.

Officially constituted in 2001, the OFS National Fraternity of Lithuania today has some 438 permanently professed members, seven temporarily professed, and some 37 candidates. Twenty-seven active local fraternities comprise six regions. There are five YouFra local fraternities, with 56 members.

## SLOVENIA HOLDS ELECTIVE CHAPTER

Fani Pečar, OFS, was elected national minister during Slovenia's elective chapter in November 2018. Presidency Councilor Ana Fruk, OFS, presided over the elections, with Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, general spiritual assistant, serving as pastoral witness.

Others elected were: Vice Minister Jožef Kozel, OFS; Secretary Metod Trajbarič, OFS; Treasurer: Slavko Žižek, OFS; Formator Mirko Potočnik, OFS; International Councilor Tomaž Potokar, OFS; Substitute International Councilor Metod Trajbarič, OFS, and OFS representative in the YouFra Council: Mojca Špende, OFS.



*Presidency Councilor Ana Fruk, OFS, and Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, pose with Slovenia National Fraternity leaders.*

## FRATERNITY EMERGING IN KUWAIT

There is a newly forming fraternity in Kuwait, Presidency Councilor Michel Janian reported.

He visited Kuwait in January, meeting with members of the group who had petitioned the CIOFS Presidency for support and recognition. The group has been meeting for three years, inspired by a visiting friar, and consists of five people from the Philippines who live and work in Kuwait. The Capuchin custos and



**Newly forming fraternity members pose with Bishop Camillo Ballin and Presidency Councilor Michel Janian in Kuwait.**

the local prelate, Bishop Camillo Ballin (apostolic vicar of Northern Arabia), expressed their support for the budding fraternity, Michel noted. The meeting took place at Holy Family Cathedral.

Michel appointed the following provisional council: Minister Lorie Pajarillo, Vice minister Lucie Guiverson, Treasurer Edna Aligada, Secretary Catherine Navoa, Formation Coordinator Lorie

Pajarillo. Michel noted that Br. Atanacio Monching, OFM Cap, expressed his enthusiasm to provide spiritual assistance and help prepare them for admission to the order and profession.



**Newly forming fraternity in Bahrain.**

## NEWLY FORMING GROUP IN BAHRAIN

Presidency Councilor Michel Janian visited the Kingdom of Bahrain in January 2019 to meet with a group of some 30 aspirants interested in becoming Secular Franciscans. They were recruited by Fr. Peter Eugenio, OFM Cap., at Sa-

cred Heart Catholic Church in Manama. The group consists of people from the Philippines and India.

“They were very enthusiastic and thirsty to know more about the order,” noted Michel. He provided a formation session, explaining the nature of the order, its history, Rule,

the vocation and Franciscan charism. This session was followed by an open forum and then a mass celebrated by Fr. Peter, assisted by Fr. Charbel Fayad.

With Father Peter as spiritual assistant, Michel appointed a provisional council: Minister Joseph

Binoy, Vice Minister Prakash Corda, Secretary Nilda S. Aidalgo, Treasurer Inna Mascarenhas, Formation Coordinator Matites K. Segubiense.

He also noted the support of the Capuchin custos and Bishop Camillo Ballin, apostolic vicar of Northern Arabia.

## VISIT TO SLOVAKIA

A fraternal and pastoral visit to Slovakia took place from Nov. 29 to Dec. 2, 2018, reported CIOFS Presidency Councilor Attilio Galimberti, OFS, and General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Alfred Parambathu, OFM Conv.

They met with the national council, delegates from regional and local fraternities, and major superiors and other friars from the OFM, OFM Conv., OFM Cap.

“We are very grateful for the hospitality” shown by Fr. Frantisek Olbert, OFM Provincial, Attilio said. He also noted “the fraternal welcoming” by OFS National Minister Jozef



**Posing for a photo during the visitation to Slovakian National Fraternity.**

Gazdik, OFS International Councilor Lucia Spondiakova and National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Robert Jozef Chabada, OFM. All three accompanied the

visitors throughout their stay.

The Slovakian National Fraternity is divided in five regions: West, Center, Orava, East and Hungarian

speaking fraternities. The professed active members number 901 with another 231 inactive due to age or health.

## Living the Gospel through our roles and responsibilities

*By CIOFS FORMATION TEAM*

As an Order, we are actively integrated in the life of Christ. We are part of the body of Christ. The promise we made when we were professed requires us to be more pro-active, more focused on Christ’s mission on earth.

Further, we have a very specific hierarchical structure centered on having a council at each level which helps to animate and guide the life of Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters – to help us live our Franciscan charism in family, in fraternity and in society.

Let’s take that concept that we are part of the body of Christ a little further. We might consider the Executive Council at each level as Christ’s heart – which pumps life-giving blood throughout the Franciscan body. In order to ensure the health of the heart, the members of the council must be properly formed (on-going formation) and make certain that

they fulfill all their responsibilities.

Whether we serve as officers at the local, regional, national or international level, we are co-responsible for animating and guiding our fraternities and members.

By properly fulfilling our unique roles on the council, we will ensure that the brothers and sisters receive support and guidance to live their Secular Franciscan life as the Rule requires of them. The council should be united in vision and ministry – especially after actions and plans are voted on.

One final note: As international, national, regional and local fraternities, we are not islands. We are intricately woven together as a magnificent tapestry that covers the body of Christ around the world – and our councils provide that important thread that ties us together. We are all ultimately united in Christ through our love and attention to each other.

# ‘Wells for Africa’ project proceeding

By VIRGINIJA MICKUTE, OFS, and MONIKA MIDVERYTE, OFS

The “Well4Africa” project, flowing out of the 3rd European OFS and YouFra Congress in Lithuania last year, is moving ahead in various phases in Malawi, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Drilling water wells in needed areas was meant to be a special fruit of the congress, with over 38,000 euros raised at the time. Since then more donations brought the total raised so far to 52,000 euros, with work started in two of the countries.

A borehole is already drilled and operating in Namane community, diocese of Blantyre, Malawi. Total cost of the project was of 8150 euros.

A more sophisticated water supply system is underway in Kihani parish, Mbarara archdiocese, Ugan-

da. This project involves three phases. The first phase has been completed, including excavation and construction of a shallow well, construction of a pump house, election of solar panel stands and installation of a water pump, construction of 50,000-liter capacity water tank at Kihani parish church, trenching and pipe laying from the well up to the church tank and further extended to St. Joseph’s primary school and St. Anne’s secondary school. Phase 2 shall involve construction of 50,000 liter-water tank at St. Mary’s primary school, trenching and pipe laying from the well up to the primary tank and extension of water to two community villages of Irwaniro and Kitambeya, construction of tap stands and control

chambers. Phase 3 shall include extension of water line from St. Mary’s primary tank to Katunguru community village, Allied primary school, Katunguru community marketplace, Bright Model primary school, St. Anne’s staff quarters and Kagunga community village. The total cost of the project is around 41,420 euros (depending on changing rate of Ugandan shilling).

The third project is aimed for Nehumambi village in Zimbabwe.

The National Council of Lithuania had launched the “Well4Africa” social initiative, together with components of the European Franciscan family, to respond to the call of Pope Francis to ensure the human right to drinking water for all and to express

solidarity with the poor, creating “conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ” (Rule 13).

Initially 13 national OFS fraternities (Belgium, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Gibraltar) and four national YouFra fraternities (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Italy, Poland) responded to the call.

Anyone may follow the progress of the projects online at [well4africa.eu](http://well4africa.eu).

During its fall session CIOFS Presidency endorsed continuing the “Well4Africa” initiative under the responsibility of Lithuanian National Council, thus becoming an ongoing mission of the Secular Franciscan Order.



ABOVE: *Enjoying fresh, clean water in Malawi.*

RIGHT: *Work progresses on a water tank and pump house in Uganda.*

