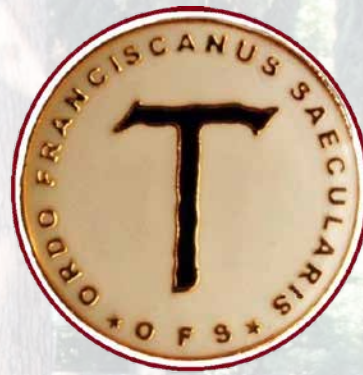


# VOX FRANCISCANA

*Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis*



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**MEET THE CIOFS PRESIDENCY**

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# Features



## THE PRESIDENCY

See some of the work of the CIOFS Presidency and learn about some of the new Presidency councilors. *PAGES 3-6.*



## WAKING UP TO WAR

Fleeing her home in the Ukraine and experiencing anxiety, fear, insecurity, Presidency Councilor Dina Shabalina is also "rediscovering our mission to be peacemakers... not allowing hatred and desire for revenge to take possession of our hearts." *PAGES 7-9.*



## MISSIONARY FAMILY

Eugenio & Elisabetta Di Giovine and their five children complete a six-year mission embedded in a church in the Diocese of Milan. *Pages 11-13.*

## OFS IN ACTION AROUND THE GLOBE

*PAGES 14-24*

Italy OFS launches  
digital platforms

...

Fraternity in Brazil  
turns 125

...

647 attend  
Quinquennial  
Congress in U.S.



...

Rite of Admission  
in Holy Land

...

Fraternities Hold  
National Elective  
Chapters

...

YouFra Argentina  
Offers Annual  
Plans with Themes

# The CIOFS Presidency

The servant leaders of the worldwide Secular Franciscan Order gathered in Rome, Italy in April for a week-long meeting – the first in-person CIOFS Presidency event since last November’s General Chapter.

Since many of the Presidency councilors were new, the meeting kicked off with an evening of fraternal sharing of their personal and Franciscan journeys. Formation sessions on what it means to be a servant leader and on the duties and functions of the CIOFS Presidency were sprinkled throughout the week.

The agenda included a review of the mandates and decisions coming out of the 2021 General Chapter, with

some focus on starting the work of the Secretariat for Formation, the Secretariat for Communications, the Juridical Office, and the Office for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. Several offices also continued under the new Presidency’s six-year term, including the Family, Economic, YouFra and Cause of Saints’ commissions, plus a Vocation Promotion Commission.

The business of the day was sandwiched between morning prayer with daily mass, and evening prayer – except on Tuesday, April 26, when the Presidency participated in evening mass offered by Cardinal Mau-

*Continued on next page.*



## **JOY IN FRATERNITY**

**The CIOFS Presidency took a moment to pose for pictures during the April meeting in Rome, Italy.**

**KNEELING IN FRONT (from left): Luis Félix Chocojay, OFS; Fr. Carlos Ginés Campos Julve, TOR; Fr. Tomás Ginga Panzo Suva, OFM Cap.; Fr. Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv., and Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM.**

**STANDING (from left): Roberto Falzago, OFS; Sylvia Diana, OFS; Anna Maria Raffo, OFS; Isabella Di Paola, OFS; Francis Byung Ju Park, OFS; Eremenciana Chinyama, OFS; Tibor Kauser, OFS; Dina Shabalina, OFS; Adolph Assagba, OFS; Mary Stronach, OFS, and Noemi Riccardi, OFS. Photo by Robert Stronach, OFS.**

*Continued from previous page.*

ro Gambetti, OFMConv., in the Seraphicum's main chapel.

It was refreshing to be back with his Franciscan family, said Fra Mauro, who is Archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica, Vicar General of His Holiness for Vatican City and President of the Fabric of Saint Peter's. Going back to one's roots helps to rediscover one's authenticity, he said.

A former general custos of the Sacred Convent of Saint Francis in Assisi, Fra Mauro reflected on how the Holy Spirit moves in one's life. Life in the Spirit is like the wind, he noted. You don't know where it came from and you don't know where it's going. In Francis, we see that fresh and free spiritual life -- unattached to whatever we have as we give of our time and talents in service to the Lord.

The general spiritual assistants offered insights of their own during the daily masses. For example:

- Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, pointed to the need for humility. "We cannot follow Jesus unless we are humble." Thus, "whatever you do," you will be able to "do it in Jesus' name."

- Fr. Alfred Parambathu, OFM Conv., saw the Apostle Thomas as being more courageous than doubting. Thomas had been out in the community rather than hiding with the other apostles. And when Thomas finally saw Jesus after the Resurrection, "he made the highest expression of historical truth about Jesus -- when he reached out to him and said, 'my Lord and my God.'" And he said that publicly. Thomas, by the way, was the only apostle to travel outside the Roman Empire, Fra Alfred noted. "He was very courageous."

In conjunction with the Presidency meeting, Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, Vice Minister General Mary Stronach, OFS, and General Secretary Isabella Di Paola met with Vatican officials to report on and discuss the Secular Franciscan Order. They met with Cardinal João Bráz de Aviz, prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, and Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM, secretary of the Congregation.



**Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, OFM Conv., during mass at the Seraphicum and (below) chatting with Mary Stronach, OFS, and Tibor Kauser, OFS.**

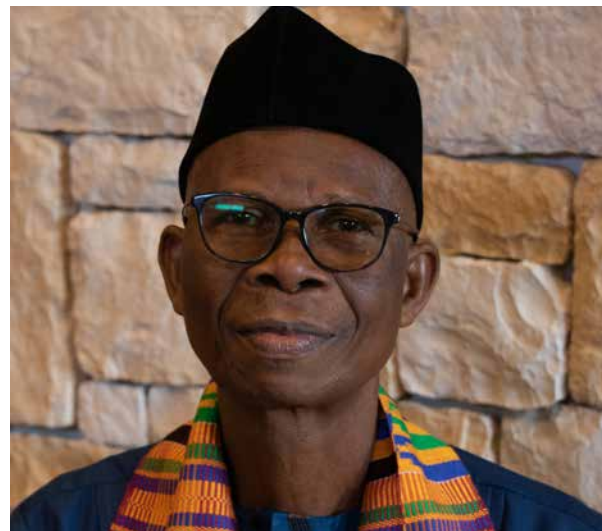


**The Presidency delegation at the Vatican with Cardinal João Bráz de Aviz and (below) with Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM.**



# *Meet Some of the New Presidency Members*

## EREMENCIANA CHINYAMA AND ADOLPH ATSU ASSAGBA



I am Eremenciana Chinyama from Zimbabwe. I come from a very small town some 150 kilometers from the capital city. I am the third in a family of five. I was born in a Catholic family. Although I come from an out center of the Franciscan parish, for some reasons I had not heard about St Francis until later in my life.

In 1993 I met Austin Chinyama who became my husband in 1995. I married him after training as a teacher. God took him to eternal rest on 15 March 2007. We were blessed with a son Tashinga James, who has joined the friars. In 2007 Inviolata Gumbo, a Secular Franciscan from the local fraternity of St. Francis of Assisi in the small town of Chivhu in Mashonaland East, heard about the death of my husband and how heartbroken I was. She visited and spoke about the family of St Francis. Inviolata then gave me the peace prayer of St. Francis; somehow I found some solace in the prayer.

From books I got from Inviolata I was moved to hear that St. Francis could just be found crying for the love of the crucified Jesus. I was moved to tears. I became more keen to know about this man and to follow him. The journey for my formation began. Inviolata used to come from the rural areas but she had more information about St Francis. Whenever she could get into town to sell milk that she pasteurized, she would take some time to talk about St Francis of Assisi. She taught me that Saint Francis loved anything that had an imprint of God, without reservation. That kind of love sounded difficult but possible.

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I am Adolph Atsu Assagba. Before being elected Presidency councilor for Francophone Africa and the Islands, I was national vice-minister of the Secular Franciscan Order of Togo (OFS TOGO). I am husband of Marie Antoinette and father of two daughters, Alexandrine-Ange and Rolande-Matthias.

After my wedding on December 29, 1988, I was approached by Joseph Adegnon, who asked me to come and get to know the Secular Franciscan Order. I entered the Order in a local fraternity of eight members practically unknown to the Catholic majority of Togo. I made my final profession in 1992. Less than three years later, I was elected local minister. I was blessed to meet OFS brothers and sisters during my trip to Canada, all members of the national fraternity of Canada (they had accepted my few articles for the OFS Canada journal).

In 2011 the CIOFS invited me to the General Chapter in Brazil as an observer and to the first East Africa Workshop in Rwanda and then entrusted me with the organization of the West and Central Africa Workshop in Togo. It was at the end of the workshop that the CIOFS Presidency invited me to the Elective General Chapter of Assisi in 2017 for the drafting of the fundamental objectives of Project Africa and appointed me as the project's first coordinator. In my capacity as international councilor of OFS Togo and coordinator of the Africa Project, the Presidency had delegated me to preside over the Elective Chapters or Fraternal Visits in Benin, Ivory Coast, Chad,

*Continued on next page.*

# EREMENCIANA CHINYAMA AND ADOLPH ATSU ASSAGBA

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I was admitted into the Secular Franciscan Order on 9 September 2009 and had my final profession on 11 October 2011. The journey of formation was very crucial for me. I learned a lot of things and that I needed to balance the spiritual with the practical. It was a great period to discover the love of God for all the things he has created. I learned that I should have love within me, for one can only give what she has.

In 2013 I was elected the treasurer for the region and in 2016, national treasurer. In 2019 I was elected to be the national minister, and national formator of Zimbabwe. I was happy to be able to serve my brothers and sisters but the work was so demanding. The COVID 19 pandemic complicated everything but during this pandemic I saw the hand of God. During the General elective chapter of 2021, I was elected presidency councilor for the English and Portuguese speaking African countries.

## DINA SHABALINA

My name is Dina Shabalina. I was born in Ukraine on November 11, 1981. I was baptized as a Catholic in 2005 when I was 23 years old. This moment divided my life into two parts. The first part of my life was mostly like wandering in the darkness without knowing the sense of my life. When I encountered Jesus Christ, everything changed completely. The very first words of the Gospel I heard in the Catholic chapel were about the meeting of Jesus and a Samaritan woman. I saw myself in this woman. Because I have been searching for the real source of love and life for so many years. And in Jesus I finally found what I had been looking for.

At this moment I came across the book about St. Francis. His life captured me so much. I wanted to love and follow Jesus like him. I was invited to the Franciscan School of Evangelization which was provided by the OFS in Ukraine. There I met OFS brothers and sisters and saw their way of life; I wanted to join them so much. In 2005 I was admitted to the Order and in 2008 I was professed. I was engaged in the activities of the Franciscan School of Evangelization where together with my brothers and sisters I could research this new journey of my life and learn how to share the Good News with those ones who

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and organized training workshops in Ivory Coast and Chad, to name but a few.

I give thanks to God for having given me the chance to discover Franciscan spirituality as a model of life in my state as a lay Catholic Christian on the path of holiness in poverty and humility in the service of my brothers and sisters. I thank all those who have helped me in my journey -- my national fraternity of Togo, all the other fraternities of Africa and Canada, my predecessors in the French-speaking area (Michèle Altmeyer, Michel Janian and the revered memory Hervé Louis Sylva). I do not forget support of brother Joseph Adegnon, OFS Togo national minister, my wife, my daughters, my biological family, the Franciscan family of Togo, the clergy and the faithful of my two Togolese dioceses, especially for their prayers.

*'Lord make me an instrument of your Peace.'*



haven't known Jesus as St. Francis did – first through his life and then through the words of the Gospel.

From 2013 to 2021 Jesus invited me to serve at the national level as the international councilor. It was such a great opportunity to know the Order as a big family. The next step was election to the CIOFS Presidency. It wasn't an easy choice for me but I realized that YES said once to the Lord during professions is YES for the whole life.

# Presidency councilor wakes up to war



by DINA SHABALINA, OFS

*Bombing leaves building in Kyiv in smoky ruins. iStockphoto by ArtistGNDphotography*

I will always remember the morning I woke up to the sound of explosions. I looked at my watch. It was about five a.m. I was not yet aware that my life and the lives of millions of Ukrainians had just been divided into “before” and “after”. Although recently the word “war” was on everyone’s lips, my mind refused to accept it. The threat of war was obvious. In many houses so-called “go bags” were always ready. However, you did not want to believe that the worst expectations would come true. Even a few minutes after the explosions my mother called and said: “War has started,” I didn’t want to believe it. The consciousness and pain came gradually.

The first days of the war were full

of anxiety. At the same time we hoped that it would soon be over. As I live with my parents on the left bank of Ukraine, our region was on the front line almost from the very weeks of the war. The danger was close enough. However, like most Ukrainians, we quickly learned how to live in war conditions: how to seek shelter during air raids, to carry on the blackout restrictions at night, to wait in line for food and medicine, to share with others your time, money, and a spare room in your house.

Of course, compared to those who found themselves under very severe shelling and occupation, life in my hometown seemed more or less peaceful. Thankfully I did not see all the horrors of war, but now every day

I live with the feeling that I have been deprived of one of the basic human needs - security. Every day and every night seems to be marked by the shadow of war.

For a while, it was scary just to listen to music on headphones because of the fear of not hearing the air-raid alarm and not having time to hide in a shelter. No matter what you do, no matter where you go, the shadow of war is always walking behind you. You are constantly thinking about and looking at the world through the prism of war and of reports about new destructions and victims. Everything around you is changing. Tomorrow seems to disappear because you can no longer plan and you do  
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***‘Each moment that you experience now, in the present, becomes precious...’  
and ‘the grief and joy of one is the common grief and joy of all.’***



***Statue of Our Virgin Mary greets the second day of war from the yard at Dina’s house. She has since fled her hometown to a safer region. Photo by Dina Shabalina, OFS.***

*Continued from previous page.*

not know what the next day will bring. However, each moment that you experience now, in the present, becomes extremely precious, because you come to realize that life is a gift that does not depend on you. You understand that your whole life is in God’s hands.

In those first weeks of the war, it was very essential for me to hear that we have to learn to live with the war, but we must not live by the war. Life must go on. I wanted to do something, I wanted to unite with all the people, to be useful in some way. From the first days of the war, I saw manifestations of extraordinary unity and solidarity among the people. There were no strangers anymore. It was realized deeper that we are now a big family of Ukrainians, in which the grief and joy of one is the common grief and joy of all.

Before the war, many brothers and sisters of our OFS National Fraternity used to gather daily for Rosary and worship prayers via Zoom. Now this time of unity in prayer has become as necessary as bread and air. But since the beginning of the war, there has been a question in many hearts: Why? Why, oh Lord, do you allow this to happen to us? Many felt helpless. Of course, we cannot always understand the ways in which Jesus leads us. But no one wanted to be alone with their worries and uncertainties about the future. So we kept on praying harder.

Prayer continues even now. In this prayerful fellowship we are strengthened in faith, and trust and also filled with peace because we know that the Lord does not abandon us. He is with us! If we cannot personally defend our towns and villages, we can be volunteers, helping others with deeds and words of support, being with those who are nearby and in need of help. We always pray for our army, for every Ukrainian who finds oneself in a particularly difficult situation, for those who have lost their homes, those who are under occupation, and those who are experiencing violence or are forced to flee abroad. We are discovering that we can take part in the spiritual struggle in defense of our homeland.

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***‘As Secular Franciscans, we are rediscovering our mission to be peacemakers...  
not allowing hatred and desire for revenge to take possession of our hearts.’***

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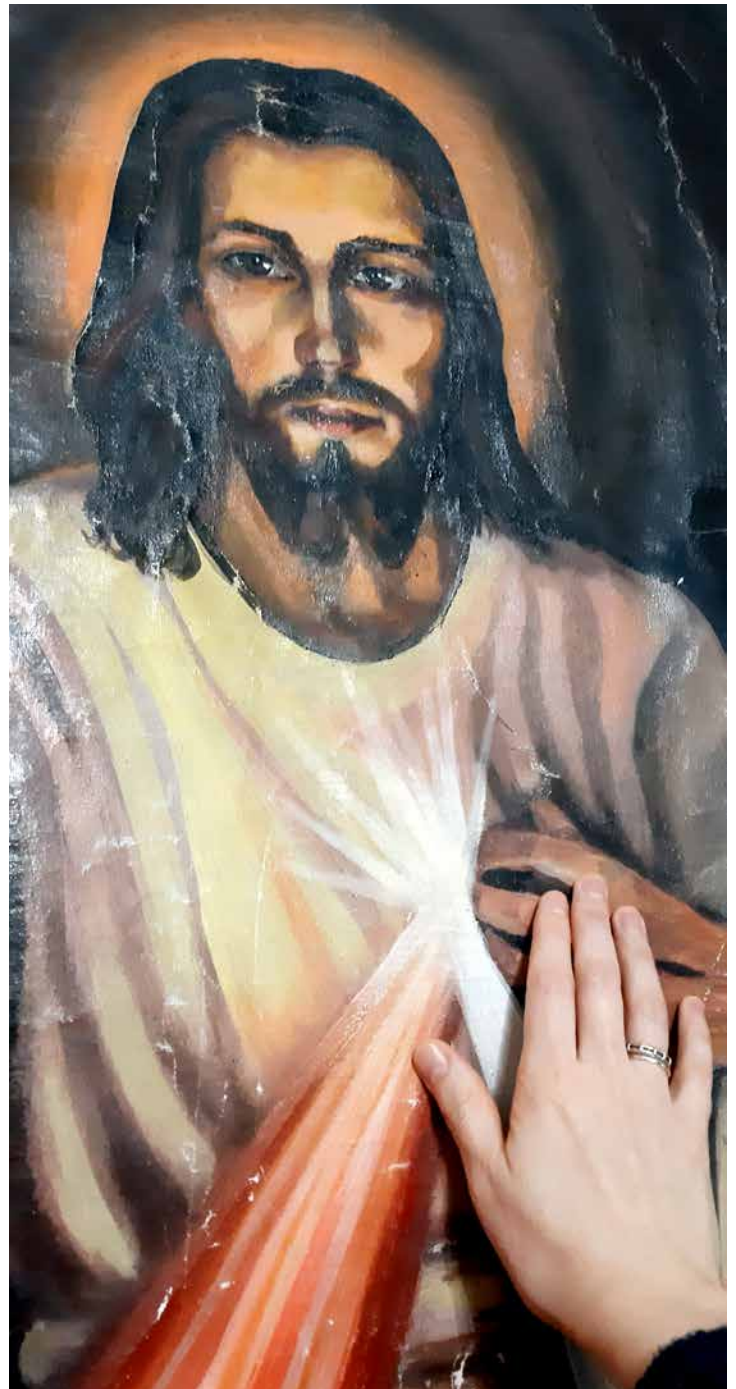
As Secular Franciscans, we are rediscovering our mission to be peacemakers. It means for us not allowing hatred and desire for revenge to take possession of our hearts, it also means remembering in our prayers for those who brought war to our land - praying for God’s mercy and enlightenment for them.

It should be noted that since Ukraine is a predominantly Orthodox country and most Catholics live in the western part of the country, most Ukrainian Secular Franciscans as well as the Franciscan youth have not come under massive shelling or occupation. Although some of the brothers and sisters, especially those living in Kyiv, the north, east, and south of Ukraine (although not very numerous) have experienced the terrible days of Russian occupation and aggression. Some of them were forced to leave. A few months after the war started, I also left for Western Ukraine with my family because the situation in my city had become unstable. Now, like most Ukrainians, I experience the fate of the displaced. On the one hand, I experience a lot of grace and see how good the Lord is because He gives His grace every day and does not leave us. On the other hand, I face many limitations caused by the war.

I wasn’t sure if I would be able to travel outside Ukraine to fulfill my service as a CIOFS Presidency councilor and if I would be able to attend its meeting in April of this year. But the Lord also showed me that He cares even in these hopeless circumstances. The Lord opened the hearts and doors of the family home of Tibor Kauser, our minister general, who invited me so that we could travel together from Hungary to Rome.

I would like to express my thanks to each brother and sister from different parts of the world, who just surrounded us with a prayerful shield. There was not a day when I did not receive words of encouragement from different countries and continents. It was important for us to know that we were not alone in these trials and that our spiritual family remembers us. Thanks to all who have opened their hearts and have been willing to lend a helping hand in this difficult time for us.

I thank Jesus for being faithful to His promise. Now, as



***Dina touches the icon of Merciful Jesus in her house during her daily prayer for peace. Photo by Dina Shabalina, OFS.***

my nation goes through trials, I especially feel His presence in my life, in the life of the Franciscan family, and in the life of my country. I believe in the resurrection and revival of Ukraine. For Jesus has already won!

# OFS of Italy houses ill Ukrainian children

by **STEFANIA MARINETTI, OFS**



*Houses owned by the OFS of Italy are a short walk from the Vatican (see the dome of St. Peter's in the background). The house at left shelters Ukrainian children receiving medical care at hospitals in Rome. The house at right is used for meetings, activities and hospitality of Secular Franciscans. Photo by R. Stronach, OFS.*

The war in Ukraine has changed the face and equilibrium of the old continent. Europe has found itself facing the call for help from a population which has had to escape from those horrors. We Italians, too, have been called to do our part, and we as Franciscans have taken action to address this urgency.

It is happening at Casa OFS in Viale delle Mura Aurelie, a stone's throw from St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. Passing through the welcoming garden, in front of the mother house (reserved for the hospitality and activities of the Secular Franciscans), you enter another house, made available by the OFS of Italy to those who have been fleeing the war since 24 February.

In particular it houses children, accompanied by their mothers, who carry the signs of the Chernobyl disaster on their bodies as well as scars

of war. Children who are seriously ill are treated at Roman hospitals after fleeing a war which, like all wars, has had no mercy even on those who are already in pain.

Welcoming them and being close to them for their every need, despite the difficulty of the language, certainly makes one perceive gratitude, but also a lot of bewilderment for the distance from home, a lot of suffering for an illness that leaves no way out, and the fear of not being able to return to their land. Their eyes express the resignation of those who have nothing more to lose and at the same time the feeble hope that is in every person, by the grace of God.

The service that the OFS performs is to provide for every need, food, clothing, linen and cleaning of the premises, but above all we want to convey that, once they cross the

threshold of the house, they are no longer alone but welcomed and loved by brothers and sisters.

Many Secular Franciscans from all regions of Italy made themselves available, asking the same question that crosses the Scriptures, the one that the people of Jerusalem ask Peter in the aftermath of the death and resurrection of Jesus: "They felt touched to the heart and asked: 'What should we do?'"

It has always happened over the centuries and it still happens: we work, laugh, suffer, but in some unswept corner of the heart there are always those grains of dust that disturb the gear: is it possible that this is all there is to life? No, that's not all. The desire to be close in a more concrete way to people who are going through suffering is in the heart of God and of all his children who are following Him.

# OFS family completes 6-year mission

by EUGENIO and ELISABETTA DI GIOVINE, OFS



**Eugenio & Elisabetta Di Giovine spoke at the 2017 General Chapter about being a missionary family. Photo / R. Stronach, OFS**

On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (8 December) 2021, our experience as a “Km 0 Missionary Family” came to an end after six years, this program is an experiment of pastoral leadership by the Diocese of Milan. This experience, which was presented at the General Chapter of the OFS in 2017, provides for the involvement of several families in the socio-pastoral leadership in a territory where there is no longer a resident priest, following a “missionary model”. To date there are about 30 families involved in the project, two of which are Secular Franciscans.

The plan of the experience provides for the family to receive an ecclesial mandate, and transfer for several years to living in a rectory where there is no longer a priest in residence. The couple continue working

*Eugenio and Elisabetta, Secular Franciscans, married for 18 years with five children, were sent by the Diocese of Milan from 2005 to 2009 as a fidei donum missionary family to the Diocese of Guanare (Venezuela) in a socio-pastoral program also sponsored by the Conventual Franciscan Friars of the Custody of Nuestra Señora de Coromoto. From 2015 to 2021 they were sent to St. Joseph’s Church by the Diocese of Milan as a Km 0 Missionary Family.*

at their previous jobs, not only as a source of income, but also as an opportunity to bear witness and proclaim the Good News, thus remaining economically independent of the parish and receiving no remuneration from them. The children live the typical life in the area, attending local schools, and in this context, they have the most significant contacts with those who are more removed from parish life. The family is there temporarily and is not dependent on any mandate from the priests or

parish priests.

The basic task of a “Km 0 Missionary Family” is to be present “on the ground” in a style of acceptance and openness, especially for those who have “distanced themselves” from religious practice. They eventually take on some of the tasks of pastoral leadership, according to the needs of the community, but they do not replace the laity already involved in the parish, but reinforce the lay presence and make it stronger.

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***The Di Giovine family.***

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Here we have an authentic workshop for pastoral activity that allows our Christian communities to face the challenges of the present age with greater serenity: the challenge of continuing to incarnate the Christian faith in daily life. The increasingly rapid social changes, cultural and religious pluralism, the new frontiers opened by science and technology all require the Christian communities to question their forms of presence in society in order to remain faithful to their commitment to be Church among the homes of the people.

It is a pastoral experiment that also speaks to the OFS. Today's social and ecclesial situation is in a state of rapid change. Often the OFS is the only witness of the Franciscan charism in small towns or great cities. The

invitation to imagine a new form of Church comes to us from the OFS General Constitutions: *Aware that God wanted to make of us all a single people and that he made his Church the universal sacrament of salvation, the brothers and sisters should commit themselves to a faith-inspired reflection on the Church, its mission in today's world and the role of the Franciscan laity within it. They should take up the challenges and accept the responsibilities that this reflection will lead them to discover.* (Art. 14 GG.CC. OFS).

Over these years some pastoral aspects clearly emerged: living in the neighborhood. a family has opportunities to proclaim the Gospel and afford perspectives the priest does not have (school, sports arenas,

playgrounds); the parish communities experience the richness of this new pastoral technique that helps them be an image of a Church that is increasingly ministerial; it promotes the role and participation of the laity and families in parish life; invites people to make the parish a place of relationship rather than providing and using services; the family's presence helps the priest to imagine a family-friendly parish, one that takes into consideration the real pace and demands that it requires.

At the end of the time allotted, in agreement with the Parish Pastoral Plan, we wanted to try to survey this experience. The goal was to verify, after six years of work, the impact of our activity and the perception of the  
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# *A new image of a pluralistic Church in which all vocations and states of life are at the service of pastoral leadership in the parish*

*Continued from previous page.*

experience in the community with a view to continuing it, even with another “Km 0 Missionary Family.” The main focus of pastoral theology is listening to people. In order to interpret pastoral activity and try to understand it, we cannot possibly fail to take into consideration the experience of those who, in one way or another, were involved in it.

Of the 1,500 parishioners involved, 342 participated in the survey. Considering that this is the first attempt at this type of activity, we believe this number is significant. The division between male (33%) and female (67%) respondents and between various age groups (52% over 60, 41% between 31 and 60, and only 6% younger than 30) actually reflects the population of the parish community.

Some very interesting data has emerged from the accounts and the responses to the questionnaires. The presence of the “Km 0 Missionary Family” allowed the development of some new socio-pastoral initiatives at the St. Joseph Pastoral Center. Special relevance was seen in the development of a summer activities program for the elderly, the idea of a formation program for families and many initiatives aimed at territorial organization that gave the area a greater feeling of association and community (thematic gatherings, pizza parties, parish festivities, new year’s celebrations, etc.), were recognized by 75% of the respondents.

The data regarding participation was also very positive. Many people

expressed their appreciation for the fact that the church now remains open from 7:30 in the morning until evening, the creation of a choir to lead the singing at Sunday morning Mass, the return of Advent blessing of the houses under the care of the “Km 0 Missionary Family”, the recitation of the Rosary in the courtyards and condominiums during the month of May, the celebration of the Word on some occasions when there was no Eucharistic celebration, and the recitation of prayers for the deceased.

There also emerged the idea that it is possible and greatly appreciated to have liturgical leadership that helps the community develop a sense of a people gathered around the Word and helps them feel a close bond with other ministerial figures who are not priests.

There was also great appreciation for the environmental initiatives, such as the total reconstruction of the tent marquee, the new ecological playground, which was enabled by a generous contribution from the OFS in Lombardy, and the maxi-gazebo in its center, a place of afternoon relaxation for the elderly in the pre-Covid days.

Turning to the image of the Church that this experience created in the faithful, 94% stated that the new image is one of a pluralistic Church in which all vocations and states of life are at the service of pastoral leadership in the parish. Only 6% stated that it is a fallback solution. Concerning the style expressed by the “Km 0 Missionary Family,”

the community saw that the clearer expressions were of welcoming, availability, attention to the children, the elderly, and to fragile or isolated individuals. The “Km 0 Missionary Family” allowed the Church to maintain a living presence even in communities that no longer have a priest in residence.

Some 96% of the faithful expressed total appreciation for the effort and would like to see this experience continued, even with the involvement of another “Km 0 Missionary Family”.

In conclusion we can state that this type of activity is defining, growing and developing at the diocesan level as well, in the furrows of “witness” and “presence”, not in “doing” (although from the data we see that the Km 0 Missionary Family has done very much).

However, this can be thwarted if, caught up in the constant emergencies arising, at least in European and North American nations, from the shortage of clergy and consecrated persons, we fall into a “functionalist” logic. In our opinion, the style of “presence” and “witness” should be preserved without falling into the temptation of using the families as “stopgaps.” One of the goals of this experience is not that of “substitution,” in which leaving the ecclesial configuration of past decades in place simply replaces the priest with another pastoral subject, but that of emphasizing and promoting ecclesial shared responsibility. This is another field of work to be cherished, deepened and developed.

# OFS in action around the globe

## CONGO NATIONAL MINISTER PASSES

The CIOFS Presidency received the sad news of the death of Honoré Prospère Mulumba Tshibalaba, the national minister of the OFS of the Democratic Republic of Congo.



## OFS OF ITALY LAUNCHES 2 NEW DIGITAL PLATFORMS

by LAURA FRACASSO, Italy OFS press office

With an aim of evangelizing through all media channels, especially digital ones, the Secular Franciscan Order of Italy has launched the “FVSONline” app for iOS and Android as well as the website [www.fvsonline.it](http://www.fvsonline.it).

The two new digital platforms will give readers the opportunity to enjoy daily content, insights, reports, columns and training resources, and also the ability to “browse” on their smartphones, tablets and computers the issues of “FVS - Francesco il Volto Secolare”, the bimonthly magazine of the OFS of Italy.

The launch of the project is also an opportunity for a slight graphic restyling of the same print magazine, 20 years after its founding.



Born in 2002, the magazine has evolved, giving space not only to the story of the internal life of the Order, but also to training

and a continuous look at the world and on ethical and social issues.

The desire to make the voice of the Secular

Franciscans heard on these issues led to this new step on the “digital roads, crowded with often wounded humanity” (cf. Message for the 48th World Communications Day).

National Minister Luca Piras, OFS, noted: “*Francesco il Volto Secolare*, which until now has been, and remains, the print and digital magazine of the Secular Franciscans of Italy, becomes much more: a new and expanded relational frontier. A tool, therefore, that can meet humanity that travels digital roads to tell everyone the Good News and be a voice of hope in the world “.

More information on the app is available on [www.fvsonline.it](http://www.fvsonline.it).

## BRAZILIAN FRATERNITY CELEBRATES 125 YEARS

*Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Petrópolis.*

*Photo from church website.*

*Condensed from an article by FRIAR AUGUSTO LUIZ GABRIEL, OFM*

Not even the low temperatures of the mountains could keep the faithful and Franciscans from coming to Igreja do Sagrado Coração de Jesus (Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus) in June to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the first OFS fraternity in Petrópolis, Brazil's Imperial City.

Friar Fernando de Araújo Lima, spiritual assistant of the Fraternity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, celebrated mass, featuring a choir of friars (Corral dos Frades do Tempo da Teologia) singing Gregorian chants.

The OFS was founded on May 30, 1897, one year after the arrival of friars from the Franciscan Province of Saxony in Germany. The then-founder of the Convento do Sagrado, Friar Ciriaco Hielscher, OFM, was also the creator of the Fraternity of the Third Order, today the Secular Franciscan Order. The fraternity has its own headquarters next to the church.

In her opening comment, Secretary Elizabeth Rigoni noted: "At the beginning of our fraternity there were more than 800 brothers; today we are much less, but the ideal of living the Gospel in the style of Francis of Assisi remains the same. Our journey continues and our doors are open to welcome you. Come and meet our Franciscan spirituality and put life in the Gospel and the Gospel in life."

In his homily, Friar Fernando said: "Jesus recommends, whoever wants to save his life, must give himself up for a noble cause, the cause in the Gospel. Whoever wants to save his life, offer it to others, not live for himself, live for the needy, for his family, live for others. This is the secret of the full and complete realization of our being."

After mass, a coffee was served at the fraternity's headquarters, with Minister Luiz Alberto Vianna wel-

coming everyone. "This fraternal and canonical bond between us only exists if the Friars Minor and our members of the OFS are present. Your presence here makes us happy and encourages us because we feel that you are on our side as Francis of Assisi asked."

With the Order marking her life for half a century, 80-year-old Teresinha Valone Joaquim commented that being a Secular Franciscan helped her "overcome all the problems I went through in my life," and added: "Here I find strength, peace and joy. Celebrating 125 years of creation is very important for all of us in the OFS."

Maria da Glória Gomes Alvarenga, a Secular Franciscan for 30 years, sees the anniversary as a way to learn more about the charism and also to spread the word. "We have already done tours and visits to other fraternities and this enriches our vocation," she said.



**Members of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Fraternity on the occasion of their 125th anniversary celebration.**

## 647 FRANCISCANS ATTEND POST-COVID CONGRESS IN U.S.



**With the Congress hotel looming in the background, “Q” attendees participated in the celebration of daily mass at St. Mary’s Basilica, an historic Franciscan parish in downtown Phoenix, Arizona. Photo by Robert Stronach, OFS.**

by MARY and ROBERT STRONACH, OFS

The hot Arizona sunshine, producing daily temperatures topping 100 degrees F (37.78 C), did not sway hundreds of Franciscans from attending the USA’s 20th Quinquennial Congress.

Hosted in Phoenix Aug. 3-7, the “Q” attracted a total of 647 Secular Franciscans and other members of the Franciscan Family. Held every five years (although this one was delayed a year due to COVID concerns), the congress kicked off with a celebratory dinner and welcoming remarks at the Sheraton Hotel. Then the throng of Franciscans ventured outside and crossed the street to

attend the event’s opening mass at St. Mary’s Basilica, an historic Franciscan parish.

The agenda featured a number of keynote speakers:

- Fr. David B. Couturier, OFM Cap., dean of Franciscan Studies, St. Bonaventure University, Olean, New York.
- Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv., of the Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky.
- Doug and Marion Clorey, OFS, past Canadian and international leaders.
- Tim and Kathy Taormina, OFS, mentors to Franciscan youth.

- Lori Hinker, OFS, a youth leader.

In addition, Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, and Vice Minister General Mary Stronach, OFS, brought greetings from the Presidency and spoke about how the world’s situation is calling us to action, and challenged Secular Franciscans to build on the Franciscan movement by creating a rippling effect from doing one act of kindness each day.

The “Q” also featured daily small group discussions (“little fraternities”) and nearly a score of break-out sessions on a variety of Franciscan and spiritual topics.

*Continued on next page.*





**“Living the Gospel is more important than talking about it,” Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv., told the crowd at the Quinquennial Congress. Photo by Robert Stronach, OFS.**

*Continued from previous page.*

Friar David drew a standing ovation after delivering a speech centered around an important element of the Secular Franciscan Rule -- to build a more fraternal world. Describing it as a “divine charter to build a fraternal world,” Father David noted: “Yours is a call to build communities of caring encounters.”

Bishop Stowe sees a parallel theme in the ministries of St. Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis with a focus on rebuilding and re-evangelizing the church. His presentation pointed to a combination of living the Gospel and being evangelizing missionaries. Both St. Francis and Pope Francis believed that “living the Gospel is more important than talking about it,” he said, later adding: “No Franciscan can be exempt from being a missionary.”

Doug and Marion opened with a prayerful song before Doug began discussing the reality of the changing face of the Church. While the western, more developed world has experienced a decline in religious affiliations, “the number of Catholics across the world has increased 57

percent.” Immigrants, he said, represent the largest growth in the more developed parts of the world. In addition, the family circle is now more complex than ever. The question, then, is how do we live the Gospel life in the midst of these changes?

Marion picked up the theme of change by taking the group back 800 years to 1221 to our foundational document, *Memoriale Propositi* – the “project of life” as its name implies. Our life and rule have changed over the years, she reminded the OFS; however, the current Rule of 1978, called *Seraphicus Patriarcha*, maintains key themes that were present 800 years ago – the importance of fraternity and family, simplicity, reconciliation and daily conversion, prayer, and peace. Despite change, we as Franciscans need to continue to live the rule.

Kathy and Tim, and their daughter, Lori, focused on the question and the challenge of conversion – past, present and future. Kathy described how St. Francis changed lives, and inspired the brothers and sisters to be “exactly who they were supposed to be” and

to live the Catholic faith to the fullest. “People were swept up in love,” Kathy said, “and we are the benefactors of their choice” to follow Francis and his spirituality – a spirituality that some described as an “aroma.”

“Our aroma is strong,” she said to ripples of laughter. “Long may we smell.”

Pointing to the “radical journey of those before us,” Tim said we cannot be shy, we cannot continue to be the church’s best kept secret. Tim looked to Francis’ advice: “Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

Lori rounded out the session from a perspective of the youth of the order, noting: “We are called to continue the mission of sending, preaching, teaching and converting.” This happens, she said, when we receive the sacraments, witness, and extend a personal invitation.

We cannot be passive, she said. “No matter what age, we much continue to be radical,” to live our Franciscan spirituality and share it with others.



### **RITE OF ADMISSION IN HOLY LAND**

Thirteen brothers and sisters in Nazareth took the next step toward becoming professed Secular Francis-

cans when they were welcomed into the Order through the Rite of Admission in March 2022, reports Presidency Councilor Noemi Riccardi, OFS.



### **NEW LOCAL COUNCIL IN BETHLEHEM**

A new local council of the Bethlehem fraternity was installed in March 2022, Presidency Councilor Noemi

Riccardi, OFS, reports.

The new minister is Fadi Gaudon.



### **ELECTIVE CHAPTER OF ROMANIA**

The National Fraternity of Romania has elected a new National Council.

The national minister is Tibor Szilárd Penu and the international councilor is Kinga Naphegyi.



### **ELECTIVE CHAPTER IN GREECE**

The new council of the fraternity in Athens was installed in June, with Presidency Councilor Noemi Riccardi, OFS, presiding and the General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Carlos Ginés Campos Julve, TOR, serving as the ecclesial witness.

The minister is Maria Thiresia Voutsinou and the secretary is Eliona Demaj (who is also serving as the contact for CIOFS). Anna Stefanou is treasurer; Maria Varthalitou is formation director, and Susan Galleno Gudat is councilor. Bishop Ioannis Spiteris, OFM Cap., is the local spiritual assistant.



### **ELECTIVE CHAPTER OF CHILE**

The OFS National Fraternity of Chile celebrated its Na-

tional Elective Chapter on 19-20 March 2022. William Tapia was elected as national minister and international councilor.



### **TOGO ELECTIVE CHAPTER**

The National Fraternity of Togo held an elective chapter in January. The new national minister is Joseph Kodjo Fogan Adegnon, who is also international councilor. Other members of the national council are: Rene Komlan Gamele

d'Almeida, vice minister; Darius Francis Ramanou, secretary; Felicienne Akoko Fayossewo, treasurer; Eric Yaovi Ahoulou, formation teacher; Kankoe Emmanuel Keugah-Chouchouda, YouFra animator; and Spiritual Assistant Christophe Tougouma, OFM.



**ELECTIVE CHAPTER IN BOLIVIA**

The OFS National Fraternity of Bolivia celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 12-13 March 2022. Mari-

anne Loayza was elected as national minister and international councilor. Carlos Salazar was elected as national vice minister and substitute international councilor.



**COSTA RICA ELECTIVE CHAPTER**

The OFS National Fraternity of Costa Rica celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 22-23 January 2022. Ricardo Herrera Sandi was elected as national minister

and international councilor. Adela Chinchilla Navarro was national vice minister and International councilor substitute.



**ELECTIONS IN EL SALVADOR**

The OFS National Fraternity of El Salvador celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 3-5 June 2022 in the

city of Sonzacate - Sonsonate. Miguel Ernesto Marquina was elected national minister and international councilor. His substitute is Alberto Napoleón Zaldaña.



**ELECTIVE CHAPTER OF PORTUGAL**

The OFS National Fraternity of Portugal celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 25-27 March 2022. Rui

Jorge Silva was reelected as national minister and international councilor.



**ZIMBABWE ELECTIVE CHAPTER**

The OFS National Fraternity of Zimbabwe celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 5-8 May 2022. Inviolata

Nhunduni was elected as national minister and international councilor.



**CANADA ELECTIONS**

The OFS National Fraternity of Canada celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 14-17 July 2022, with Vice

Minister General Mary Stronach, OFS, presiding. Jewel Jasmins was elected as national minister and as international councillor.



**ELECTIVE CHAPTER IN NICARAGUA**

The OFS National Fraternity of Nicaragua celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 27-29 May 2022 in the

city of Darío (Matagalpa). Orlando Zamora Flores was elected as national minister and as international councillor. His substitute is Ana Verónica Palacios.



**ELECTIVE CHAPTER IN VIETNAM**

National Elective Chapter of OFS Vietnam was held on June 20-21, 2022, in Hồ Chí Minh City. The Chap-

ter members elected the new national minister and the Council.



## ELECTIONS IN SLOVENIA

The OFS National Fraternity of Slovenia celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 21-22 May 2022. Fani

Pečar was re-elected as national minister and Tomaž Potokar was re-elected as international councilor.



*40° Capítulo Nacional Fraternal y 14° Electivo*  
 "...QUE NO SE MARCHE JAMÁS SIN TU MISERICORDIA"  
 NUEVO CONSEJO NACIONAL OFS ARGENTINA

## ARGENTINA ELECTIVE CHAPTER

The OFS National Fraternity of Argentina celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 18-19 June 2022. San-

tiago Negro was elected as national minister and international councilor. The vice-minister and substitute international councilor is Omar Casas.

# For YouFra Argentina, it's all about planning with a theme



The cover of the 2022 planner produced by YouFra Argentina.

by AILEN LUCIA NATALI, national president of YouFra Argentina

The National Council of the YouFra of Argentina has produced a colorful calendar and planner for 2022 – a visible sign of YouFra's organizing and planning.

In fact, since 2019, YouFra Argentina has been disseminating annual planners with the purpose of promoting the YouFra movement, and helping the economic maintenance of the National Fraternity as well as local units of Franciscan Youth.

The annual organizers always have a central theme and a simple training on some YouFra event, anniversary

or national proposal for that year:

- **Year 2019:** Meeting of St. Francis with the Sultan and Beatification of the Rioja Martyrs (Enrique Angelleli, Fray Carlos de Dios Murias, Gabriel Longueville and Wenseslao Pedernera).

- **Year 2020:** Youth and leadership (in relation to the Latin American Day for Human Rights lived by all the YouFra of Latin America in the year 2019).

- **Year 2021:** Right to water and *Laudato Sí*, sharing this theme with the proposals of the Franciscan Fam-

ily of Argentina.

- **Year 2022:** Fraternity and Service, in relation to the 800 years of the Letter to a Minister and the Encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*.

The annual planners help the brothers and sisters of the Franciscan Family to organize dates and share important events.

They also support the YouFra movement in attracting more young people to be part of the journey and know the joy of following Jesus in the manner of Francis of Assisi.