

Our Saints: Witnesses of "identity and the sense of belonging"

Notes on the recent circular letter of the General Minister - Br. Francisco Lopes



“Who are we Capuchin Friars Minor?” Beginning with this very question, the General Minister, Br. Mauro Jöhri, this past October 4, sent to the whole Order his latest Circular Letter with the title, “Friars Minor Capuchin: their identity and sense of belonging.” In summary, the letter calls us personally and in common to live what we have promised in the profession of the evangelical counsels in our Order, journeying, however, an important and effective path of realistic reflection, being concrete and fraternal on the way we move ahead with such a choice in daily life, a choice that places us within a history of a host of brothers that centuries before us have taken up the same path in the footsteps of St. Francis in conformity with the inspirations of the Capuchin reform and that today, as beacons of holiness, drives us to seek in the inconsistency of our times, the one means of not losing our Capuchin identity, namely, returning to strengthen our belonging to this particular charism in the great Franciscan family in the Church.

The “priority of the fraternal life” remains to distinguish, even in current history, marked strongly by individualism, the trait of our belonging to the spiritual family desired by Francis of Assisi. This “fraternal life,” however, abides in precise and deliberately chosen places, even physically and geographically, in order to foster closeness to the people without disturbing the withdrawn simplicity that is many times not desired by others. This has always characterized our form of life and apostolate.

It is right that here the life of our saints speaks to us. And we have many of them, thank heaven! Almost all of them were known as “good and merciful friars” not because they practiced a sterile “fuga mundi,” hiding themselves from the noises, risks, and sufferings of the people but because they shared in them with a vision of faith and a practical charity in solidarity, even to heroism, but always with Franciscan joy and simplicity. Thus, the external signs that accompany our Capuchin identity – the habit, the beard, the hermitage – do not serve only to distinguish us in iconography but are still a true sign of the family tree to which we belong and that in the history of the Church have brought out and bring out still many fruits of holiness.

If we succeed, then, in imagining that our vocation and mission in the current world, complex and in constant and rapid change, continuing to be that of our “greatest brothers,” to discover the face of Christ in the Church today, we have the real possibility of continuing to be valid signs for future generations, especially for those who ask us to “touch the flesh of Christ” as Pope Francis also insists. This remains possible only if our vision will be full of the enthusiasm of one who looks forward to a reality that knocks on the door with the hands of those newly arrived, guided by the footsteps of holiness of those who preceded us but also beginning from our way of life guided by our constant pursuit and belonging to this exciting challenge of living the Gospel with the “DNA” of the Capuchins.

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Meeting of the General Council and New Members of the Fraternity

ROME, Italy - The ordinary meeting of the General Council was held from September 15-26. These are the most important topics and decisions:

- The budget of International Solidarity for the year 2015 was approved;
- The number of delegates for PCO VIII was approved together with a change in the place of its celebration: the International College ‘San Lorenzo da Brindisi,’ Rome;
- Draft program for the Meeting in Fatima (December 1-5, 2014);
- The resignation of Br. Willibrord Jan Geerts, provincial councilor of the Province of Flanders, was accepted and Br. Marcin Derdziuk was appointed as his successor;
- The Custody of the Dominican Republic and Haiti, on October 14, 2014, will be divided into the General Custody of the Dominican Republic and the Delegation of Haiti, the latter depending on the Province of Rio Grande do Sul.

Appointments for the General Curia and the houses dependent on the General Minister: Delegate for the Capuchin Poor Clares - Br. Leonardo Ariel González (Province of Rio de la Plata); Delegate for the OFS - Br. Francis Bongajum Dor (Custody of Cameroon); Vice General Secretary - Br. Ivan Michele Milazzo (Province of Palermo); Guardian of Garbatella - Br. Benitius Brevoort (Province of Medan); Vicar of Garbatella/Chaplain of the Poor Clares - Br. Hailemikael Beraki (Province of Eritrea).



Leonardo



Francis



Ivan



Benitius



Hailemikael

The Office of the General Postulator: The "Saint Factory"?

BICI interviews Br. Carlo Calloni – General Postulator OFM/Cap



What is the service to the Order of the *Office of the General Postulator*?

The Office of the General Postulator has the first task of bringing fully to light the holiness of many of our brothers such that the Church, in her authority, declares them to be models and intercessors for all those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. At the same time the Office works such that the memory of many of our brothers, of our sisters of the Second Order (the Capuchin Poor Clares) and the sisters and brothers of the Institutes or Congregations aggregated or affiliated to the Order be kept alive and not be lost. Concretely then, the Office of the General Postulator has a threefold task: legislative, normative, and technical. It is up to the Office of the General Postulator, in fact, to manage and bring to a conclusion every Cause from the diocesan to the Roman phase; to transmit the liturgical norms and texts; and to administer the material goods of the Cause. Not to be forgotten is the task of promoting and presenting the spirituality and the holiness of the individual Servants of God, Venerables, Blesseds, and Saints that they may come to light for the good of the whole Church, for the Order, and for the greater glory of God—the holiness, gift of God for all, that is a participation in the divine life by means of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Do we still speak of "making" saints?

Often one hears that the Office of the General Postulator is the "saint factory." It's an expression that in my opinion discounts holiness and makes it banal, not recognizing the fullness of the meaning and importance of "be then perfect as my Father is perfect." The Office of the General Postulator is interested in canonical holiness, that is the holiness that is recognized by the Authority of the Church. Holiness highlighted by a holy life of exercise of the virtues to a heroic degree, of the reputation for holiness and of the signs that accompany such a life. To present the life and deeds of many of our brothers is the way to say that it is also possible today to live a life returned to God as St. Francis reminds us in the Earlier Rule: "Let us refer all good to the Lord, God Almighty and Most High,

acknowledge that every good is His, and thank Him, from Whom all good comes, for everything." 'Making saints' is the means by which the mercy and the love of God in Christ Jesus comes to be exalted. It is not something of an old and moldy sacrilege, but the beauty that makes itself present.

In a few words, what is the procedure that the Church might recognize the holiness of one of our brothers?

The Statutes of the General Curia, at n. 33,3, declares that "The Causes to be introduced are chosen with the consent of the General Minister and his Council among those that present a special interest ecclesially, or for the Order, and are able to bear a significant message for contemporary people." The path starts with the request by the Provincial Minister or Custos to begin the process of beatification and canonization of a brother. The first step is to verify the reputation for holiness. In other words if the brother in life, in death, or after death has had significant and consistent recognition by the People of God of a life that showed the signs of heroic virtue. It is important that the reputation for sanctity be spontaneous and not induced or, even worse, built around a table. The reputation for holiness having been verified, the more technical and canonical part begins. The Postulator sends the request or petition to the Bishop of the place where the Servant of God died, asking that the diocesan inquiry begin, listening to witnesses, gathering the archived proofs, verifying the doctrine and certifying that the cult is not underserved. At the end of the diocesan inquiry the Acts are handed over to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, which begins the Roman phase of the Cause. Having obtained the decree of juridical validity of the diocesan inquiry, the preparation of the *Positio* proceeds in collaboration with the *Relatore* appointed by the same Congregation. Then follows in succession the verification by the historical consultants, the theological consultants, and the Congress of Cardinals and Bishops who recognize the heroic life of the Servant of God. At this point the Holy Father approves for publication, by the Prefect of the Congregation, the Decree to declare

the brother Venerable. For beatification, then, a miracle is required, that is something extraordinary obtained by the intercession of the Venerable. With a process similar to that by which the heroic virtue is declared—diocesan inquiry, presentation of the Acts to Rome, verification of the acts by Rome, Roman medical commission—one arrives at the recognition of the event as "miraculous," and thus opening the path to beatification. For canonization a second miracle is demanded after the decree of beatification. The process is the same as that for beatification.

How can we continue to increase collaboration between the Circumscriptions and the Office of the General Postulator?

I believe that to increase collaboration between the Office of the General Postulator and the Circumscriptions it is important to know some of the steps that the Provincial Minister or Custos must make to open a Cause. The first step, which determines the success of the Cause is the verification by the Provincial Minister, with his Council, of the existing reputation for holiness. In this the Office of the General Postulator can be a real help, offering with its acquired experience and with knowledge of the norms dictated by the Church, that view and discernment that can avoid an uncertain or difficult path. The Minister must then present to the General Postulator a brother to be appointed Vice-Postulator. This is the person who gathers the documentation, even that that is contrary or seems to be contrary to the Servant of God. The Vice-Postulator takes on his full importance and relevance if he works in intense collaboration with the Office of the General Postulator without thereby feeling less important. It is worth noting that the Vice-Postulator concludes his juridical function with the closure of the diocesan inquiry but continues as 'animator' for the knowledge, diffusion, and memory of the Servant of God, Venerable, or Blessed. To conclude I can't but recall Admonition VI of our Seraphic Father St. Francis: "Therefore, it is a great shame for us, the servants of God, that the saints have accomplished great things and we want to receive glory and honor by recounting them."



The "inaugurations" of the Renovated Curia

ROME, Italy – After three of years of intense labor our General Curia on Via Piemonte was officially inaugurated. The General Council thought that the delivery of the new building, so important and significant for the whole Order, should above all thank everyone who had collaborated for the realization of the work in each stage and detail. Thus, on September 13 it was the Capuchin Friars who shared in a celebration; on September 20 the workers with their families and the whole staff and then on September 20

civil and ecclesiastical authorities were invited. Finally, on October 4, the Solemnity of St. Francis, the altar of the chapel was dedicated during the solemn Eucharist at which our confrere Seán Patrick O'Malley, Archbishop of Boston (USA), presided. All of these celebrations had an opening moment of prayer, a brief presentation and explanation of the work done, and were followed by a fraternal agape and guided tours of the building for those who wished.



Dominican Republic and Haiti: Change of Circumscription

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC - On October 16, 2014, the provincial custody of the Dominican Republic and Haiti was canonically suppressed and transformed into the General Custody of the Dominican Republic and the Provincial Delegation of Haiti (depending on the Province of Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil).

The following brothers were appointed for the administration of the General Custody of the Dominican Republic:

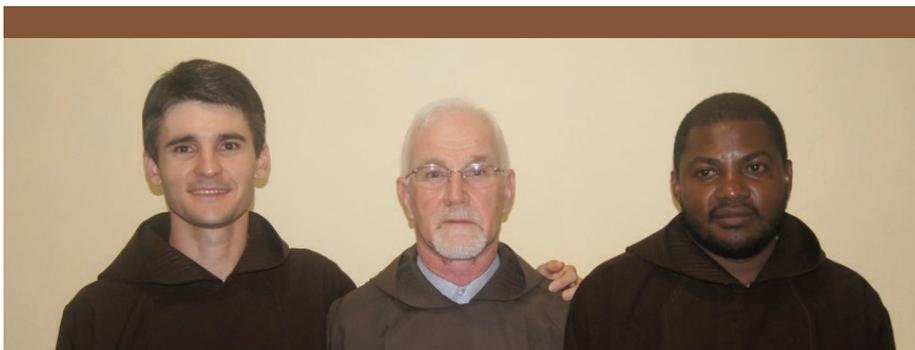
CU: Jorge Luis Jiménez Portes
1C: José David Antonio Vásquez Guzmán

2C: Kelvis Acevedo Almonte

3C: Santiago Bautista Guerrero

4C: Demetrio De La Cruz Jiménez

At the same time Br. Aldir Crocoli (Province of Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil) was appointed delegate of the Provincial Minister for Haiti and the brothers Sergio Defendi and St-Ange Bastien were appointed Councilors.



The Minister General at the Extraordinary Synod on the Family

VATICAN CITY – The General Minister, Br. Mauro Jbri, took part in the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the family and pastoral challenges in the context of evangelization, held at the Vatican from September 5 to 19. Beyond the significant experience of the universality and synodality of the Church, the Minister emphasized the desire of the Pope and the Synod Fathers to speak openly and without fear of the concrete situations that afflict people in different family situations in the world, such that, instead of being a 'customs house,' the Church may become an encouraging and merciful presence and perhaps, truly a welcoming house for all who suffer the disadvantages of a family in change or break up by suffering and separation. The final 'Relatio' presents the points that the Synod Fathers together with the Holy Father will take into consideration for the redaction of the definitive document that will come out after the Ordinary Synod on the same theme called for next year. The Synod concluded with the Mass of beatification for Pope Paul VI, at which at the General Minister also participated.

Meeting for Capuchin Library, Archive, and Museum Workers

ASSISI, Italy – The course for this year was held outside of Rome, in Assisi, from September 1 to 6 at our house, the "Domus Laetitia." The week was divided into two great moments: in fact, guided visits to the principal Franciscan places



were alternated with plenary meetings at the house, to discuss together the application of the international standards and rules for cataloguing in our cultural institutions. The 55 participants in the initiative, Capuchin religious and lay collaborators, the majority Italian, came also from Europe, North and South America, and Africa. They had the opportunity to visit the principal institutions in the city of the Poverello, not only as pilgrims and tourists, but specifically as workers for our cultural goods. They could literally touch with their hands the 'treasures' of the Franciscan heritage, especially parchments, manuscripts, art objects, and reliquaries preserved in the Sacro Convento, in Chiesa Nuova at the house of St. Francis's parents, in the

Bishop's House, the Cathedral of San Rufino, the Protomonastery of the Poor Clares, at the Portiuncula, in the Missionary Museum of the Umbrian Capuchins and in the Art Gallery of Perugia. As usual, there was also the opportunity to update the cumulative catalogue of Capuchin libraries, in which 36 libraries currently participate—the online registration of which is found at the Directory for the registry of the Capuchin Cultural Institutions and authoritative file of Capuchin authors (website: www.ibisweb.it/bcc). The Course, as in the past, was held in Italian and English.

Br. Luca Bianchi is the New President of the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality

ROME, Italy - Following the appointment of Br. Paolo Martinelli as auxiliary bishop of Milan, the Magnificent Rector of the Pontifical University 'Antonianum', Professor Mary Melone, appointed Professor Luca Bianchi OFM Cap Director of the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality for the 2014-2017 triennium, after noting his election to the Council of the Faculty of Theology on October 1, 2014.



Meeting of the Superiors of the CIC

FATIMA, Portugal - The XVI biannual meeting of the superiors (provincials, councilors, guardians) of CIC, 48 brothers coming from Catalonia, Spain, and Portugal, was held from October 20 to 24, 2014 at the Centro Bíblico dos Capuchinhos at Fatima. The theme for this year, in view of the next PCO, was "the sense of work in our life" elaborated by means of historical reflection, the Christian vision, and the Franciscan and Capuchin tradition in its various shades of meaning and challenges in today's world. Br. Štefan Kožuh, General Vicar, also took part in the reflection, showing the closeness and interest of the central administration for such a gathering.



ROME, Italy - November 29, 2014, is the 35th anniversary of the naming of Saint Francis as Patron of Ecology. Many believe that we stand at a critical moment of Earth's history. Social, economic and environmental crises call for an assessment of our current situation, and for the discovery of effective ways to promote responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, to future generations and to our planet.

Romans VI (the JPIC animators for the global Franciscan Family) has reflected on how best to celebrate this anniversary. We

convenient for you and your partners, preparing events, prayers and gatherings to commemorate this anniversary. Be sure to include in your planning the entire Franciscan Family, the laity with whom you work and minister, diocesan organizations, ecumenical groups, interreligious groups and all people of goodwill. Help to promote among all people a spirit of care for creation in the spirit of Francis. You might want to consider the possibility of linking this celebration with that of the Spirit of Assisi, which occurs every year on the 27th of October.

Saint Francis "PPatron of Ecology" 35th anniversary



are very happy to announce the creation of a website for this purpose that offers various resources to help with the celebration (<http://francis35.org>). It was launched on March 22nd of this year, World Water Day, a date chosen to serve as a reminder that our commitment to work for the Integrity of Creation must be concrete and practical. The resources are available in various languages, and include a reflection on the celebration, Pope John Paul II's declaration naming Francis the patron of ecology, a Eucharistic celebration, an ecumenical prayer, norms for an interreligious celebration, a Mayan Cross Prayer, Prayers of the Faithful and an article on a Franciscan spirituality of the care of creation. Please share with all your friars and other Franciscans in your area.

We invite you to celebrate in ways most appropriate to your region and culture, and most

We hope that these materials will be helpful to you. Share them as widely and as ecologically as possible; we suggest projecting words and images rather than printing papers, or at least using recycled materials when printing. Please send a short article about any celebration you hold in your city or region, along with a photo or two to us at francis35romans-VI@gmail.com. May God bless you in your work to care for the Creation that we share as gift with all of God's creatures.

Members of the Roman VI

Benedict Ayodi, OFM Cap. Nancy Celaschi and Sheila Kinsey, IFC-TOR

Attilio Galimberti, OFS. Thomas Kocbuchira, TOR. Ugo Sartorio, OFM Conv.

Joe Rozansky and Fabio L'Amour Ferreira, OFM