

St. Francis and the Jubilee of Mercy



Edited by BICI

The Holy Father has announced ahead of time, in canonical terms, the opening of the next Jubilee; he gave the notice himself this past March 13, on the second anniversary of his election as pastor of the Universal Church: it will be the Holy Year of Mercy. The opening of the next Jubilee will take place on the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (1965), and because of this has a special meaning, moving the Church to continue the work begun by the Council. Here are the words of the Pope during the penitential liturgy at the Vatican: “[...] I have often thought of how the Church may render more clear her mission to be a witness to mercy; and we have to make this journey. It is a journey which begins with spiritual conversion. Therefore, I have decided to announce an Extraordinary Jubilee which has at its centre the mercy of God. It will be a Holy Year of Mercy. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful” (cf. Lk 6:36). And this especially applies to confessors! So much mercy! This Holy Year will commence on the next Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and will conclude on Sunday, 20 November 2016, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe and living face of the Father’s mercy. [...] I am confident that the whole Church, which is in such need of mercy for we are sinners, will be able to find in this Jubilee the joy of rediscovering and rendering fruitful God’s mercy, with which we are all called to give comfort to every man and every woman of our time. Do not forget that God forgives all, and God forgives always. Let us never tire of asking forgiveness. Let us henceforth entrust this Year to the Mother of Mercy, that she turn her gaze upon us and watch over our journey: our penitential journey, our year-long journey with an open heart,

to receive the indulgence of God, to receive the mercy of God.”

A Pope called Francis who proclaims an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy recalls to us the words of St. Francis chosen in his Testament to describe the beginnings, by then a long time past, of his conversion, that of the “I showed mercy” that lives in the meeting with the lepers and which gave him a new existence: “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”; his whole life was marked by the sign of the mercy of the Father that accompanied him, encouraged him and made him live the gift and give life. In this face of the Father “rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4), Francis learned to love. A love first received, welcomed, lived, and then offered. A love that opens up to praise and thanksgiving. And in that blessed embrace of the Father of every mercy, Francis gave birth to a new humanity. “He embraced the mother of the Lord Jesus with an inexpressible love since she made the Lord of Majesty a brother to us and, through her, we have obtained mercy.” The gestures and the words, in the daily life of his living in the world, speak the language of mercy, the language of a mother. It is a attentive and generous outlook, but above all one of pardon. Recall the beautiful words that he writes in the Letter to a Minister: “And if you have done this, I wish to know in this way if you love the Lord and me, His servant and yours: that there is not any brother in the world who has sinned—however much he could have sinned—who, after he has looked into your eyes, would ever depart without your mercy, if he is looking for mercy.” The pardon/mer-

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cy comes from love and is the response to Love: “If you love the Lord.” In St. Francis mercy takes on the generous face of attention and of care, of the one who knows how to welcome his own weakness and how to bend down with tenderness towards another. “Where there is mercy and discretion, there is neither pride nor hardness.” Thus St. Francis admonishes the friars. A heart of mercy is a heart of benevolence, open to pardoning, a heart that doesn’t know the hardness of pride and that, following the example of Christ, knows how to “walk in charity.” (Eph 5:2)



The Grace of Working: Between Theory and Reality



Considerations on the Circular Letter of the General Minister - Br. Dominique Pacreau, OFM Cap, Province of France

I was struck by the observations on secularization

Our brother the General Minister does not put forward great theoretical debates on secularization. He makes a prior observation: our sources of support came in great part from pastoral work, but this is no longer the case. Missionary activity is not lacking; it is rather more abundant and necessary than it has ever been, but it will not bring any sort of support. To live in the periphery of a population – or in a Muslim neighborhood – to go out from the church, to go towards the peripheries, can demand much energy, but there is no one who will pay you for this. I find it interesting that for the first time the following situation makes itself present to us: we are in a mission country – everywhere in the world. In France this was written eighty years ago, but the Church has continued to move forward as if there was still a Christian regime. It is necessary to draw the conclusions, to find new approaches for the Church and for the Capuchins.

We are forced by necessity

It is poverty that calls us to look again at certain practices: we are forced. It is often this way. I don't want a cheap spirituality, but this is life; it is the Holy Spirit, perhaps, who invites us to conversion, to change, to invent. It is when we are up against the wall that the questions put themselves to us. Will we listen to this call?

What are we invited to do?

To share ordinary life. I cite a paragraph of the youth of the Franciscan Family, brothers and sisters: "This paid employment, inherited as a tradition from the twentieth century, but rooted in the intuition of St. Francis of Assisi, is above all a place of mission that immerses us into the lives of common men and women of our time, who work, who look for work, who live with persistent unemployment [...] from joining into the world of paid employment, we are subject to our basic human condition." We are called to live our religious life not in the extraordinary, but in the ordinary, to live a prophetic life, probably against the current and the mentality of the world, but in the ordinary. Prophecy is not extraordinary. Many people (as Christians) would like to drag us into the extraordinary, into distinctive signs. How to witness to the Gospel in a world guided by a growth economy? How to cultivate the interior life in a world of communication? To have a lifestyle similar to that of simple people. The General Minister insists: cook and do housework (when possible).

What didn't I find in this letter?

The preparation for PCO VIII has begun. I think that they will be able to do further reflections. First of all, the Brother Minister juxtaposes, states facts and convictions [...] it would please me if they could

be put in relation with each other [...] work, mission, fraternity, poverty [that] are not elements of our life that are added one after the other, I think it's the way of articulating them that makes our life and it is on this point that it necessary to reflect. The Brother General Minister says that that "[work can permit] each individual to fully develop his skills and therefore realize himself according to his own aspirations." Surely, this is a beautiful thing. But for how many people? For those on the other hand for whom work is draining, stressful, back-breaking and not at all gratifying. How to humanize work? In what way, with others, could the same workers participate in a transformation of their place of work into a place of liberation? Furthermore, I spoke above of work as a place of mission. I think that a Capuchin does not work just to earn his bread. The field of work is a place of evangelization (as is free time, the family, and culture). I would say simply, because it creates ties of solidarity that put you in contact with people who are very distant from the Church, because it makes you look again at your way of speaking and your concepts of the faith and of religion.

Spiritual Exercises of the Curia

FRASCATI, Italy – From March 8 to 13, the fraternity of the General Curia experienced an intense period of spiritual exercises in the friary of Frascati. The meditations were guided by Br. Jude Winkler, General Councilor of the Friars Minor Conventual, biblical scholar and well-known preacher. The path proposed by the preacher was that of the Gospel of John, centering on the search for a personal meeting with Jesus in the Word, in prayer, and in Eucharistic life, as well as in the concreteness of one's brother in the life of fraternity. In addition to the welcoming climate of the place and of the fraternity of Frascati, the joy, depth, simplicity, and above all the good humor with which Br. Jude led the retreat fostered the attentive participation of all.



Appointment of a New General Councilor



ROME, Italy – Yesterday, March 17, 2015, during the ordinary session of the General Council of the Order, at the conclusion of the examination of the nominations carried out in the EACC and CONCAO Conferences, Br. Norbert Auberlin Solondrazana, of the Province of Madagascar, was appointed General Councilor for the Order. Born on May 28, 1968 at Antsiranana in Madagascar, Br. Norbert Auberlin Solondrazana entered the novitiate of the Capuchin Friars on October 3, 1989, making his first profession on October 4, 1990 and

then perpetual profession on August 13, 1995. On August 9, 1998 he was ordained priest. In the Order he has held the following assignments: first assistant and then master of novices, scholastic director at St. Laurent de Brindes at Antananarivo, Provincial Minister, founder of the new Capuchin parish at Hell-Ville, Nosy-Be. He has recently been involved with assistance to handicapped children at Ambrondrona, Nosy-Be. In 1999-2000 he attend a spiritual direction course at the Chatelard spiritual center in Lyon, France. The post of General Councilor was left vacant when Br. Jean-Bertin Nadonye Ndongo was appointed Bishop of the diocese of Lolo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thus we have found a new brother, whom the congratulations and prayer of the whole Order will accompany as he takes up his new service.

Ordinary Meeting of the General Council

ROME, Italy – The ordinary meeting of the General Council was held from March 16 to 27. The principal topics were:

Reports: the following were discussed: pastoral visitations, reports in medietate triennii, fraternal visitations, conference meetings, and ordinary chapters of various circumscriptions. The statistical report on the Order for the year 2014 was presented. The actual for 2014 and the budget for 2015 were approved. It was decided to create two new General Custodies from the current Province of Sibolga: the General Custody of Sibolga and that of Nias. The canonical erection is planned for April 10, 2015, in Sibolga, Indonesia.

Appointments: General Councilor: Br. Norbert Auberlin Solondrazana (PR Madagascar), following the appointment of Br. Jean-Bertin Nadonye Ndongo to the episcopate. Province of Croatia: Br. Anto Pervan – IV Provincial Councilor (following the appointment to the episcopate of Br. Ivica Petanjak).

PCO: The proposed instrumentum laboris for PCO VIII was presented.

A Capuchin Receives the "Freedom" Prize from the City of Dublin

DUBLIN, Ireland – The Capuchin friar Kevin Crowley (born February 24, 1935, first profession of vows November 22, 1959, final consecration to God November 22, 1962) has been awarded the highest honor of the Irish capital, together with the athlete John Giles, on the evening of February 28, 2015. Br. Kevin received this recognition for his service of charity and distribution of free meals for more than fifty years. He took the occasion of giving thanks to express his concern for the new epidemic of drugs in the capital and



made an appeal to the government to do something to alleviate the grave situation. Giles received the prize for his football career and the John Giles Foundation, which seeks to help young people by means of sports. The award ceremony was held at the Mansion House, with the presence of Dublin Mayor Christy Burke who expressed himself thus on the honor conferred to the two citizens: "I was asked how I would sum up both gentlemen, and I

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said: Well, it's very simple; one prays and the other plays." Br. Kevin is now part of the select list of Freedom prize winners, which includes such names as John Kennedy and Nelson Mandela.

Brothers Walk Seven Days from Assisi to Rome

ASSISI - ROME, Italy - "Seven stages in seven days, hoping that on the eighth day (not without allusions to Easter, though it be a Friday) we can meet Pope Francis." Thus nine Franciscan brothers (Conventuals, OFMs, Capuchins, and TORs) left from the tomb of St. Francis towards Rome on Friday, March 6, passing by Our Lady of the Angels and Rivo Torto and reaching, escorted in this stage by novices, Foligno and the Shrine of St. Angela. The next day they were received by the Capuchin friars of Spoleto in their large friary. On Sunday they arrived at Terni, awaited by the friars of the city, and were all welcomed at the church of St. Joseph, together with parishioners. Then was the turn of Otricoli, an ancient and charming town on a hill where the pastor has worked to sensitize the people. On Tuesday the 10 they were welcomed by the pastor of Rignano Flaminio, with the families of the place. Then, further south, on the outskirts of Rome, at Prima Porta to be precise, they were guests of the parish entrusted to the Pauline monks of Jasna Góra, the last stage before going by the sinuous bends of the Tiber and being welcomed, together with the General Ministers and Bishop Carballo, into the embrace of Bernini's colonnade. Many ideas made them think about making this pilgrimage on foot to Rome: Lent, the Year of Consecrated Life, the desire to confirm their fidelity to Pope Francis, to receive his blessing on the anniversary of his election as "Bishop of Rome," the memory of the journey of Francis of Assisi to the center of Christianity with his first brothers. But all this is united in the idea of creating a sort of 'preview' of a four-year journey that will see the different Orders present in Assisi united, a process that is well underway. Pilgrims on the streets of Umbria and Lazio, bringing the spirit of Assisi by means of a certain 'quiet preaching' made of little signs: a relic of the Poverello, the Franciscan habit in its various shades, a smile and a greeting, the efforts and the tenacity...

(‘S. Francesco’ magazine)

Reopening of the Relic Chapel



GENERAL CURIA - March 21, 2015. In a climate of recollection and prayer, Cardinal Angelo Amato, S.D.B., Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, with the participation of the friars of the fraternity of the General Curia, in the context of a brief liturgy, blessed the Relic Chapel following the renovation of the house at Via Piemonte 70. The Relic Chapel, planned and set up in 1950s and 60s by Father Bernardino Romagnoli da Siena, General Postulator from 1948 to 1987, has found a new location on the ground floor of the General Curia, adjacent to the Church. With respect to the existing structure and the dimensions of the new space, the Relic Chapel preserves, beyond all of our saints and blessed, a multitude of

saints and blessed of the Church, from antiquity all the way to our own day. The most recent relics that have been set in the austere and solemn wooden structure are those of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, of Pope St. John XXIII, and of Pope St. John Paul II. Cardinal Amato, in his brief talk, recalled how the saints and blessed are the vitality of an Order that sinks its roots into its history to nourish the faith, to live in hope, and to act with charity in its own time. The General Minister, Br. Mauro Jöhri, thanked the Cardinal for his presence and expressed his hope that the Order should never lack the presence of brothers who not only invite others to holiness but live it themselves.

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Among the massacred Christians

blew themselves up at the entrances to the churches, crowded by hundreds of people present for

LAHORE, Pakistan - The wave of massacres and killings by fundamentalist, Islamic fanaticism against Christians and other minorities in different parts of the world is disturbing. This time Pakistan has been struck again by a terrible tragedy. On March 15, two attacks were made in front of the Catholic Church and the Church of Christ (Evangelical) that are found next to each other in the neighborhood of Yohana Abad. Lahore is the city with the most Christians in Pakistan and in this neighborhood they are at least a million. The two suicide bombers

the Mass and for Sunday worship. The double attack was then claimed by a dissident group of Taliban. This time the community assisted by our friars was also involved, who, despite the shock and horror, did all that was possible to comfort the people in this renewed and growing wound of death and pain that seems to have no end and has not yet drawn the attention of the international community. These are already the times of ordinary martyrdom. (In the photo: Br. Qaisar Feroz and Br. Francis Sabir praying in the hospital for the dead and wounded).



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