

EMBRACE THE WORLD

MARCH, number 0001

2021



"In this way did the Lord give me, Brother Francis, the grace to begin doing penance: when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world." – Testament of St. Francis, 1226

In this edition...

Page 1 **INFORMATION CORNER**
ANNOUNCEMENTS, MESSAGES ETC.

Page 2 **EDITORIAL: Whistling in the Wind**
WHAT SEEMED BITTER WAS CHANGED INTO SWEETNESS!

Page 4 **EXCERPTS FROM RATIO FORMATONIS OFM CAP: Living according to the form of The Holy Gospel**
THE LEPER

Page 5 **JUSTICE: Opera San Francesco per i poveri, Milan, Italy**
LENDING A HAND TO A PERSON EVERY DAY EVEN AT THE TIME OF COVID-19

Page 8 **PEACE: The Capuchins of Chad and Central African Republic**
WE HAVE HERE ONLY FIVE LOAVES OF BREAD AND TWO FISHES

Page 11 **INTEGRITY OF CREATION: Capuchin GEM (Green Environment Movement)**
CHANGING THE WORLD FROM OUR DOORSTEPS

Page 12 **INTEGRITY OF CREATION: Photo Gallery**
CAPUCHIN 511 AT THE GENERAL CURIA

Page 13 **INTEGRITY OF CREATION: RECYCLED (7Rs of Waste Management)**
CREATING A PLANT BOX USING RECYCLED MATERIALS



A publication of
the Office of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation
Order of Friars Minor Capuchins
Via Piemonte 70, Rome, Italy



INFORMATION CORNER

Announcements, messages etc.

Embrace the World, First Edition

Brothers. Peace and good. We are finally able to publish the first edition of our journal: Embrace the world. At first, we were hoping to launch it on the month of January 2021. However, for one reason or another, the date was moved to March 2021. What is important is that we have already started. We hope the our articles will be sources of inspiration and consolation for all of you. Happy reading!



Calendar of activities

Note: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the dates are subject to change.

April 10 and 17, 9AM New York Time	An online conference of the JPIC of PANAMERICA
April 22, 2021	Earth Day Celebration: Blessing and dedication of trees, gardens, garden tools and gardeners in all Capuchin Convents, Schools, Parishes and retreat houses
June 2021	Meeting of Capuchin Representatives of the Major Centers for the Poor in Europe (venue: Madrid, Spain)
October 2021	A conference of the PACC JPIC (in collaboration with the Secretariat on Formation and with the Secretariat on Mission Animation)
November 2021	Visit to Capuchin circumscriptions in the African Continent (in collaboration with the Secretariat on Formation and with the Secretariat on Mission Animation)
December 2021	A conference of the CCMSI JPIC (in collaboration with the Secretariat on Formation and with the Secretariat on Mission Animation)



SHARE YOUR STORY

One of the best ways to animate the world towards loving the excluded is to share your stories. We invite you to be a contributor to EMBRACE THE WORLD by sending us a story of your work in your immediate peripheries especially in the area of JUSTICE, PEACE and INTEGRITY OF CREATION. All articles should be limited to one page only (no more than 600 words). You can send us as many pictures as you want. You can also send us a video (It should not exceed 10 minutes of duration). All your contributions will be published in EMBRACE THE WORLD and will also be posted on the CAPUCHIN JPIC WEBSITE in the blog of your specific Conference. You can write your story in your own language. Send all contributions to: jpicofmcap.webmaster@gmail.com

"If we wish justice, peace and ecology to become specific services in our provinces and fraternities we must form an international secretariat with a full-time staff. Its responsibility will be to develop and co-ordinate this new ministry throughout the world, in a Franciscan manner. It will be at the service of the General Definitory (Council), which should constantly become THE VOICE OF THE POOR FOR THE WHOLE ORDER." – CPO V #97

Links:

Capuchin JPIC Website: <https://jpeofmcap.wordpress.com/>

Capuchin JPIC Institute of Life: <https://www.jpicofmcap.org/>

Capuchin JPIC Online Library: <https://www.jpicofmcap.org/library/>



EDITORIAL

Whistling in the wind

WHAT SEEMED BITTER WAS CHANGED INTO SWEETNESS!

Peace and good to everyone.

Embracing the world demands from us a radical way of living in solidarity with the excluded. It requires us to be *shepherds that smell like the sheep*. It impels us not to simply be with the excluded but to be their brothers. It means living among them without elevating ourselves on a pedestal or sitting in a throne. It means working together with them, being in dialogue with them, finding solutions with them, experiencing their challenges and triumphs.

I am reminded of a picture of St. Francis embracing the leper and another picture of him embracing Jesus. Francis embraced Jesus by embracing the leper. We also embrace Jesus when we embrace the excluded in the world, be it the suffering poor or the suffering creation.



THE VOCATION OF SAINT FRANCIS AS EXPRESSED IN HIS TESTAMENT

I invite you now to a short reflection on the first part of the Testament of St. Francis in which he briefly expressed to us how God called him and led him to his vocation. A vocation that we Capuchins, the 'brothers of the Testament', are also called to live.

"In this way did the Lord give me, Brother Francis, the grace to begin doing penance: when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world."

— Testament of St. Francis, 1226

THE LORD GIVE ME, BROTHER FRANCIS, THE GRACE TO BEGIN DOING PENANCE

St. Francis referred to penance as a grace. He viewed it as something positive. Maybe because for him, penance leads to rebirth from the old self that is struggling with sin, weaknesses and selfishness to a new man imbued with grace, fortitude and charity for others. I believe he looked at penance as a process of conversion. A journey back to the presence of God whom he passionately seek.

WHEN I WAS IN SIN, IT SEEMED TOO BITTER FOR ME TO SEE LEPERS

Anne Sullivan once told her pupil Helen Keller that: *The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen nor even touched, but just felt in the heart*. Sin and habitual preoccupation with external things deprive us of the sensitivity of our spiritual senses. It prevents our spirit from seeing, hearing and feeling spiritual realities clearly. Hence, *they look, but they don't really see. They hear, but they don't really listen or understand* (Matthew 13:13). Before his conversion, when Francis sees a leper what he sees is what society in general often sees. He saw in the leper his physical illness and deformities. He saw someone who is a threat to his health, someone with a fearful countenance that could infect him even from a distance. Someone who can bring him suffering and even death. We can find some parallelism between his experience and the present COVID-19 pandemic.



AND THE LORD HIMSELF LED ME AMONG THEM AND I SHOWED MERCY TO THEM

Lord, I want to see! (Luke 18:41) This is the phrase of a blind man before Jesus. St. Francis at the beginning of his conversion would constantly say this prayer: *"Most high, glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me Lord, a correct faith, a certain hope, A PERFECT CHARITY, sense and knowledge, so that I may carry out Your holy and true command"* (Prayer of St. Francis before the cross of San Damiano).

Regaining the sensitivity of our spiritual senses takes time. It was a gradual journey for St. Francis. He first had to sever his attachment to the comforts he experienced within the walls of Assisi. He divested himself of his comfortable clothes and later replaced them with a garb of penance. He went out of the walls of Assisi and started to live among the lepers near the ruined church of San Damiano. He also spent times within the caves of mount Subasio seeking God in the depths of his heart. Then slowly he learned to see. Then he no longer just noticed the leper but he started to feel their pain. He learned to show mercy to them. Showing mercy or learning to feel the pain of others is not yet PERFECT CHARITY but it is already a beginning.

AND WHEN I LEFT THEM, WHAT HAD SEEMED BITTER TO ME WAS CHANGED INTO SWEETNESS OF SOUL AND BODY

We undergo several stages before we reach perfect charity. First we need to see things with our heart and spirit. When we begin to notice the excluded in our society who are often invisible to our attention despite of their physical presence among us, then we learn to slowly feel their sufferings. This leads to mercy but the feeling of mercy comes from a vantage point of someone who is at a status higher than the one receiving the mercy. There is a need for mercy to grow into compassion which brings us down from our pedestals or ivory towers. This draws us out from our comfort zones and reach out to alleviate the sufferings of others. When we start to care for those who suffer, we sooner or later become one with them and their suffering, we develop a deeper solidarity with them. We become equals. For us Capuchins, the challenge is to be even lesser than them. To be at their service.

The caregiver and the one in need of care experience together struggles and triumphs only known between them. They develop a certain intimacy natural among those who struggle and journey together. In these struggles, they start to appreciate each other's beauty amidst their weaknesses and imperfections. Judgment is lessened and acceptance is increased. Later a deeper knowledge of the other person is gained. The bond becomes stronger and deeper. From it grows a charity that is unconditional and inclusive; a charity that is much more perfect than when they started their journey together.

Parallel to this journey towards unconditional and perfect charity to others is a journey towards a deeper relationship with God whose image can be discerned in all His creation. To learn to see God as our Father, leads to an experiential awareness that the excluded are our brothers and sisters. Perfect charity comes with the acceptance of the reality that we are all children of God, including creation, and that we are all inter-related. The pain of our sisters and brothers is also our pain. Their joy is our joy. When we see that suffering people are finally experiencing some form of comfort and sweetness, it also becomes a source of comfort and sweetness in our hearts.

AND AFTERWARDS I DELAYED A LITTLE AND LEFT THE WORLD

Outside the walls of Assisi, in the depths of the caves of mount Subasio and in the ruined church of San Damiano, Francis found a hidden treasure. He discovered the face of Jesus both in the lepers that he lived with daily and in the cross of San Damiano that he contemplated constantly. The darkness of the caves brought him back to the womb of his Creator and he was reborn and he saw the true treasure of life. I am reminded of the encounter of Nicomedus with Jesus. Jesus told him, *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."* (John 3:3).

Francis saw the real treasure outside the walls of Assisi. This is the treasure of being restored back to his dignity as a son of God. He also found his mission: to be an instrument of restoring all things to their dignity as children of God. Afterwards, he delayed a little and left the world. *The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field* (Matthew 13:44).

MY BELOVED CALLS TO ME

My beloved calls to me, "Arise, my darling. Come away with me, my beautiful one." (Song of Songs 2:10). Each day, the Beloved calls to us: *Arise my darling. Come away with me, my beautiful one!* He waits for us. He is patient. His love is unrelenting. Each day, God invites us to leave our comfort zones, to go to the peripheries and respond to the cry of the poor and the cry of creation. A precious treasure is truly waiting for us out there. Come! Let us make haste and meet the bridegroom to celebrate with him! *Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.* (Isaiah 55:1)

Br. Joel de Jesus, OFM Cap.
Director, Office of JPIC, Capuchins



EXCERPTS FROM RATIO FORMATIONIS OFM CAP

Living according to the form of the Holy Gospel

THE LEPER

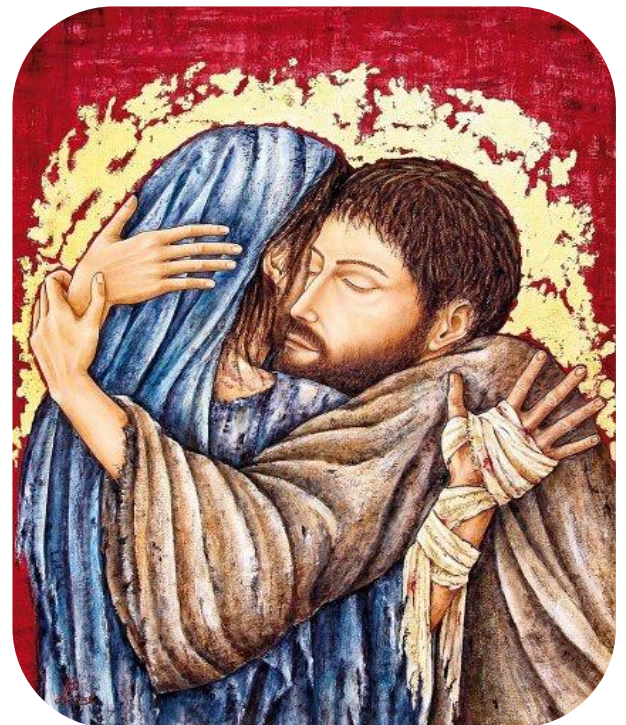
(An Excerpt from the Ratio Formationis of the Capuchins # 21- 24)

21. To take the risk of being present with the heart, (Mi 6:8): inside the human misery of another: this is the dynamic of mercy. Some war wounds would leave their mark on the emotional memory of Francis until the end of his life. The gentle gaze of God's mercy helped him to know, to welcome and to integrate his own wounds and shadow side. Only one who has experienced mercy can show mercy. This is something that completely changes our ways of relating to others: from accusation and judgement leading to guilt, we are led to empathy and understanding, inviting us to responsibility. For Francis, sharing the life of lepers was a school in the true sense (1Cel 17; L3C 11). From that moment, the free gift of mercy became the foundation of the new project of evangelical living inspired by God Himself.

22. *When I was in sin it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body* (Test 1-3). For a long time, Francis feels insecure in the presence of lepers, and protects himself: up go the walls, he keeps his distance, he hides. It wasn't a fear of physical contagion, but something more profound, it was fear of sharing the same fate as the lepers: fear of not being accepted, of being excluded, of having no rights, of not being known or loved by anyone. Being invisible: being nothing and nobody.

23. Francis kisses the leper - although we should really say, allows himself to be kissed. It was not just an act of sheer will-power to overcome his repugnance. His kiss was the expression of a sincere emotional experience, which eventually drove out all fear and transformed his whole emotional universe. Everything starts to take on new meaning: bitterness becomes sweet, a transition takes place, from needing to be recognised by others to having a good knowledge of himself. Thanks to the lepers, Francis begins to know himself and experiences the meaning of gratuitous giving. To kiss the Gospel and to kiss the leper are the same thing; listening to the words of Jesus and hearing the cry rising from the flesh of those who suffer, are the same thing: it is always Jesus who is speaking, and who plants the kiss (Mt 25: 31-46) (1Cel 17; 2Cel 9; L3C 11; LMj 1,5)¹.

24. Among the lepers, far from all false security, true interior security arises. Here is the evangelical paradox: the less the power, the greater the freedom (VII PCO 19). Where there is nothing to lose, real security is born, as a gift freely given. Here Francis learns another decisive lesson that was to leave its mark on his life and on that of his brothers: the incompatibility between brotherhood and power. Anyone who wants to be a lesser brother must serve and give up any kind of dominion over others (Mk 10: 42-45; ER 3,9; 6,3; 16, 6; SalBVM 16-18; 2LAg 47).



¹ Cf. F. ACCROCA, *Tutto cominciò tra i lebbrosi. Gli inizi dell'avventura spirituale di Francesco d'Assisi*, Porziuncola, Assisi 2014.



JUSTICE

Opera San Francesco Per I Poveri, Milan, Italy



**LENDING A HAND TO A PERSON
EVERY DAY**

even at the time of **COVID-19**

Note from the Director of JPIC: At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in Italy, I wrote our Capuchin brothers of Northern Italy working in the soup kitchens for the poor to share with us how they were able to continue to help the poor amidst the quarantines and other challenges they faced. The brothers from Opera San Francesco per i poveri (OSF) in Milan, Italy responded and sent us this message. May we find inspiration from this letter to continue to embrace those who are in need of help even at this time of the pandemic.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." (John 21:15)

During the COVID-19 emergency, the *Opera San Francesco per i poveri* (Work of St. Francis for the poor) continued its "mission" by remaining close to the least and the most needy. It was necessary to modify the way in which the guests were received in order to comply with ministerial provisions for the protection of the guests themselves and of the volunteers who served during this time of pandemic.

The shared objective of placing the PERSON at the center, guaranteeing what is synthesized in our motto, "Lending a hand to a person every day", certainly has not been, nor is it, a path without difficulties and continuous reorganization. The strength that has sustained us during this time has been the simple words of gratitude and the eyes of the people we meet every day, filled with a brilliance that leads us back to the INFINITE and reminds us of the great certainty that we are all children of the same Father.

It is true, COVID 19 is a huge health problem that spares no one, rich or poor, and it has not spared even us friars of Corso Concordia, who were forced into a sudden and imposed detention of 28 days due to the contagion of some of our confreres. Even the friars directly involved in the Opera had to stop and wait until the moment of quarantine had passed. Most of the volunteers had to forcibly abandon their commitment to service due to the drama of the Lombardy and Italian situation while remaining in communion in heart and mind.

It was truly beautiful for us friars to see the passion with which the lay collaborators, in the midst of an emergency, took the reins of the Opera together with the usual volunteers and the new ones who generously responded to the call for help. It was a great consolation and teaching for us friars to observe from the windows of the convent the effort and dedication of the people who are committed to ensure that every day, brothers and sisters in need will lack nothing. The solidarity with all that is small, weak and suffering has made concrete and visible to us that unique and indissoluble bond that our father Francis wanted with Lady Poverty.

OSF has always been known in Milan, and not only there, for its two soup kitchens that continued to provide meals during the hard days of the emergency. Faced with the impossibility of accommodating the needy in the soup kitchens, the two centers distributed bags containing take-out meals for lunch and dinner as well as protective masks. The most fortunate managed to eat in their poor homes, the others in the streets of the city. The volunteers involved in this distribution are equipped with gloves, mask and face shields to ensure everyone's safety.



photo: <https://operasanfrancesco.it/lettera-di-fra-marcello-gennaio-2021/>

The Outpatient Clinic is the most sensitive service during this period. From the beginning, all the necessary procedures have been adopted to ensure the protection of everyone, guests and operators. Each incoming patient undergoes a temperature measurement and follows all the necessary procedures to access the services offered. Precisely because of the valuable service it offers to those who cannot access the National Health Service, it has been reinvented to ensure its operability. One of the valuable initiatives born at the time of COVID-19 that deserves to be shared and that underlines the imagination and willingness to be there among the poorest, is that of home-based care. Every day, Sister Simona and Alma visit the most fragile patients wherever they are (containers, dormitories, shacks ...) to verify their needs and their situation, and if necessary, they put them in telephone contact with the volunteer doctors of the polyclinic.

The showers have never stopped working, even though their number has been reduced in accordance with ministerial regulations. It is still a service of prime necessity and one of the few open at this time in the whole of Milan. Alongside the usual faces, new ones have arrived with the same fears, the same shared efforts. Unfortunately, the locker room, due to its location, is the service that has been suspended precisely to avoid overcrowding, but has not failed to give our guests the possibility to completely change their clothes when they take a shower. The Collection Center, which sorts donated clothing and supplies the locker room, has been closed to the public since March 10. We hope to reopen it as soon as possible.

The Reception Service is open to ensure that everyone can get a card and thus have access to the canteens and showers. The other services such as the Work Desk are open in compliance with the required safety standards.

In addition to all the veteran volunteers, we must give a heartfelt thanks to these young people who, in this time of lock down of school and work, have become "rescue angels" within our services, helping us to guarantee them on a daily basis.

New forms of poverty are emerging that require an urgent and unavoidable response, to which we must necessarily respond with charity and professionalism.

The hope of all of us, friars and volunteers, is to see soon the possibility of returning to normality and to guarantee a service made of meetings and pauses where the human quality of the relationship is not sacrificed, but valued. In the hope of having you here soon to share in fraternity our experience of service to the poor, we entrust ourselves to your prayers and to your mutual remembrance. A virtual embrace, but full of affection and esteem. Peace and good.

Br. Giuseppe Fornoni and confreres of Opera San Francesco
Milan, Italy 8 May 2020
The original article is written in Italian
English Translator: Br. Joel de Jesus, OFMCap



OPERA SAN FRANCESCO PER I POVERI

OUR MISSION

ALWAYS IN MILAN

WE ARE COMMITTED TO HELPING THE POOR

Opera San Francesco per i Poveri, **OSF**, is founded by the Capuchin Friars of Viale Piave in Milan, which since 1959 **guarantees free assistance and hospitality to the poor**. It satisfies the basic and real needs of people in serious difficulty by offering them a listening ear and protection.



THE VALUES THAT GUIDE US



HOSPITALITY

All people who need it can use the services of OSF **without distinction** of ethnicity, language or religion.



FREE

OSF's services are **free** and **ongoing** throughout the year and are provided through the generous support of thousands of donors and volunteers.



ATTENTION TO THE PERSON

Whoever comes to OSF is not just the bearer of a sum of needs to be satisfied. **It is a person with an experience and a history**, sometimes dramatic, that is helped to regain their dignity and to undertake paths of social inclusion.



PROFESSIONALISM

OSF guarantees a managerial management of services attentive to **quality** and in constant **development**. OSF's services are possible thanks to the professionalism and availability of employees and volunteers.

Website: <https://operasanfrancesco.it/>



PEACE

The Capuchins of Chad and Central African Republic

WE HAVE HERE ONLY FIVE LOAVES OF BREAD AND TWO FISHES

Note from the Director of JPIC: On January 21, 2021, Father Jean Miguina, OFM Cap, Custos of the General Custody of the Capuchins in Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR), wrote a letter to the General Curia to recount the unstable, political situation in the CAR that has led to the displacement of many people from their homes. He shared how a Capuchin convent became a refuge for more than 5,000 people and the challenges the Capuchins faced in providing them with shelter and food.



¹⁵ As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food." ¹⁶ Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." ¹⁷ "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. ¹⁸ "Bring them here to me," he said. ¹⁹ And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. ²⁰ They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ²¹ The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children. (Matthew 14: 15-21)

Dear brothers,

Allow me to give you some news from Central Africa as a fraternal sharing. This Republic, which covers an area of 623,000 square kilometers and has an estimated population of five million (5 million), forms with Chad, the General Custody of Chad-CAR.

For a presentation of the Central African Republic, it must be said that it is a country located in the heart of Africa. The autopsy of the current crisis in CAR shows that the CAR is living an essentially political crisis. The country did not experience democracy until 1993. Three years later, in 1996, it recorded armed violence including mutinies from 1996 to 1998, attempted coups d'états in 2000, and coups d'états in 2003 and 2013. In 2016, in a context of insecurity marked by the actions of the Armed Groups, group elections were held. Professor Faustin Archangel TOUADERA was elected President of the Republic and Head of State, marking the return to constitutional order. He attempted to pursue a policy of reaching out, which led to the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR (*l'Accord Politique pour la Paix et la Réconciliation en République Centrafricaine: APPR-RCA*) on 6 February 2019.

After more than a year since the signing of the APPR-RCA, the CAR is not out of the woods. Despite the stated ambitions to make this Agreement an instrument to contribute to lasting peace, the least that can be said is that peace is precarious in light of the human rights violations that continue to be perpetrated in the hinterland and most recently in the capital Bangui. In fact, despite a context of widespread insecurity, the country organized coupled elections (presidential and legislative) on December 27, 2020. The provisional results of the elections were announced on January 4, giving the outgoing president victory in the first round of voting with a figure of 53.92%. The Constitutional Court validated the president's victory with 53.16 percent on Monday, January 18, 2021.

It is in this context of an increased presence of rebels in the hinterland, some groups of which are signatories of the APPR-RCA, that the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) was born in mid-December, a group of armed rebel groups that disrupted the smooth conduct of the elections by preventing the population from



exercising their civic duty in several cities in the country. The town of Bouar, where the curia of the Custody is located, was unable to vote due to the detonation of weapons heard early in the morning of December 27, election day. The CPC rebels were ordered to prevent the elections from taking place, and so they issued summons to dissuade citizens who wanted to go to the polling stations. In the end, no one was able to vote in Bouar as in several provincial towns.

On Thursday, January 7, an altercation between a member of the regular forces and an Antibalaka element (self-defense militia allied to the CPC) resulted in an exchange of fire between the two individuals, which involved both forces in the city. The population, caught off guard, found refuge in the parishes of the city and in our Convent of St. Lawrence which houses the philosophers and the Curia. Caught off guard, we too welcomed as best we could all those who came to us. Some were welcomed in the guest rooms but the majority slept under the verandas, in the garage, in the parlors etc. Water was provided for the first day. The next day, January 8, we had to mobilize the young volunteers among the displaced to help us count the number of people on our site (we counted 2268 people in total), organize them by sector, quickly dig three toilets. For health cases, our brothers Antonio Triani, a doctor and Parfait Mandazou, a brother in initial training but a state-qualified nurse, helped day and night some of the displaced who fell ill.



The following day, January 8, MINUSCA (UN Mission in the Central African Republic) accompanied Bishop Mirek, the Prefect of Bouar, came to visit us and inquire about the situation of the displaced. We explained to them the precarious situation of the people who have found refuge in our Convent, insisting on the lack of water, food, medicine and the insufficiency of toilets and decent shelters. They took note and promised to relay the information for an emergency response. But the sun went down without the displaced seeing the promised emergency aid coming.

On Saturday, January 9, clashes resumed between the forces in place, resulting in more displaced people on our site, bringing the number to about 4000. We just had to offer space within the walls of the convent so that everyone felt safe. It is there, under the stars, that many had to lay out their mats, their loincloths to spend the night. While waiting for the help of the NGOs, everyone is doing what they can to prepare food with the small means carried in haste during the escape. A small market has been set up to offer basic necessities: cassava flour, rice, beans, salt, sugar, smoked meat, etc. While some people manage to get something to eat, others depend on the generosity of neighbors. For example, we had to help the young volunteers (about thirty) for the daily food ration to enable them to continue to give themselves for the organization, the sensitization and the order in this fortuitous cohabitation but which is likely to last.

After a week, the water arrived by the MINUSCA water truck, followed by WFP energy cookies. It was only on January 19, 2021 that food distribution began for 5,409 people on the list of displaced persons in St. Lawrence. We hope that peace will return so that these displaced people can go back to normal life.

Fr. Jean Miguina, Custos
Bouar on January 21, 2021
Friars Minor Capuchins
General Custody, Chad - R.C.A.

B.P. 23 - BOUAR (R.C.A.) Tel. 00236 75727962
Original article is written in French
English Translator: Br. Joel de Jesus, OFMCap



PHOTOS: *The Capuchins of Chad and Central African Republic:* WE HAVE HERE ONLY FIVE LOAVES OF BREAD AND TWO FISHES





INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Capuchin GEM (Green Environment Movement)

CHANGING THE WORLD FROM OUR DOORSTEPS

"Five years on the encyclical appears ever more relevant. The multiple «cracks in the planet that we inhabit» (Laudato si', 163), from the melting ice caps in the Arctic to the raging wildfires in the Amazon, from extreme weather patterns around the world to unprecedented levels of loss of biodiversity that sustain the very fabric of life, are too evident and detrimental to be ignored anymore."

– Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Vatican

In response to the downward situation of our environment, the Capuchins are trying to lift up the world using their convent gardens as the fulcrum. Manual labor has always been a part of our Capuchin tradition and most, if not all of our convents, have vegetable and herb gardens. Creation has always been our silent partner in the contemplative and eremitical dimensions of our life.

We continue the Capuchin tradition of caring for the earth through the Capuchin Green Environment Movement (Capuchin GEM). Capuchin GEM has three elements:

1. Capuchin 511
 - 1.1. Planting and caring for at least 5 trees
 - 1.2. Having 1 vegetable garden
 - 1.3. Having 1 portion of the garden dedicated for herbs
2. Reforestation
 - 2.1. All circumscriptions are encouraged to have at least one reforestation project that promotes participation of the laity
3. Waste Management
 - 3.1. All convents are encouraged to practice proper waste management using the 7R guidelines

Table 1: The 7Rs of waste management

1. Refuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not buy what you do not need. Do not accept plastic bags when you can bring with you a reusable bag. Avoid individually packaged products when you can buy them together in a single package.
2. Reduce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce consumption of energy and materials. Save electricity, water and other resources. Avoid buying more than you need. Buy things that last longer. Avoid products that are over-packaged.
3. Re- gift, Reuse or Repurpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you received something that you do not need, consider giving it to someone who can use it. Do not throw away something when you can still reuse it. Some things, after they have been used, can still be useful for another purpose.
4. Repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If something can still be repaired and reused again, do not throw it away. Maximize the usability or lifespan of products. Take good care of things to make them last longer.
5. Recycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When a product can no longer be repaired, reused or repurposed, then maybe it is time to recycle it (e.g. paper, plastic, metals, electronic items).
6. Recover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If something can no longer be used but you can still save something from it, like ENERGY, save it (e.g. generating bio-fuel from decomposing organic matter, composting).
7. Responsible disposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice proper segregation and disposal of garbage. Place all plastics, metals, cartons, organic matter, biohazards, batteries and others in separate containers and dispose them properly.



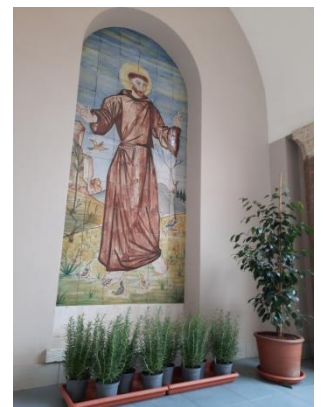
INTEGRITY OF CREATION

Photo Gallery: Capuchin 511 at the General Curia

"For this reason, (Saint) Francis asked that part of the friary garden always be left untouched, so that wild flowers and herbs could grow there, and those who saw them could raise their minds to God, the Creator of such beauty. Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise."

– *Laudato si'*, 12

The General Curia has a beautiful garden at the heart of its concrete structure. The garden, has 18 trees, some herbs and ornamental plants. We recently created a new garden at the roof deck or terrace that is dedicated for potted vegetables and herbs. The garden of the Curia is a concrete example of Capuchin 511 (at least 5 trees, 1 vegetable garden and 1 space for herbs). In addition, most of the materials used in the rooftop garden are recycled.





INTEGRITY OF CREATION: RECYCLED (7Rs of Waste Management)

Creating a plant box using recycled materials

Materials needed:

4 rectangular, plastic containers



1 plastic crate



Instructions:

1. Cut the plastic containers into two along the red line.



2. Apply the soil into the container and proceed to planting.



3. Place the 4 containers into the plastic crate to complete the plant box.



4. **Another option:** You can stack one crate after another to create a tower version of the plant box.



"It is hard for us to accept that the way natural ecosystems work is exemplary: plants synthesize nutrients which feed herbivores; these in turn become food for carnivores, which produce significant quantities of organic waste which give rise to new generations of plants. But our industrial system, at the end of its cycle of production and consumption, has not developed the capacity to absorb and reuse waste and by-products. We have not yet managed to adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations."

– Laudato si', 22