



Prot. N. 00109/16

 Curia Generalis
Fratrum Minorum
Capuccinorum

THE MEN OF FORGIVENESS

DEAR BROTHERS,
MAY THE LORD GIVE YOU PEACE!

On September 23 of last year I communicated to you the wonderful news that Pope Francis had asked our Order to bring to Rome, for the occasion of the Jubilee of Mercy, the mortal remains of our Saints Leopold Mandić and Pio of Pietrelcina. By this request the Pope meant to show to the Church and the world two excellent signs of men who gave their very existence to announcing the mercy of the Lord by means of the sacrament of Reconciliation. In the same letter I let you know that Pope Francis would welcome us to celebrate the Eucharist with him and I invited you to do everything to be present at this joyous event. Now I am writing to you as the relics of the two saints are returning to their respective shrines and I want to express my gratitude to you for having responded to my request. It was a great joy for me, and surely also for all of you, to see more than 1,200 Friars Minor Capuchin praying with Pope Francis, listening to his word, hearing the expressions of joy as friars met, seeing each other again, happy to be able to thank the Lord for the holiness of Pio and Leopold. We concluded our unforgettable morning by passing through the Holy Door and then we stayed to pray before the reliquaries of our two brother saints.

The mortal remains of the saints were received in three places: in the Basilica of St. Lawrence outside the Walls, in the church of San Salvatore in Lauro, and in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. The number of people who wanted to venerate our brother saints was higher than every expectation.

We saw many, many people in line from the first hours of the morning, men and women attracted by holiness, wanting to lift a prayer of thanksgiving or to ask help in the various struggles that arrive in life. These two holy friars passed a large part of their lives ministering the sacrament of Reconciliation and they transformed the confessional from a dark and narrow corner into a place for grace and pardon. The homily that Pope Francis offered us during the Eucharist highlighted the grace of sacramental forgiveness: "Your tradition, that of the Capuchins, is a tradition of forgiveness. Among you there are many wonderful confessors." The Pope reminded us that he who is able to forgive is aware of being a sinner and is always asking forgiveness for himself. The Pope went on to say: "You Capuchins have this special gift from the Lord: to forgive. And I ask you: never get tired of forgiving." Then came the strong appeal: "Be men of forgiveness, of reconciliation, of peace!" Dear brothers, let us welcome this invitation in order to nourish our fraternal relationships, and when the inevitable conflicts and misunderstandings arise, let us never tire of returning again to the path of mutually offered forgiveness. Our vocation calls us to promote reconciliation and peace also in the places where we pass our own lives, and this demands a journey of continual conversion in order to open ourselves humbly to recognizing that we need the loving presence of the Lord and his grace. We cannot back out of the invitation to make the journey of holiness! The two saints, Leopold and Pio, and the countless saints and blessed of our

Order, repeat the same, not so much with words, but with the force of attraction that they continue to exert. Let us remember that the saints are not self-referential or possessive people; the purpose of their lives was that of attracting people to God and his forgiveness. The Eucharist celebrated by Pope Francis allowed us to express to him our recognition and gratitude. I said expressly in my words of thanks at the end of the celebration: "Holy Father, the Capuchin friars here present, from all over the world, but also those who were not able to come, especially our sick and elderly who have dedicated their lives with joy in the confessional, in preaching, in education, in hospitals, in prisons, in giving each day a plate of food in our countless soup kitchens, say to you with simplicity that we love you and that they pray for you as you ask us to do each Sunday." And in conclusion I asked him, "to support us and to never stop blessing us as Father, that each of us, each Capuchin friar may live poverty in joy, serving in purity of heart and loving obedience to the Church, ready to go where nobody wants to go! Thank you, Holy Father!"

Dear brothers we have experienced a beautiful and powerful moment; now it is our turn, the turn of each individual fraternity, to ask itself how it intends to translate into the concrete what we have

received in these days rich with encounter and what stirs our life as Capuchin lesser brothers. Yesterday we began the privileged season of Lent; let us allow forgiveness to live abundantly in our hearts and in our houses.

May the good God bless us all in our journey of renewal. For my part I take the occasion to greet each and every one of you with warm fraternal regards.



Br. Mauro Jöhri
General Minister OFMCAp

Rome, 11 February 2016
Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes

