

# VOX FRANCISCANA

*Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis*



Published by CIOFS

WINTER 2019-2020



## **Faces of Formation** OFS & YOUFRA FORMATION SCHOOL HELD IN SOUTH AMERICA

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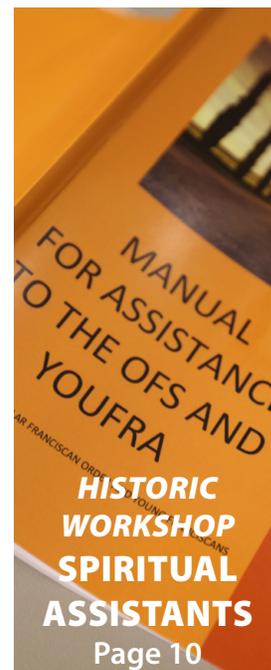
## OFS and Finances

*Presidency Councilor Attilio Galimberti reflects on Article 25 of the Rule, with a look at money in Jesus' time, the early Franciscan perspective and what the Rule tells us today. PAGES 11-14. iStockphoto*



## Vatican Youth Forum

*YouFra participant reflects on his experience at the Vatican's XI International Youth Forum. PAGE 14-15. Photo © by Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.*



*OFS ACTION  
AROUND GLOBE  
CHAPTERS  
AND MORE*  
Pages 16-23

*AUSTRALIA  
NEWSPAPER  
SPOTLIGHTS OFS*  
Page 24



## COVER

Participants in the first OFS-YouFra Formation School of the Southern Cone enjoy a visit to the famed Iguazu Falls. Pages 12-13



# CIOFS: from globe-trotting to meeting face-to-face

Story and photos by ROBERT STRONACH, OFS

Imagine a small group of people collaborating and visiting over two dozen countries in just a few months, usually in pairs. That partially describes the work of the CIOFS Presidency members. Whether weary or refreshed by their globe-trotting, they gathered in Rome, Italy, Oct. 26 to Nov. 2 for their semi-annual face-to-face meeting.

They reported on their travels and activities, and hunkered down to plan the General Chap-

ter, which will be held in Rome in November 2020. They tackled a bevy of other issues on behalf of the Order. At the same time, the ministers general of the Franciscan orders assigned the head of the Capuchin branch to conduct a pastoral visitation of the Presidency.

A jam-packed week? Yes.

A sense of joy and fraternity? Definitely.

A truly fraternal welcome for Minister General Fr. Robert Genuin, OFM Cap.? Absolutely.

In brief, they spent the first few days on General Chapter logistics, including breaking into work groups to develop or fine-tune proposals and reports for the chapter. Then they started reporting on their participation in national chapters as well as at special events, such as the first-ever school for formators in the Southern Cone (southernmost areas of South America).

Presidency councilors also gave updates on Project Africa, the emergence of small Franciscan groups

and fraternities in the Arab world, and plans for OFS and YouFra congresses.

Among other things, they approved a research project to compile the history of CIOFS from 1950 to the present and approved a commission to foster knowledge of Secular Franciscan saints. They reviewed progress of developing online formation courses. They discussed a draft revision of the International Statutes, which they plan to distribute for *Continued on page 5.*

# CIOFS Presidency

*continued from page 3*

comment to national fraternities in early 2020.

The spiritual side of fraternity life on the international level was never neglected, especially with four friars participating as general spiritual assistants. Mass and liturgy of the hours began and ended

each work day.

At the end of the week, in a roundtable discussion preceding Father Roberto's reflections on his visit, several Presidency members admitted to feeling some anxiety about the visitation, but that it quickly vanished as they

recognized a "brother" was among them. There was harmony, not to mention a winning smile.

Noted Minister General Tibor: "Formally it was a pastoral visit. In fact, it was more a fraternal visit because it was done in such a deep fraternal

spirit."

The pastoral visitor, Father Roberto, put it this way: "I found myself at home."

"You have given me a beautiful impression," he said, pointing to the Presidency's "shared modality".

*Continued on next page.*



(From left) Jenny Harrington, OFS; Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM; Fr. C. Hernán Eguzquiza Rodríguez, TOR; Ana Maria Raffo Laos, OFS.



(From front) Ana Maria Raffo Laos, OFS; Silvia Diana, OFS; Fr. C. Hernán Eguzquiza Rodríguez, TOR; Jenny Harrington, OFS.



(From left) Andrea Karlović, OFS; Ana Fruk, OFS, and Lucio Monti, OFS treasurer.



(From front) Michel Janian, OFS; Augustine Young Hak Yoon, OFS; Fr. Alfred Parambathu, OFM Conv; Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap; Mary Stronach, OFS (interpreter).



**LEFT:** Maria Consuelo de Nuñez, OFS.

**RIGHT:** (From front) Maria Consuelo de Nuñez, OFS vice minister general; Fr. Robert Genuin, OFM Cap minister general; Tibor Kausar, OFS minister general; Isabella Di Paola, OFS secretary; Fr. Fernando Ventura, OFM Cap (interpreter).



# CIOFS Presidency *continued from previous page*

He said he recognized that “you could not organize a week like this” if it hadn’t been for the personal time and effort making preparations. “This is beautiful.”

He found it “very significant” that Presidency members “expressed satisfaction in your work for

the OFS” and “that here you feel fraternity.”

He encouraged all the Presidency councilors to “see the bigger picture” and develop a unified goal for the whole order – not just administrative, but also “where the Lord wants us to go today.”

Father Roberto spoke of “the responsibility to create unity and address the needs of the whole order... to stimulate the locals so they can grow based on the projects the Lord has for them today.”

Regarding the reported limited spiritual assistance

available to a number of fraternities, he said: “Keep insisting that the first orders (and TOR) have to go in communion with the OFS. Friars need to invest in a lot of service to OFS... By doing so, the orders are investing in themselves.”

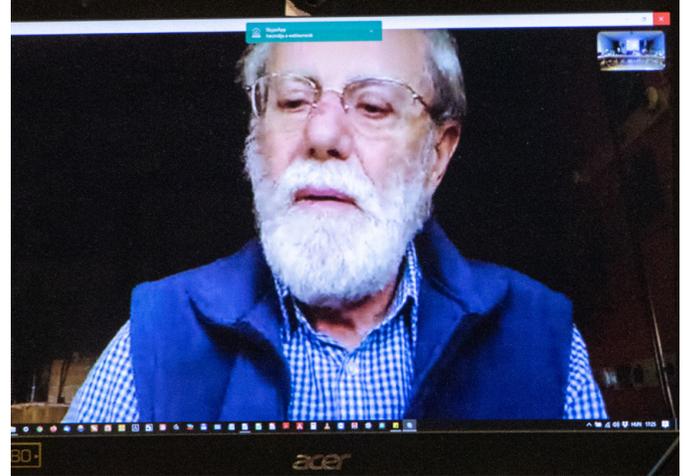


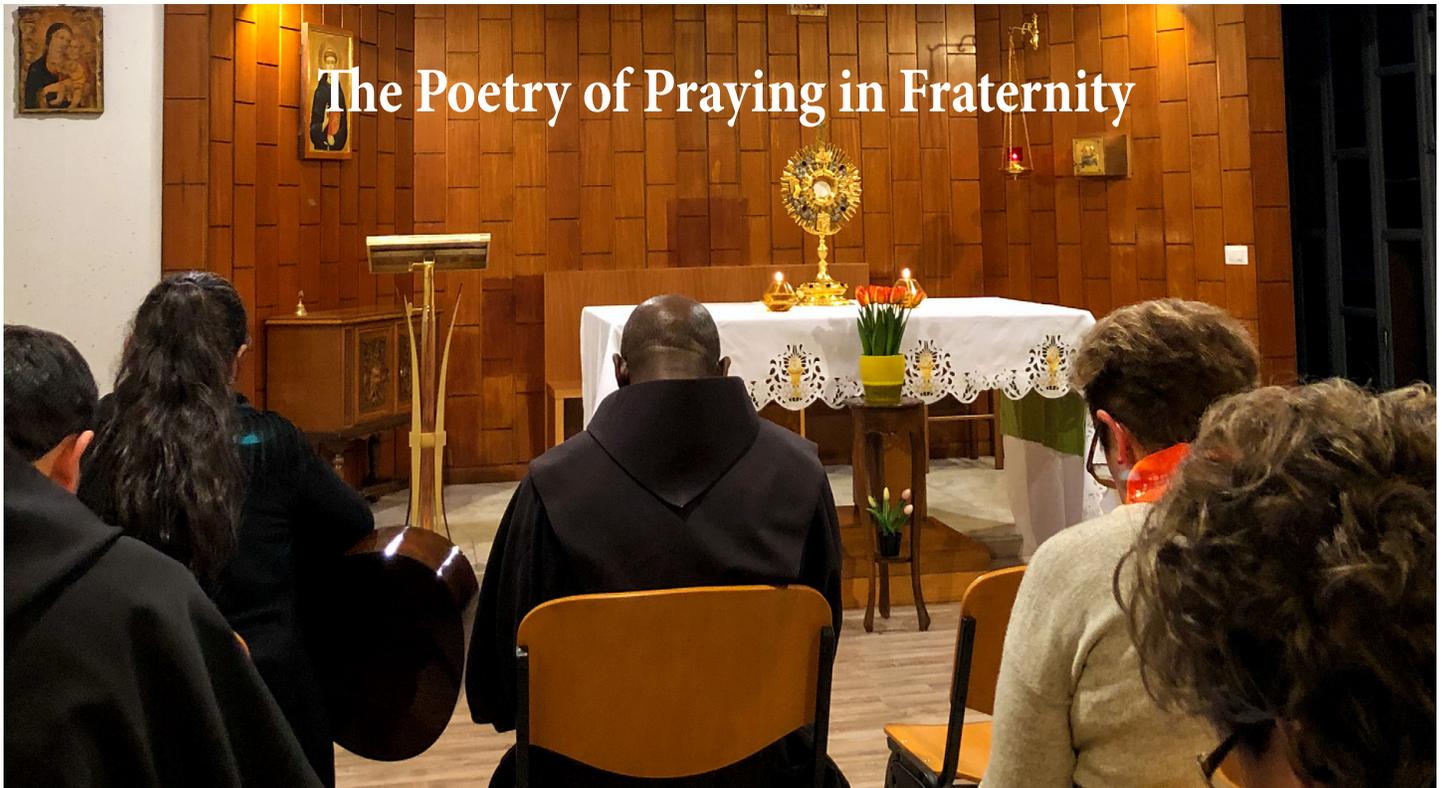
**ABOVE: Fr. Robert Genuin, OFM Cap., addresses the Presidency and celebrates mass.**

**LEFT: Silvia Diana, OFS, and Ana Maria Raffo Laos, OFS, during mass.**

**RIGHT: Attilio Galimberti, OFS, participated via Skype.**

**BELOW: Ana Fruk, OFS.**





## The Poetry of Praying in Fraternity

As with local, regional and national levels of fraternity, the Presidency meeting held some special spiritual moments as it included time to pray and reflect together.

### *An example...*

General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Francis Dor, OFM Cap, removed the sacred host from the tabernacle and placed it in a monstrance on the altar. Thus began a special evening prayer for members of the CIOFS Presidency, who for five days already had been tackling the challenge of planning the 2020 General Chapter and reviewing reports on national fraternities and special projects

around the globe. They still had two days to go in their twice-a-year Presidency meeting in Rome.

They began and ended each day with prayer in a combination of the four official languages (English, French, Italian and Spanish). On this particular day, Mass, morning prayer and evening prayer were in French and Italian, with some Latin added to the mix.

Praying the liturgy of the hours in choir is a rich experience, even in a language one may not know well. That evening, after psalms and readings rotated between languages, Father Francis suggested praying

the Magnificat in Italian – at which point Presidency Treasurer Lucio Monti burst out singing the first stanza of the canticle. They all joined in chanting the verses before the exposed Eucharist. Their prayer suddenly had become deliciously musical. For a timeless moment, they had become God's troubadours, together lifting their spirits in praise and adoration the way Mary had: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my savior."

It was a similar experience as they sang the Our Father in Latin. The Gregorian chant can send one's spirit soaring; in a sense,

becoming one with the Eucharist on the altar.

As evening prayer came to an end, they all remained in personal meditation.

They had begun the day by sharing the Eucharistic meal at mass. Father Francis' thoughtful act allowed them to share it again at night in a very meaningful way, simultaneously in private and in fraternity.

It allowed them to experience the music and poetry of language, the uplifting joy of song, and the pulsing heart of fraternity.

It's an illustration, perhaps, of how Franciscans can work hard and be renewed through immersion in prayer.



Fr. Hernán



Fr. Amando

## Fr. Hernán Is New General Spiritual Assistant

The CIOFS Presidency welcomed Fr. Claudio **Hernán** Eguzquiza Rodríguez of Paraguay as the new general spiritual assistant from the Third Order Regular (TOR) friars.

In fact, former General Assistant and newly elected TOR Minister General Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano introduced Father Hernán at

the opening of the Presidency meeting on Oct. 26. He praised Father Hernán and thanked him for accepting the important assignment to work with the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) and its Franciscan Youth (YouFra). Friar Hernán said he “is excited about” the appointment and that he sees it as “a call from God.”

In Paraguay he was vicar provincial for his Franciscan province and was responsible for training applicants and post-novices. He was a philosophy professor at Catholic University of Asunción and was president of the Franciscan Family of Paraguay from 2014 to 2018.

His pastoral duties in-

cluded serving as a prison and school chaplain. He also helped create a tutoring center for children and adolescents living in poverty and a bakery and cooperative for mothers in poverty. Ordained in 2009, Friar Hernán holds degrees in philosophy and theology from Catholic University of Asunción.

## Friar Who Serves Vatican and OFS As An Interpreter Seeks to Help Elderly on Island Off Coast of Africa

A friar is appealing to Secular Franciscans to support a project to build a new home for the elderly on the isolated island, Principe, off the western coast of equatorial Africa.

“I am making a plea to Secular Franciscans around the world, in Franciscan solidarity,” said Br. Fernando Ventura, a missionary Capuchin from Portugal and interpreter to the Pope and the Vatican for major Church events since 1999 and for the OFS since 1988.

“The present housing for our beloved elderly is completely inadequate and frighteningly unsafe with

the foundation crumbling and walls and doors deteriorating. I have been given permission from the OFS General Minister... to ask you to consider supporting this effort of brotherly love.”

To help, go to the link below to learn more and donate, then “share the link” with OFS brothers and sisters, families, friends and associates.

“Pray for our elderly and ask the Lord to bless this project,” Friar Fernando urged.

“I thank you so much on behalf of all our elderly who will benefit from your kindness.”



**POPE FRANCIS AND FRIAR FERNANDO**  
*When he is not serving as an interpreter for the pope, the Vatican and the OFS, Fr. Fernando helps spearhead projects that care for orphaned children and abandoned elderly on the island of Principe, off the western equatorial coast of Africa. Photo / Vatican Media.*

[www.gofundme.com/f/bethany-house-for-the-elderly](http://www.gofundme.com/f/bethany-house-for-the-elderly)

# Formation School of Southern Cone



Iguazu Falls in the border between Brazil & Argentina.

Photo by Enaldo Valadares / Wikipedia / Creative Commons License

## 51 from 5 Nations Participate in ‘Fraternity without Borders’

Brazil hosted the first OFS-YouFra Formation School of the Southern Cone from June 20 to 23, 2019.

The theme was, “Franciscan Formation and Identity: For a Fraternity

Without Borders”.

The school was held in Foz de Iguazú -- a triple border region of Brazil-Paraguay-Argentina, which includes the famed Iguazu (Iguacu) Falls, which participants got to

visit. The priority focus was on formation, leadership, and Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC).

The general objective “was to provide a space of formative and informative sharing” for OFS

and YouFra formators, JPIC animators, fraternal animators and spiritual assistants, reported CIOFS Presidency Councilor Silvia “Sissi” Diana, OFS, who helped coordinate the  
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school. Other coordinators were Emanuelson Matias, YouFra international counselor for South America; Fr. Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv., general spiritual assistant, and CIOFS Presidency Councilor Ana Maria Raffo Laos, OFS, who served as training coordinator.

“Fifty one brothers and sisters from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile and Paraguay participated,” Sissi noted. There were also teams of volunteers from the OFS and YouFra fraternities of Foz de Iguazú, along with “the Capuchin Friars Minor, members of the Parish Community and

about 30 families that welcomed us in their homes throughout this meeting that took place at the Our Lady of the Conception Vicentine Infant Education Center, Sisters of San Vicente de Paulo.”

Building on the “Fraternity without Borders” theme, Sissi said partic-



*Fr. Alfred Parambakathu with Presidency Councilors Ana Maria Raffo Laos and Silvia Diana.*

ipants committed to the following actions:

- emphasize JPIC as an essential part of the Franciscan charism;
- promote communication and cooperative JPIC activities among Southern Cone countries;
- train to generate an understanding of the JPIC

service.

- build on JPIC commitments coming out of the X Latin American OFS-YouFra Congress (Guatemala 2019);

- organize and strengthen National Formation Teams in all the countries of the Southern Cone;

- think of formation as a path of conversion.

“I really liked the collaboration of OFS and YouFra,” Ana Maria noted.

“The course was very well prepared,” Friar Alfred added. “I liked very much their sense of prayer... The life was joyful... Participants were looking forward to another course.”

# Workshop in Rome

## 60 National Spiritual Assistants Participate



*Sixty friar spiritual assistants from 37 nations participate in the workshop organized by the general spiritual assistants.*

The general spiritual assistants to the Secular Franciscan Order made a bit of history in November 2019 when they conducted an international workshop for national spiritual assistants.

The week-long event took place at the Seraphicum in

Rome, Italy.

“We had 60 participants from 37 nations,” reports General Assistant Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap. There were “22 OFM Cap, 21 OFM, 9 OFM Conv, 8 TOR.”

“The general spiritual as-

sistants were the principal animators,” he notes.

Other presenters included Fr. Carlos Trovarelli, minister general of the Conventuals; Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, minister general of the Third Order Regular; Tibor Kauser,

OFS minister general, and Ana Fruk, OFS Presidency councilor.

“It was a great moment of meeting and exchange of experience and mutual edification by spiritual assistants from all over the world.”



*National spiritual assistants exhibit their sense of fraternity and visit the Vatican. Photos by Fr. John Nguyen*

# OFS and Financial Responsibility



## A Reflection on Article 25 of the Rule

by ATTILIO GALIMBERTI, OFS

### The Bible and tithing

In the Old Testament we can read the prescription to pay tithes, where Israelites (men) should give 10% of all of they earned. (*Leviticus 27:30, Numbers 18:26, Deuteronomy 14:24, 2nd Chronicles 31: 5*).

Commanded by God to support not only the Levites anointed for the sacred service but also widows, foreigners and orphans, we can interpret it as a sort of tax necessary to provide for the needs of priests and Levites but also a sort of “pension” for the most disadvantaged people.

The Christian Church, taking up the old Testament, deduced the percentage of 10% as the “recommended minimum” for offerings.

The Gospels do not identify a specific sum or percentage since they, instead, emphasize the importance and benefits of giving. St. Paul does say in his first letter to the Corinthians, a Christian should give according to his means. This could mean

giving sometimes more than a tenth, sometimes less, according to personal conscience. But it is necessary to give with joy and gratitude (principle of restitution - everything comes to me from God), never reluctantly.

It is important at this point to note how the relationship with money is treated in the Gospels.

Money has always had its importance and Jesus warns his followers against becoming slaves of it. Obviously, its use is inevitable and even the disciples had a common fund, the one run by Judas, and in many of his parables Jesus shows that he knows very well the value of money.

Why does Jesus say to his audience to give to Caesar what is Caesar's? At the time of Jesus the Jews were not allowed to mint coins other than using copper or bronze; therefore, they were coins of little value and were called lepton (etymologically meaning thin and usually it was the hundredth part of the official currency). The only coins that had

current value on all the markets were the Greek drachma and the Roman Denaro, minted in silver (weighting about 3.85 gr) and the shekel of Tiro (weighting from 11 to 14 gr). The Roman money had the effigy of the emperor and was the one used for payment of taxes.

At the time of Jesus every male Jew had to pay a tribute to the temple equal to a drachma (silver coin minted in Greece and equal to two denari; the daily pay of a laborer was one denaro.) But the temple accepted only silver coins minted in Tiro -- the SICLO, even if it did mean going against the law because on one side it had the image of the God protector of the City and on the other the Zeus sacred eagle.

This requirement, that is the one to accept the tribute only in Sicli, explains the presence of the money changers in the courtyard of the Temple. Women and children were exempted from the tribute but could voluntarily pay one (the Parable of  
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Jesus and the widow offering two coins - two Lepton, the only money she owned).

With a Lepton were bought two sparrows (Matthew 10.29) or five with two Lepton (Luke 12.6).

One Denaro was a worker's daily pay. What was the value of the 30 denari with which Judas sold Jesus?

Considering that they were taken from the Temple treasury, they had to be Sicli of the value of 120 denari. This value is not accidental because if we refer to Ex 21:32, this was the price to redeem a slave.

With two denari the good Samaritan assures the person of the parable two or three days in the inn.

With this data we also understand the value of the perfume with which the woman in Bethany anoints Jesus' feet: 300 denari, the pay of 300 days of work.

But even greater was the value of Mines and Talents. These were not coins but units of weight. A Mina corresponded to 600 grams of silver. A Talent was equivalent to 60 mines, which corresponds to approximately 36 kg of silver (about 30 years of work of a worker).

From these figures we can understand the contrast between the debt condoned by the Master (10,000 Talents - equal to around 24 billion euros today) compared to what the debtor servant pretends by his fellow man: 100 denari.

The servant who receives a talent and buried it in the ground renounces to all that he could have earned in his whole life and, perhaps in a more figurative and comprehensible sense to the contemporaries of Jesus: that man has thrown away his life.

In the Acts of the Apostles we find the concepts of the sharing of goods, the attention to the poor and, therefore, the detachment from money.



**Ancient Roman coins.**

### **St. Francis and money**

Should you be asked what the relationship between St. Francis and money was, you would all answer that Francis referred to it as the Devil's Dung and, even more, that he forbade his friars even to touch it.

Have you ever wondered why?

At the base of this refusal is Francis' knowledge of how the rich manipulated money to enrich themselves even more - through the debasement of coins (reducing the quantity of precious metal without changing its value, resulting in inflation that impoverished the middle and poor classes because the rich held back for themselves the precious metal part removed from the coins).

The prohibition of Francis was for fighting these unjust practices and for proposing more fair ones. An essay by Fr. Michael Cusato, OFM, historian and medievalist, can help us in performing this analysis:

The prohibition of the use of money in the Franciscan tradition is part of a larger problematic of minorite poverty. But it is crucial to note that for the early Franciscan fraternity, it was the poverty of the poor and the laborer -- and less the poverty of the

convent - that was the focus of the early Franciscan reflection. Having renounced the ownership of all things and having pledged to sustain themselves by work and service in the world at the sides of the working poor or in service of the weak, the early Franciscans thus joined the ranks of society's poor, conscious of the social dynamics which create and perpetuate misery for the marginalized. Hence the minorite option to be poor among the poor also included within it the desire to be there for the poor; that is, with the intention of creating a better and more just world.

How do we construct our life so that we are using the goods of Creation in a more just manner? The world will look different when seen through the plight of the poor. This is the essence of the Franciscan education.

The second generation of Franciscans (those men who entered the Order in the second and third decades of the minorite existence) was largely unfamiliar with the foundational experiences of the early movement in the valleys of Umbria. As such, these men did not really understand the socio-economic dynamics which had been crucial in the formation of

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the earliest friars and which served as the soil out of which the substance of the Early Rule had been created, with its absolute prohibition of the use of money. Instead, these men tended to look at the prohibition of the use of the money as the means by which they could become poor and remain poor, following in the footsteps of the poor Christ. Entering the fraternity thus became for them a moment of genuine “impoverishment” when they dispossessed themselves of their goods and properties (as best as one could) and embraced a life that allowed no access to money, assuring that they would remain poor. This is how most of Franciscan history has understood the connection between poverty and the prohibition of money. For such friars, what was distinctive about Franciscan poverty was its intense (one might also say fool-hearted) austerity rather than its solidarity with and concern for the plight of the poor. In other words, the focus was on me and my lifestyle (us and our lifestyle) instead of on the poor and the manifold injustices done to them. There is, in other words, a profound disconnect between the understanding of poverty within the early Franciscanism and much of the rest of Franciscan history. And our understanding (or lack of understanding) of the dynamics of money and its effects upon the poor follows from this.

Money, per se, is thus not the problem. The use of money was prohibited not because it was money but because of the way money came to be manipulated for the private advantage of a few to the public disadvantage of the many. Is not money today sufficiently stable so as to be relatively equitable for all who are paid in it and who must use it? But what other economic structures in our world today disadvantage those without power? The problem



**Statue of  
St. Francis.**

addressed by the early Franciscans and, perhaps our challenge today, is to identify similar structures of injustice and exploitation which trap the poor, the vulnerable and the voiceless into lives of misery, grinding poverty and dehumanizing conditions and to work either to ameliorate and even transform those structures or distance ourselves from them. Such work is what is required of us to build in our midst, in our time, the Kingdom of God which is the full actualization of the intentions of God's creation.

### **Us – How do we live this relationship in light of the Rule?**

For us who have made the profession to the OFS (to live the Gospel following the example of Francis), it is important to understand these concepts, but it is also important to refer to the Rule. As you well know, our Rule is divided into three parts -- the place within the Church and within the Franciscan Family, Form of Life, and Life of Fraternity.

For living a balanced life of fraternity, it is essential to live these THREE parts in a complete way. It is important not to neglect any parts of the Rule; otherwise, our life (either fraternal or spiritual) suffers or is incomplete. It should be made clear and

reaffirmed from initial formation to profession and beyond, that all parts of the Rule are equally important.

Life in the Church and in the Fraternity has the same relevance, even with the appropriate distinctions, as the spiritual and active life that is proposed in the Form of Life.

It happens instead (and my personal experience leads me to say that this is quite frequent) that much time is devoted to deepening the second part of the Rule (the Form of Life) and not so much to the other two. To the Life of Fraternity, very little time is given, with the motivation that, after all, these are “bureaucratic” aspects that are easy to understand. This is not the case and all the articles must be studied, lived and loved with the same intensity.

Given that it is the theme of our reflection, we will pay particular attention to the Article 25, the one which addresses the Fraternal Contribution. Let's read the whole text:

*Regarding expenses necessary for the life of the fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate, and of charity, all the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means. Local fraternities should contribute toward the expenses of the higher fraternity councils.*

*Continued on next page.*

Said in this way, it appears simple but it has its roots in articles that precede it in the Form of Life and in particular in articles 11 (detachment and right relationship), 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17.

For the necessary expenses -- the Fraternity is a reality made up of people who live together in spirit even if not in a convent. It is obvious that living together also entails costs (formation, texts, a responsibility with relevant costs attached) and, as it happens inside the family, it is right that (Art 26 - co-responsibility) all give their contribution according to their means.

But, and it is still the Rule that asks us for this in the articles of the Form of Life, the Fraternity does not live in a box isolated from the world. This is not the goal of Fraternal life. Our place and our role are in the world. It is where the Form of Life and Constitutions invite us to realize our vocation.

Here then is the invitation to realize activities of Worship, Apostolate, and Charity. Is this not going from gospel to life and life to gospel (Art 4) in a concrete way? And for doing this it is necessary to invest our time, our energies, our commitment but also a certain amount in terms of money. As long as it is a means for, it should not be despised as it should if it becomes the goal of our life.

But, again, the Fraternity is inserted in an Order, which has its own structures and which is called by Rule and Constitutions to realize a specific service to the Order itself (that is, to its members) and here is the Rule invitation to each Fraternity (and to each of its members): the Fraternities have to CONTRIBUTE TO their higher fraternities' expenses.

Then we have two levels of contribution. **A parenthesis:** Usually and

*to make things easier, the councils establish a minimum amount that each member should pay to the fraternity treasurer and this, if not properly explained, makes the contribution appear like a tax or dues and not a free donation as it instead should be. (In a family all members contribute to the family life according to their means.)*

**The first level** concerns the fraternal contribution to the Fraternity -- which comes from each member, according to his/her own means. If we are living fully Article 11, the contribution could very well be greater than the "minimum".

**The second level** is the one that the council (and the Fraternity) uses as a contribution to the expenses of the higher councils.

So, to paraphrase our founder, *"Let us begin, brothers (and sisters), to serve the Lord God, for up to now we have done little or nothing."*

## A Reflection: Youth in Action in a Synodal Church

by *ARESIA GARGIULO*

VATICAN CITY -- "Youth in Action in a Synodal Church," the XI International Youth Forum, held in Rome from June 18 to 22, 2019, has been described as the third phase of the course outlined by Pope Francis. This Forum was preceded by the preparatory phase, called the pre-synod, and a second celebratory phase, the Synod of Bishops. Two youth per nation of the world were invited to this Forum from the various episcopal conferences; each movement/group/association which works for youth ministry had one representative; one youth delegate from the Italian National Council attended representing Franciscan Youth International.

During the Forum's opening press

conference, the Rev. João Chagas, who is responsible for the Office of Youth of the DLFV (Dicastery of the Laity, Family and Life), stated, "We want to make certain that Synod directives relative to youth ministry are well received and that they are implemented."

For us, as Franciscan Youth, it is always a grace to be able to live this kind of encounter and to feel part of a Church on the move. Personally, I lived these days with great enthusiasm, above all on seeing a Church that has its youth at heart, who calls us together, includes us, involves us, listens to us, considers us and gives us a central role in the discussion. It was truly stimulating and my role, as

the only YouFra International present, was, of course, that of bringing the voice of Franciscan Youth, but above all to listen. We had the opportunity to discuss in official moments, but also informally, and to get in touch with very diverse church experiences: national experiences in which Catholicism and Christianity are minority religions, sometimes even persecuted; Catholic realities in areas of deep social crises or in territories in which war is lived, but also in very positive situations in which participation of youth in the life of the Church is very strong and is felt. All this truly imparts the image of the Universal Church, giving us a fundamental

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# Youth in Action in a Synodal Church

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**Some of the 300 youth at the Vatican's XI International Youth Forum. PHOTO © by Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.**

vision to gain a global understanding of today's Catholicism. This broad scope must necessarily give impetus to localized action. Therefore, each of the 300 youth present at the Forum is called to become an instrument to disseminate widely what was learned.

The first objective of the Forum was to gather feedback from the youth on the national receptiveness of the Synod and, in particular, on the apostolic exhortation, "Christus Vivit" (Christ Lives). A point of contention emerged that there was still no translation of "Christus Vivit" in some languages, and this, besides hindering the spread of the message, communicates to the young people of those countries that there is a lack of interest on the part of the episcopal conferences.

In the apostolic exhortation, there is talk about young people as protagonists. We asked ourselves a lot about the meaning of "being protagonists"? Is it a way to be in the spotlight? Is it some-

thing related to fame? Or is it something that involves us because it sees us as in the forefront even when we are involved in the silence of concrete service?

For us who discussed it, it must be a movement that goes in two directions. First of all, it should be a step going towards oneself. Being protagonists means being able to go from a spiritual life made up of random moments in one's own life to a life according to the Spirit that involves everything that concerns the life of the young person.

This means being protagonists on our own journey, which is the only way we can take the second step towards the other -- meeting the other, and each being our true selves. The challenge is really to be for the other person even when it is inconvenient. This is where we are authentically present to ourselves and others.

We feel the need, and there is also great expectation, to share the experience of the Synod. We have all had the

opportunity to shake hands with the Pope, but how many know, work and converse with their own bishops? In many situations, there is a need to dispel the idea that the young person has nothing to say in terms of youth ministry but it is necessary to disseminate good practices as much as possible.

The Synod asks the Church itself to change its way of operating -- no longer a Church that stands on a pedestal and distributes the Truth, but rather a Church that knows how to place itself alongside the young person, like Christ with the disciples at Emmaus, who knows how to show The Way even by staying with them on the road going the "wrong direction," and making concrete gestures of attending to our care.

We young people have a great need for concrete gestures and that is what we strongly ask of the Church. This is key to bringing the experience of the Synod to all the realities of youth ministry in the world.

# OFS action around the globe

## SWISS OFS CANONIZED

Swiss Secular Franciscan Marguerite Bays was elevated to sainthood on Oct. 13, 2019. Born in 1815 in Siviriez in the western Swiss canton of Fribourg, Bays was a laywoman from a farming background who dedicated herself to God. She worked as a seamstress, domestic help and farmhand but was known in the region for helping the poor, domestic servants and orphans. For 19 years, she had the stigmata and died in 1879.



## YOUFRA ASSEMBLY IN JULY 2020 IN MEXICO

The 3rd International YouFra Assembly will be held in Mexico City, Mexico, from July 4 to 10, 2020.

The main theme of the Assembly is: “*Sanctify yourself and you will*

*sanctify society.*”

“The idea of the theme and all programs of the Assembly is to see where we are as YouFra,” noted Franciscan Youth Councilor Andrea Karlović, “and what concretely we

are doing every day, or what we can do in our fraternity and society.”

Elections for international YouFra councilors and substitutes will be held during the assembly.



**Cathedral in Mexico City**

## BURKINA FASO ELECTS

The OFS National Fraternity of Burkina Faso in West Africa celebrated its Elective Chapter on September 7, 2019.

Denis Poda was elected national minister and international councilor.



**National Chapter participants in Burkina Faso.**



Great Britain's Chapter of Mats.

## GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS 'BEATITUDES' CHAPTER

Calling it their “Beatitudes” Chapter, Secular Franciscans in Great Britain held a Chapter of Mats June 21-23, 2019, to mark the close of the year celebrating the 40th anniversary of the OFS Rule approved by Pope Saint Paul VI in 1978.

National Minister Betsy Hart, OFS, described the

chapter’s theme:

“The essence of our Franciscan heart lies in our living from Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel in the true spirit of the Beatitudes which informs our Rule. When as Secular Franciscans, we are truly involved in the world in the spirit of the Beatitudes, we become beacons of hope for all those whom we meet. As our International Minister Tibor (Kausser) said in his

letter to us in June (2018), ‘Go out, and find how you can live your vocation in the Church, in society, among the poor, among the needy, among our neighbours, in the family, at work, in the fraternity, in free time, in different ways reflecting on the same charisma and the same vocation. Be inspired, so that you can inspire others!’”

She added: “When we are together, we are a truly for-

midable force and a powerful sign of witness of the Church and to the world.”

More than 100 brothers and sisters from across Great Britain participated in the chapter, which took place the Hayes Conference Center in Swanwich, Alfreton.

Working groups focused on the “Beatitudes” theme, with regional representatives making presentations on a particular beatitude.

## TANZANIA ELECTS

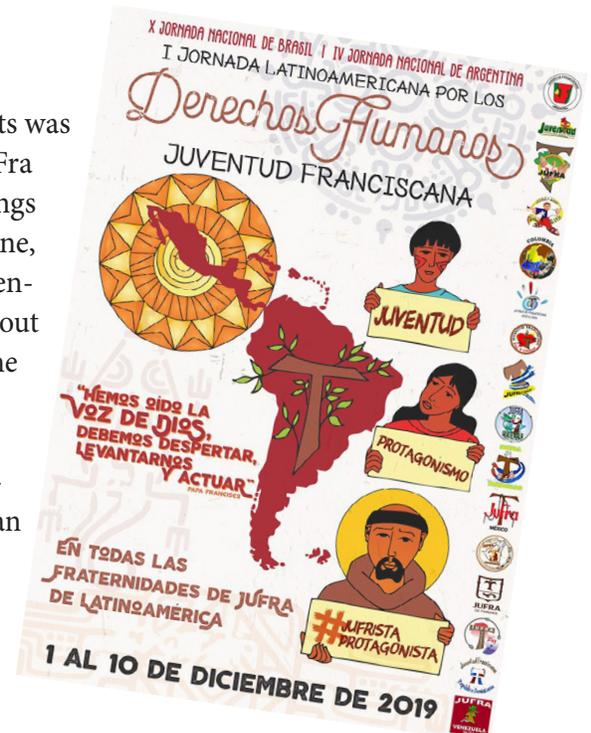
The OFS National Fraternity of Tanzania celebrated its National Elective Chapter October 25-27, 2019.

Lucy Nambuo was elected as national minister and Felix Moshia as international councilor.

## YOUFRA'S 1ST LATIN AMERICAN DAY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The 1st Latin American Day for Human Rights was observed in December 2019, thanks to the YouFra of Latin America. This initiative has its beginnings in the fraternities of YouFra of the Southern Cone, YouFra of Brazil since 2010 and YouFra of Argentina since 2016. The annual objective is to carry out “day of local actions, between days 1 and 10 of the month of December, concluding on the 10th for being the Universal Day of Human Rights.”

These countries are committing to bring attention to human rights every year from a Franciscan perspective, and encouraging actions aimed at strengthening the social, Christian and apostolic commitment of Franciscan Youth and Secular Franciscans in today’s world.



## CAMEROON RE-CONFIRMS MINISTER

The National Fraternity of Cameroon celebrated its elective chapter from August 22 to 24, 2019, at the home of the Xaverian Fathers of Ngodi Bakoko in Douala.

The chapter identified five priority themes to be implemented by the new council, including a commitment to form a National YouFra Fraternity.



Genesis Ngwambi was re-confirmed as national minister for the next three years. In addition to the 37 chapter members, there were several observers.

## SLOVAKIA CHAPTER ELECTS

The OFS National Fraternity of Slovakia celebrated its Elective Chapter from August 30 to September 1, 2019.

Jozef Gazdik was elected national minister and Lucia Spodniakova as international councilor.



## AUSTRALIA RE-ELECTS MINISTER

The OFS National Fraternity of Australia held its National Elective Chapter on September 14, 2019 in Sydney.

Lola Kelly was reelected as national minister and Leellen Lewis was elected as international councilor. Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon, OFS, presided, with Fr. David Blowey, OFM Conv., witnessing on behalf



of the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants. Others elected were Maria Iadanza as vice minister and substitute international councilor; Peggy McNeil as formator; Mirjana T. Kovacevic as secretary; and Larry Cox as treasurer.

## OFS MEMBERS AT AMAZON SYNOD

Two Secular Franciscans were among 30 members of the Franciscan Family who was

present at the Synod of the Amazon in October 2019.

The others included three cardinals, 17 bishops, four religious, and four friars. The OFS sis-

ters -- Moema Miranda and Dorismeire Almeida de Vasconcelos – are from Brazil and were invited to participate.

Participants came from different countries

in such roles as “synod parents”, auditors and experts. The main theme of the Synod involved the defense of people’s lives, of biodiversity and of our “common home.”

## OFS STARTING IN TIMOR-LESTE

The first candidates for the OFS in Timor-Leste were admitted into the Order on July 4, 2019.

There were 22 brothers and sisters willing to follow Christ through the example of St. Francis. This new branch of the Secular Franciscan family is located in the Southeast Asian nation occupying half of the island of Timor.



## FRANCE HOLDS ELECTIVE CHAPTER

The OFS National Fraternity of France celebrated its National Elective Chapter October 19-20, 2019.

Claire Hulot was elected national minister and Claire Dechenaux as international councilor.



## POLAND ELECTS EMILIA NOGAJ

The OFS National Fraternity of Poland celebrated its National Elective Chapter September 27-29, 2019. Emilia Nogaj was elected national minister and international councilor.



## NEW ZEALAND ELECTS

The OFS National Fraternity of New Zealand celebrated its National Elective Chapter on September 22, 2019. Dominic Anderton was elected national minister and Colleen Logan was elected international councilor.



## MEXICO ELECTS ANGEL DE LA ROSA

The OFS National Fraternity of Mexico celebrated its National Elective Chapter on September 20-22, 2019. Angel de la Rosa was elected as national minister and as international councilor.



## ECUADOR HOLDS ELECTIONS

The OFS National Fraternity of Ecuador held its National Elective Chapter on September 13-15, 2019. Martha Osorio Montiel was elected both national minister and international councilor.



## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC ELECTS

The OFS National Fraternity of the Central African Republic celebrated its National Elective Chapter on September 13-15, 2019. Magloire Désiré Malisaba was elected national minister.

Maka Gblossokotto Lucienne was elected international councilor.



## PANAMA HOLDS ELECTIVE CHAPTER

The OFS National Fraternity of Panama held its National Elective Chapter on August 16-18, 2019. Ileana Vásquez was elected national minister and international councilor.



## PARAGUAY ELECTS MINISTER

The OFS fraternity of Paraguay elected its national council on Aug. 10, 2019. Gustavo Benítez is the new national minister and international councilor. Mirtha Ferreira is vice minister and substitute international councilor.



## EGYPT HOLDS CHAPTER

The OFS in Egypt met in chapter on July 30, 2019, with a new provisional council appointed. Shehata Habib is the new national minister. The chapter took place in the OFM convent of the Virgin Mary in Mokattam.



## HUNGARY ELECTS MINISTER

The Hungarian national fraternity celebrated its 2019 national elective chapter.

László Kerekes, OFS, was elected national minister.

Márton Beke, OFS, was elected international councilor



## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC ELECTS

Dominican Republic Secular Franciscans elected and installed their national council on Sunday, June 16, 2019. The new minister and international councilor is Rafael Pericles Ferrer.



## FRATERNAL VISIT TO BOLIVIA

The Fraternal Visit to the OFS of Bolivia took place in the cities of Santa Cruz, Cochabamba and La Paz from July 11 to 14, 2019. Also in each city there were meetings with the YouFra. Silvia Diana, OFS, was the delegate of the Presidency.



## MALTA HOLDS CHAPTER

The Malta OFS National Fraternity celebrated its elective chapter on June 15, 2019 at the Franciscan Center of the Friars Minor of Hamrum. The new national Minister is Anthony Vella, and the International Councilor is Evelyn Vella Clark.



## KOREA VISIT FEATURES ANNIVERSARY

A profession anniversary celebration took place during the 2019 Fraternal and Pastoral Visit to the Korean OFS.

In Seoul, Kim Ema Sook and Hyu Jong Soon celebrated the 25th anniversary of their profession to the OFS during holy mass with the St. Masseo Fraternity that was attended by the two visitors and officiated by Spiritual Assistant Fr. Edmondo Paek, OFM. Both wore traditional costumes; Kim Ema was in green and Hyu Jong in red.



## UKRAINE ELECTS

The OFS National Fraternity of Ukraine celebrated its National Elective Chapter on June 1, 2019.

Zoya Kutrysh was elected as National minister and Dina Francesca Shabalina as International councillor.



## NICARAGUA ELECTS

The OFS National Fraternity of Nicaragua celebrated its National Elective Chapter from May 16 to 19, 2019.

Angela Rosa Ramos was elected as national minister and as international councillor.



## VIETNAM HOLDS ELECTIONS

The OFS National Fraternity of Vietnam celebrated its National Elective Chapter from May 24 to 25, 2019, in Dalat.

Joseph Vu Quang Khai was elected as national minister and Anton Phung Bai as international councillor.



## 2 LEADERS EMBRACE SISTER DEATH

The OFS Family mourned the passing of two leaders in 2019:

- Louis Hervé Sylva, OFS, of Mauritius, who was a member of the CIOFS Presidency from 2005 to 2008.
- Paulo Machado, aged 101, who had been national minister of Brazil as well as international co-councillor. He was a collaborator in the drafting of the Rule of the OFS, approved by Pope Paul VI in June 1978, and in the drafting of the General Constitutions ad experimentum.



*Louis Hervé Sylva, OFS*



*Paulo Machado, OFS*

## SOUTH AFRICA COUNCIL APPOINTED

A fraternal and pastoral visit to South Africa in 2019 resulted in the appointment of a new Provisional National Council, with the mandate to plan the celebration of an Elective Chapter within two years.

The national minister and international councillor is Caleb Molefe.

The vice-minister and international councillor substitute is Thembi Mafu.

# From guiding planes to guiding the dying, St. Francis is Larry Cox's role model



*Australia's "Catholic Leader" profiled Secular Franciscan Larry Cox in a feature article published Nov. 4, 2019. This condensed version is reprinted with permission.*

by PETER BUGDEN

BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA -- Larry Cox has helped air travellers to safe landings at busy airports and sat as a guide at the bedside of hospital patients on the toughest journeys of their lives.

When he retired as manager of the communications centre and flight watch area at Brisbane Airport more than 20 years ago, he launched into something completely different. He became a voluntary chaplain for Centacare at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital.

It was something he'd been training for, and choosing that path flowed from being a member of the Secular Franciscan Order.

Originally a farm boy from Alberta, Canada, Larry is now the Queensland regional minister of the Secular Franciscans (and a member of the OFS national council) as well as being on the national council for

spiritual directors specialising in the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola. Having those commitments is one reason why he's retiring from chaplaincy.

He began seeking out the Franciscans in 1982 when he and his wife Lucy moved to Brisbane.

"There was just something there – a desire that I wanted to get into the ethos, the charism (of St Francis and the Franciscans)," Larry said.

St Francis' way of "just helping people" gelled with Larry.

"And I suppose that's why I thought chaplaincy would be good, because you're helping people at a critical time in their life, when they're asking the big questions – 'Well what's happening to me, and why is it happening?', 'What's life all about?'"

Larry has visited patients four mornings a week – the first 15 years at Royal Brisbane and Women's

Hospital and the past five at Prince Charles Hospital. Centacare's pastoral ministries director Judy Norris recently presented him with an award recognising his service on top of a similar award he received the previous year from Centacare executive director Peter Selwood.

One of the most important lessons he's had to learn is to bite his tongue.

"You really have to train yourself to realise you've been given two ears and one mouth, and you've got to use them in that proportion."

Larry has found the most important thing is simply being present.

"And then they realise that they could open up and come out with some of their concerns that you could help them work through and to see different options ..., which is primarily what we did – help them emotionally, spiritually ..."