

SPECIAL EDITION

PRESENTATION



At the end of the year, newspapers and magazines take stock of past events and forecast future ones. On the contrary, our “Pace e Bene” simply reports the most important facts that involved us in these last few months, without giving judgements or attempting any forecast, always thanking Divine Providence and entrusting our future to it.

During this year, the meetings that we have already reported have been particularly meaningful: the meeting of the historic-formative committee, the meeting of the formators and young sisters who gathered for a formation term. This issue gives ample room to the experience that the young sisters had during the above-mentioned formation term.

It was a meaningful event for all of us to live the summer months in fraternity with 32 young sisters coming from the four continents. It was thrilling for them to have a direct contact with the origins of Christianity and of our charism, to rediscover the richness of our Sources and, simultaneously, to experience communion with sisters from different nationalities and cultures.

The young sisters showed that they were aware of the precious formative opportunity that was offered to them by means of the explanation of subjects regarding our consecrated life and the

personal approach to our rich tradition of typical places, especially in Rome, Gemona and Assisi.

In this issue’s articles we present a summary of the formative contents that were given, but we are unable to communicate all the significance of the relations that these sisters gradually established with people and places.

Permanent formation, today, requires us to promote, among other things, new relations that are capable of generating mutual trust, since *an increase in the ability to trust one another is considered as an essential sign of conversion and personal and spiritual growth.* (see Letter from the Minister General to the young ofm of 27 May 2007). After closing the year dedicated especially to *formation*, we are now opening the new apostolic year on the horizon of *fraternity*; however, a deeper analysis of these aspects never ceases, as life is moulded by continuous formation and must always be related to fraternity.

I hope that, in the year 2008, the desire to revive our communities translates into an actual commitment on the part of each one of us, so that we can joyfully sing with the Psalmist: *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* (Psalm 133:1).

WALKING WITH THE CHURCH



“DREAMS CAN COME TRUE”!

LORETO, 1- 2 september 2007

Benedict XVI told young people not to be afraid to dream, since the Spirit of God is the one who places great aspirations in their hearts.

This is the message the Pope left Saturday evening to the half-million young people gathered in Loreto. The encounter was part of the Italian bishops' pastoral program to focus on youth ministry.

The Holy Father continued the message today at Mass, saying: “Unfortunately, today it is not unusual that many young people see a full and happy life as a difficult dream, and sometimes almost as an impossibility.

“Many people of your age look to the future with anxiety and pose many questions.”

The Pontiff said they ask themselves, “How do we be a part of a society marked by many and grave injustices and sufferings? How do we react to egoism and to the violence that at times seems to dominate? How do we give full meaning to life?”

“Do not be afraid, Christ can fulfill the deepest aspirations

of your heart! Could there be unrealizable dreams when it is the Spirit of God who awakens and cultivates them in the heart?”

Great things

Benedict XVI said: “Allow me to repeat this to you tonight: Each one of you, if you remain united with Christ, can accomplish great things.

“This is why, dear friends,

you must not be afraid to dream -- with open eyes -- of great projects of good, and you must not let yourselves be discouraged by difficulties.”

During the meeting, some young people gave testimonies and engaged the Holy Father in dialogue, posing questions to which the Pope responded.

After the Saturday prayer vigil, the Pontiff went into the shrine of Loreto for a moment of private prayer in the Holy House. According to tradition, it is Mary's house from Nazareth that was carried stone by stone to Italy.

Later, the night was illuminated by fireworks that concluded a day marked by the vigil with the Pope and music performed by Italian artists.



WALKING WITH THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

**BE
JOYFUL**



**IN
THE LORD**

In the meeting between the Minister General OFM Fr José Rodriguez Carballo and the European youth, which took place in Assisi on 11 August, there were also our young sisters, who had already gathered for the formation term.

We would like to quote some passages of his greetings, which were centered on the theme “BE JOYFUL IN THE LORD!”

“My dear youth: you have come from many countries of Europe to Assisi, “the capital of the culture of love

and peace”, as love pilgrims. Here, in the Porziuncola, I renew my warmest and fraternal welcome to all and I greet you by wishing you Peace and Good.

[...]. Mary, the “Virgin made Church”, as sings Francis of Assisi (SVM), continues to be a model for those, young, adult or elderly, who wish to be disciples and missionaries in this beginning of the third millennium. Her “YES”, her “FIAT” keeps resounding in the heart of the believer and of the entire church, of which Mary is the image, waiting to be made up-to-date in the present of each one of us,

so that the Word becomes incarnate anew in the world through our word and our life.

"[...] Dear youth: like Mary, open the eyes of your heart to discover Jesus who "passes by" in your streets, as he passed by in the life of the first disciples (see Mark 1:16). Find out that he is by your side in the joyous as well as in the difficult moments of your life. And once you have discovered him, let him enter your lives: Open the doors of your heart to Christ! "Open the doors to Christ as Francis did, without fear, without calculation, without means" (Benedict XVI to the youth in Assisi)...Young people, let yourselves be conquered by Christ, like Clare did! And you will find out that he is the true treasure, compared to which everything else becomes secondary. Dear youth: Christ is "passing" by your life. Which are the walls that prevent him from entering? Are you willing to knock down the walls that prevent him from sharing his life with you? Let yourselves be met by Christ! Trust Him! Let yourselves be loved by Christ! Do fall in love

with Christ!, as Francis and Clare did, and your life will be totally transformed.

[...] The Poverello feels a "joy never before experienced" when he "leaves the servant and meets the Lord" (2 Cel 6). True joy, the joy no one will be able to take away from us, the true celebration, originate from the experience of the encounter with the other and, for us believers, from life hidden in God (see 1 Peter 1:8-9) "Only the Infinite can fill our heart" (Benedict XVI to the youth in Assisi)

[...] And if your joy rests with the Lord, even in the moments of tribulation you will maintain an "incredible and glorious" peace (1 Peter 1:8-9).

[...] You are looking for peace in your heart: do not fear and say "YES" to the Lord. You are thirsting for fullness: do not fear and say "YES" to the Lord. You are looking for a meaning for your life: open yourself, offer yourself, accept and, like Mary, start saying "May it be done to me according to your word." And then, what would be impossible for us, the Lord will make it possible, because "nothing is impossible" for Him (see Luke 1: 37)".



THE GRACE OF THE ORIGINS

CHRONICLE OF THE FIRST FRANCISCAN TERTIARY MISSIONARIES OF GEMONA IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)

CHAPTER VI

ST. JOSEPH HEARS THE FAITH AND SIMPLICITY OF THE NUNS

One day, the Franciscan sisters in New York were in such dire straits that they had nothing to eat for dinner. The nun in charge of the kitchen went to the Superior and asked what she should prepare for dinner. The Superior answered that she did not have any money and invited her to go and pray St. Joseph. The nun, who was his devotee, gladly went to pray, but after a short time she returned to the Mother to ask what she should cook. As she had nothing to give her, the Superior sent her back to pray. The humble nun obeyed and returned to the Chapel, but since it was getting late and she was aware of her duty, she went back to the Superior asking her what she should give the nuns. Then the Superior said: Go and pray St. Joseph with a lot of faith, because he must provide. For the third time, the nun went back to pray, but she was quite hesitant because she had not been heard.

That time, however, was unlike the others. As soon as she started praying, the doorbell rang. Since the other nuns were busy with the school, the one in charge of the kitchen acted also as the doorkeeper. Therefore, she had to stop praying and go open the door. The poor thing was surprised to see a woman get in carrying a basket full of supplies. Tea, coffee, sugar, butter, ham, eggs, bread, plenty of everything. The nun ran to the Superior shouting that St. Joseph had indeed provided for the nuns' dinner. Someone could say: Was it not St. Joseph who came with the basket? The Lord used to send food to St. Paul, the first hermit, by means of a crow. The young woman who had brought the basket was quite surprised at seeing that unusual cheerfulness for such a small present. So they told her how the sister, not having anything for dinner, had had to disturb St. Joseph so that he could provide. The woman

told them that she was a servant in a shop and never used to go back home so early. But that day, she felt urged to ask permission to her boss, so that she could have time to visit them. Since she wanted to bring them something, she took what she thought would be most useful, as she did not know what they needed. That young woman is now a nun among the sisters of mercy.

Another day, the nuns were left without petrol for the lamps: now there is gas. The sister who had to prepare them went to the Superior to ask her to buy some. She answered that she did not have any money and that if the Lord wanted them to lit the lights that evening, he would provide; otherwise they would go to bed earlier. The nun had just reported to the others what the Superior had said, when a poor old woman came with a big bottle of petrol. The sister went back to the Mother to tell her that even that night they would not be able to go to bed earlier, because the

Lord had sent the petrol, which, by the way, lasted a long time. Before St. Anthony provided the nuns with 15 thousand dollars, they had found themselves in financial straits to pay a 5-thousand-dollar instalment. A bill for the house was due to expire in three days and the person who had promised to lend them the



money was no longer able to do it. So, they would have spoiled the good name of the Institute as well as lost the earnest; moreover, they would no longer be able to open homes in that Diocese. They were quite distressed, especially the one who had given her name and word that they would buy it, although she was not the Superior back then. She prayed a lot with the other nuns, then she left for New York accompanied by another sister and a person who was quite charitable to the Institute. They were looking for someone who would feel sorry for their troubles. She was willing to travel and pray even all night, but she would not return home without the money or a security. Thank God, the first person to whom she introduced herself relieved her of her pain. It was a man who was a fervent devotee of St. Joseph. The nun, with tears in her eyes, said: For St. Joseph's sake, you

can help me if you want to. When he heard the name of the Saint, the man answered: Tell me what you need: I am willing to do all I can for you and your Community. She told him the circumstances in which they found themselves and he added that if they had asked him a week earlier, he would have had the money, but he could still borrow it from a bank in his name. And so he did. The sister thanked him whole-heartedly and returned immediately to Peekskill, in order to comfort the other sisters who were waiting in pain. They all thanked God, who had disposed things so benignly.

One day, the former Superior, who was in charge for buying the house, was in bed with fever. She was told by the new Superior that there was no money in the house to pay for an instalment which would expire in a few days. She got up instantly to go to the city to look for some generous people who would help them. They all prayed together in front of the image

of St. Joseph, with seven candles lit, so that the Lord would dispose that someone helps them. Then they prepared to leave, together with the Superior. She was waiting for the train when they came and told her that a man with his wife had come to visit her and they were already in the parlour. She went to excuse herself because she had to leave for N.Y. As soon as he saw her, the man asked: You are anxious, what has happened? You look

suffering, are you sick? She answered that it was all true, as she had had to get up from bed for a very important business and she had to go to the city. He added: May I do something for you? You need some money, don't you? That's the very reason we were going to N.Y. Well, you go to bed and I'll go back to town to settle everything in your stead. He called his wife, who had gone walking on the balcony with the nuns. He made a carriage come, since he had ordered it only for that evening. He and his wife went back to N.Y. with the train that the nuns should have taken, in order to settle the nuns' matters. They all thanked God with all their heart because he had answered them. It never once happened that they prayed without obtaining what they needed, because the Lord makes sure that those who abandon themselves to Him and hope in His Providence lack for nothing.

CHAPTER VII

THEY OPEN A BOARDING SCHOOL IN PEEKSKILL AS WELL AS OTHER SCHOOLS

In order to be more useful to their neighbour, not only to the poor but also to the rich (and simultaneously to fulfil the obligation to earn their own bread), the Franciscan sisters opened the boarding school in Peekskill. As we use to say, every beginning is hard. So they started with only one girl. However, the news of the opening of the school, under the title: Academy of Saint Mary of the Angels, spread rapidly. Sooner than they could have hoped for, they had three dozens schoolgirls, as many as the house could hold. In the Academy, the girls were taught all the sciences that were deemed appropriate for a young American woman to know. Among the subjects there were also several languages, but the first place was given to catholic religion. Since the school welcomed also Protestants, the religious had the great consolation to obtain the abjuration of a young protestant woman, who embraced catholic faith. She was christened in the small Chapel of the convent. Not far from the convent, there is the school for the poor young boys and girls of the Peekskill area, who would have to attend protestant schools if they were not educated by the nuns. These children learn German and English too. The school has more than 140 pupils. Moreover, every Sunday five nuns go to the village catholic church to teach catechism.

In the afternoon, in the school, they educate the maids and the young girls who cannot attend school during working days. This is of great benefit, because in this way the youth are not only educated, but also taken away opportunities to do much mischief, as we know that the devil finds work for idle hands. As I said before, lessons take place in the catholic church, since in the village there are thirteen protestant churches and only one



catholic church. The good Lord knows the good that the nuns do to the people of Peekskill, for which they receive and will receive their reward from Him. The people are good, they are not ingrate; on the contrary, they are grateful for the benefits that they receive; they respect the nuns more than any other person. When they go visit the sick, they are welcomed with such a respect that can arise only out of faith, since they are regarded as brides of Jesus Christ. Sometimes they go visit three or four sick people but in the end they must visit seven or eight of them, because those who have sick people at home invite them to come in when they see them pass by. So it happened that two nuns who had gone to visit three sick people after Vespers had to visit seven of them instead.

It was getting late and they had not finished the visits yet. They could barely go forth, because the village is on the sea-shore, it was very cold and the snow was very high, so they could not see the road. A man in a sleigh passed by and invited them to get up and offered to take them to the convent. They thanked him and told him they could not accept his offer because they still had a sick man to visit. Well, the man helped them get up, took them to the sick man and waited there to take them back to the convent. One of them was surprised at the man's good heart, but the Superior said: This is nothing extraordinary, because the protestants themselves have a lot

of respect for the nuns and if they see them walking, they invite them to get up their sleighs or coaches.

Sometimes the families who have sick people send their coaches to fetch the nuns so that they can come and visit them, especially when they do not want to prepare to confess. In such cases, not only do the nuns go as quickly as they can, but the Superior orders the whole Community to pray and lit candles to the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph. Those who are sent to visit

the sick pray along the way and in the sick person's room, then they do their best to help these poor souls reconcile with God. One day the nuns were called so urgently that those who had to go did not even have the time to wear their cloak. One of them said: my God! Even if the nuns could give absolution, they would not be able to be quicker! But the messenger said that a man was about to die and wanted to have the nuns around so that they could pray for him. One day a woman ran to the nuns to ask them to go and prepare her mother for confession. She said: my mother is very sick, the doctor says she can pass away any day now. She doesn't want to, but she must go to confession. My sisters and I are very distressed at seeing that our mother doesn't want to receive the comforts of religion. She is 70 and has gone to confession only twice. We were not surprised at our father's behaviour because he was protestant, and yet, thank God, he died as a good Catholic. But our mother! She has been catholic since she was a child and seeing that she doesn't want to go to confession... causes us great pain.

The woman and her sisters are very good catholic and take Holy Communion very frequently, despite having such a mother.

The school that was opened in N.Y. by the Franciscan nuns in the very first year is running well, although it is not much attended because there are only three teachers for two hundred pupils. Sometimes the nuns must teach some protestant people, who in order to marry a Catholic embrace his or her faith. In each Mission, the nuns teach catechism in the churches.

The Franciscan Sisters of Peekskill (or better to say of Gemona, Italy, because the mother house is there) have opened two mission houses in the

State of New Jersey, under the supervision of the Passionist Fathers, in which they run three schools. Like the others, these too are mixed. One is about half-an-hour walk away from the house and two teachers have to go there every morning. They must go by coach almost always, because in those parts, near the seaside, the ground is very clayey and therefore always muddy. In the house of Union Hill, although there are usually only three nuns, they have the privilege of having the Most Blessed Sacrament in a small Chapel, and this for the needs of the sick. Indeed, the parish priest does not feel up to letting Him in the church, since the sacred vessels have been stolen there repeatedly. Even in Guttemberg, in the month of November 1873, the Church was burglarized during the night. The nuns who, besides teaching, are often responsible for the sacristy in the missions, went in the morning to decorate the church and found the Holy Tabernacle open and the Sacred Particles left behind the altar. The priest could not celebrate Mass that day, because he did not have another chalice. The Superior asked him to administer Holy Communion to them nonetheless, which he did gladly. Through their Communion, they tried to make

amends for the sacrilegious profanations that had been committed in the previous night. Oh Lord, please inflame us with your love, so that we can do our best to make up for the abuses to your goodness. In the missions the nuns do a lot of good to people, and they even devote themselves at night to teach

those who work during the day. Especially in the past year they toiled a lot to teach children as well as adults how to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.

From ACGAs, Ist. 7, Mission USA, 3/1



THE GRACE OF THE ORIGINS

FROM THE MUSEUM OF “ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS” MOTHER HOUSE

INTRODUCTION

During the years from 2002 to 2005, in the premises of the Mother House, a new museum was set up that gathers the most significant mementos of our Institute's history.

After the terrible 1976 earthquake, which destroyed Gemona and also a great part of our historic heritage, the most precious mementos, which were often recovered among the debris of the convent, were brought to the “Sacred Heart” boarding school in Udine, where they were kept until the reconstruction of the Mother House was completed (1985). Here, they were kept in the Provincialate for some years, closed into drawers and closets.

In the 1990s, the need to reorder systematically all these objects was felt and they were exposed in some rooms in the basement. The setting up of this first museum was made with a lot of dedication by Sr Eligia Capriz, who also took charge of the restoration of the damaged works, especially the statues. The rooms, however, were quite small and humid and therefore, as time went by, the objects were deteriorating.

It was necessary to find a new location to safeguard the historical goods and, above all, to set them off better. In 2002 the renovation of three new rooms started, which were located on the first floor of the building. They were planned to host a bigger, more luminous museum, aesthetically refined and provided with modern security systems.

The numerous artifacts (there are about 1000 of them) were catalogued and for the most part photographed, then about 300 of them were selected and subdivided, then displayed in special closets following this itinerary:

1. The place: “St. Clare's convent”
2. The Foundress
3. The Founder
4. The first Sisters
5. The life in prayer
6. Pope Pius IX
7. “St. Mary of the Angels” School and Boarding School
8. The Mission in the United States of America
9. The Mission in the East
10. The itinerary of the Institute

Every section of the museum is introduced by didactic panels containing a general presentation as well as photographs.

Each object is accompanied by a caption and the common logos is the image of the ancient convent.

As regards the historical documents, we have drawn from various sources, among which it is worth to remember the precious testimonies, both oral and written, by Sr Eligia Capriz, who was the faithful keeper of our mementos for many years.

Moreover, we have found precious information in our archives and in the rich bibliography of our religious Congregation, especially in the “*Historic memories*” by Father Gregory and in “*A soul and a work*” by Sr Lilia Nascimbeni. In order to date and evaluate the most important artifacts, we called in some experts.

By means of the “Pace e Bene” bulletin, we would like to introduce to you, in stages, the various sections of the new museum, dwelling especially on the objects that are most significant from an historic and affective point of view.

Our visit to the Museum, which tells the “marvellous and painful” history of our Institute, begins with the visit to the first room, dedicated to our Founders.

LAURA LEROUX DE BAUFFREMONT
In religion SISTER GIUSEPPA OF JESUS
FOUNDRRESS OF THE FRANCISCAN MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART

LAURA LEROUX: 1832-ABOUT 1855

Laura Leroux was born in Paris on 2 august 1832, from Eugène, a gifted and rich banker, and Aurélie Bourg de Bossi. Her father died in 1849 when he was still young, leaving as his sole heiress his only daughter, Laura, not before he managed to arrange her wedding with the heir to the dukes of Bauffremont, Roger.

Laura, who did not attend any boarding nor public school, received a good education in the family and, aided by a lively intelligence, she acquired a extensive culture and a refined sensitivity to what is beautiful.

She married at 17 (1849) and had a daughter, Hélène-Marie (1851), who died in 1859.

The wedding did not mark a happy union: indeed, in the month of May 1855, the couple separated by mutual consent. On 21 May 1855, Laura left Paris and moved to the South of France, attracted by the desire of a life that would be spiritually richer.... (from the didactic panel)

The objects that bear witness or recall this stage of our Foundress' life are the following:

1. COUPLE OF CRUCIFIXES WHICH BELONGED TO OUR FOUNDRRESS

19th century
gilded metal

The most important dates in the life of Laura Leroux are carved in French in a crucifix:

2 August 1832 (birth)

1 June 1845 (First Communion)

2 June 1845 (Confirmation)

22 October 1849 (Wedding)

7 September 1851 (birth of her daughter Hélène Marie)

15 June 1855 (the Duchess leaves Paris).

In addition, the three common religious vows (Poverty, Chastity and Obedience) and a forth specific one (Love for the Most Holy Eucharist) are carved in both crucifixes.

Maybe the forth vow recalls the short experience as Carmelite nun of our Foundress, who, under the spiritual guidance of Fr Carlo, displayed a strong preference for the Eucharistic cult: indeed, she took the religious name of Sr Maria Giuseppa of Jesus Host.



2. PORTRAIT OF HELENE MARIE, PRINCESS OF BAUFFREMONT, THE FOUNDRESS' DAUGHTER

about 1854

watercolour on daguerreotype

(= old photograph for which a silverised copper plate covered in silver iodide was used).

The photographer impressed the image of the child, then an artist, who was present in every studio, retouched and completed the portrait with watercolours.

The little H el ene Marie is portrayed, dressed in white, sitting in the green landscape with two small white rabbits. The child is wearing blue shoes and a necklace with a medal.

The portrait is surrounded by a gilded brass oval frame, lightly carved, and is inserted in a rectangular



support whose front is covered in red velvet and its back in black leather.

The small picture is kept in a wooden case covered in black leather with floral motifs printed on it. The inside is lined with red silk and red morocco leather.

The watercolour was donated to us by the Duke Th eodore of Bauffremont in 1939, when we were looking for information in view of writing "A soul and a work".

The photograph was made in Paris by L. E. Mayer and P. E. Pierson, two photographers who, in late 19th century Paris, set up a studio that saw, among its clients, also the French emperor Napoleon III. One of their photograph albums is still kept by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Trade mark on the case: : *Mayer & Pierson, Photographes / de S. M. l'Empereur / Boulevard des Capucines, 3 Paris.*

3. ALFONSO RODRIGUEZ

TRAIT  DE LA PERFECTION CHR TIENNE (TREATY OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION)

It is an edition intended for laypeople and published in Paris by Plon Fr eres in 1848.

The binding is refined with a black leather cover and gilded edge.

The book is an example of the religious readings and reflections to which the Foundress devoted herself even before she started a new life project.

Indeed, the volume contains handwritten notes and underlinings that bear witness to the Duchess' spiritual path in the period between 1853 and 1855. .

We quote only some of them, translated from French into English:

"... and when, in the middle of the day, you end your personal examination and become aware that in that day you have done nothing to become a better person, that you have not mortified yourself, that you have not even done an act of humility despite the many opportunities that you have had, consider that you have wasted the entire morning and take the firm resolution not to spend the rest of the day in the same manner..."



NOTE BY THE FOUNDRRESS: “*GOOD HABIT! VERY TRUE WORDS. (MAY 1853)*”.

“...Take care not to do good works in order that people may see you... otherwise you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father ...”

NOTE: “SCARING WORDS”.

Page 32 “*DO WE PLACE AS MUCH AMBITION TO COMMAND OUR PASSIONS AS TO DOMINATE OUR NEIGHBOUR?! (DECEMBER 1853)*”. *THE JOY WE FEEL AFTER MORTIFYING OURSELVES IS MANY TIMES AS BIG AS MORTIFICATION ITSELF*”.

Underlined text: “To achieve fidelity in prayer, spiritual life, observance; never get discouraged, never neglect what depends from us, act with pure intentions. Attend Holy Mass with fervour, practice spiritual reading, do not neglect small things, love meditation, silence... Drink like birds do, raising our head upwards at every sip... keeping our eyes always turned to the Lord...”



4. JACQUES RENÈ ROHRBACHER

HISTOIRE UNIVERSELLE DE L’EGLISE CATHOLIQUE (UNIVERSAL HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH)

Paris, Gaume Frères, 1850, 29 volumes

Ownership note: *L. Bauffremont*

It is one of the documents that highlights the Foundress’ cultural level. In the volumes there are some underlinings that regard especially the history of the French Church.

The binding is quite valuable and refined.

5. ALTAR-CLOTH MADE OUT OF A SHEET BELONGING TO THE FOUNDRRESS.

First half of 19th century

Cotton linen cloth

The initials LL (Laura Leroux) are embroidered using satin and couching stitches. The lace is needle-made; the pleats are hand-sewn.

In the museum storeroom there are also nine pairs of white silk socks bearing the embroidered initials “*L.B.*”



We show also some objects about whose origin there is no precise information, but that help us reconstruct the high social environment in which the rich French lady lived.

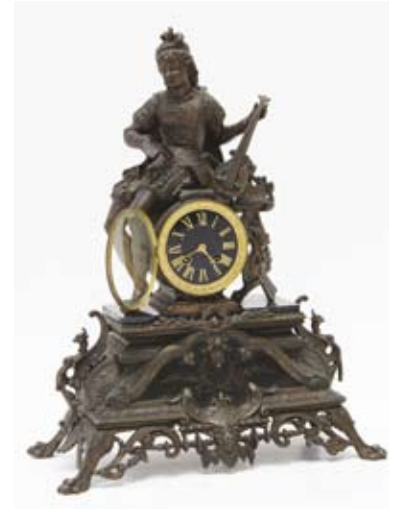


6. GILDED METAL WATCH, CALLED "THE PARISIAN". 1830.



7. BRONZE CLOCK, OF GERMAN TASTE AND PROFANE SUBJECT.

It was kept in Gemona, in the office of the Superior General.
1830 circa



8. SPECTACLES WITHOUT FRAME IN REFINED CASE AND READING SPECTACLES.



9. IVORY FAN. IT IS DECORATED WITH FLORAL AND ANIMAL MOTIFS.



10. PAROISSIEN ROMAIN (THE ROMAN PARISHIONER)

Paris, Belin-Leprieur et Morizot. First half of 19th century.



(to be continued in the next issues with the Passionist experience, the encounter with Father Gregorio, etc...)

LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION

ACTIVITY OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2007

The General Council continued its activity according to the provisions of the Chapter Document and the six-year programme, turning its attention particularly on formation.

1. After the “Quarter of formation to interculturality”, which ended on 30 August, the Council undertook the evaluation of the experience lived by the young sisters in the most meaningful places of Christianity, of the Franciscan Family and of the Congregation, and it assessed how the subjects that had been presented to them about the Congregational charism, the history of Franciscanism and the essential dimensions of our consecrated life had been assimilated. To crown this special time of formation, the perpetual Profession of three young sisters in the chapel of the General House was celebrated with special solemnity and participation.

2. It is with joy and renewed hope that the Council confirmed the admission to perpetual Profession of Sr Maria Lourdes Roca from the Latin American Province.

3 A particular care and commitment were required for the preparation to the Extended General Council. The General Council and the Provincial and Regional Superiors will go to India on 28th November 2007 and together they will deal with the most important issues, to instil in the Congregation a renewed vitality by means of a serious and firm return to the original charism, a more solid commitment to specific formation to religious life and a better realization of the missionary spirit that must animate every sister of our religious Family.

4. The preparation of the meetings scheduled for 2008 went on.

In particular:

- in cooperation with the Provincial Superior of the Latin American Province, the project of a meeting of the representatives of the schools and reception houses was set up, which will take place in Santiago of Chile starting from 24 March 2008.

- the meeting of the sisters who celebrate their jubilee of religious life, which will take place next July and will be centered on the theme: “Minority: the evangelical strength of fraternity”.

5. In response to the formation requirements, the General Council, after a careful discernment, deliberated to reinstate the International Juniorate, which at present welcomes young sisters from the Oriental, French and Latin American Provinces. Sr Bernarda Alvarez, from the Latin American Province, was named Mistress of the International Juniorate and took the role of Superior of this new community, resident in the General House.

6. The Council also confirmed the nomination of Sr Mirella Venturin as Mistress of Juniorate in the Latin American Province.

The Superior General, Sr Emmapia, dedicated the month of October to the Canonical visit of the communities in “St. Elizabeth” Province, spread in the island of Cyprus, in Lebanon and in Bulgaria. Subsequently, together with the Vicar General, Sr Cecilia Subiabre, the General Treasurer, Sr Paola Dotto and the Provincial Superior, Sr Monica Hannoulli, she met in Turkey the Salesian Fathers who run a house that is our property situated in the island of Bujukada.

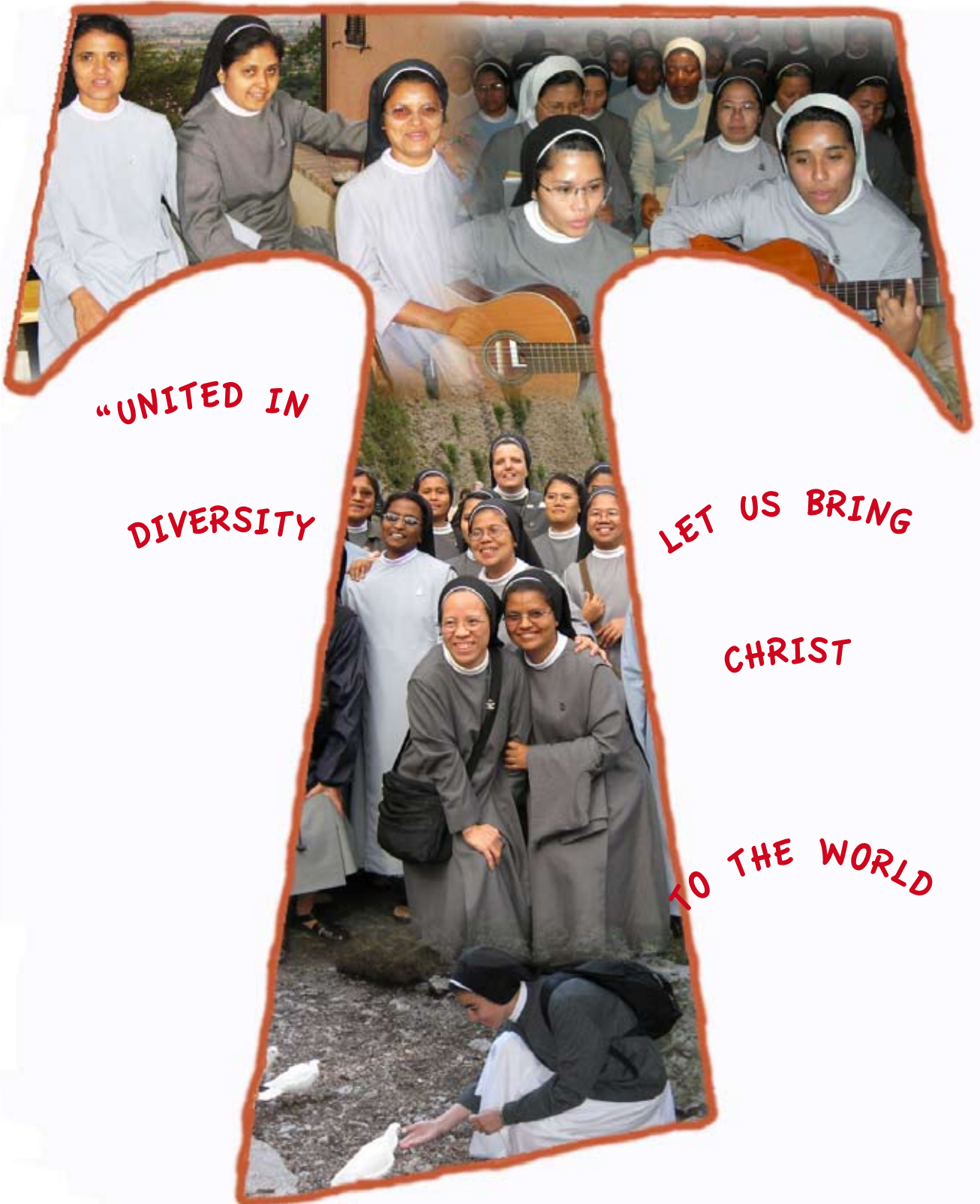
JUBILARIANS YEAR 2008

			PROFESSIONE
80°	Sr Blandina Pasin	Prov. Romana	08-05-1928
75°	Sr Francis Marie Connolly	Prov. USA	17-04-1933
	Sr Clela Pezzato	Prov. Veneta	18-10-1933
70°	Sr Giancarla Bettio	Prov. USA	01-07-1938
	Sr Theresa Charles Grant	Prov. USA	27-08-1938
	Sr Giuditta Cestaro	Prov. Romana	05-10-1938
	Sr Marina Guerini	Prov. Romana	05-10-1938
65°	Sr Ellen Joseph Drury	Prov. USA	28-08-1943
	Sr Serafina Muffato	Prov. Veneta	17-09-1943
	Sr Biancangela Carniato	Prov. Veneta	17-09-1943
	Sr Mariarosa Carlesso	Prov. Romana	17-09-1943
	Sr Giambattista Manente	Prov. Veneta	17-09-1943
	Sr Clemens Bolognani	Prov. Romana	17-09-1943
	Sr Ernestina Magoga	Prov. Latinoamericana	28-12-1943
60°	Sr Regina Parolin	Prov. Veneta	02-06-1948
	Sr Leonilde Billia	Prov. Veneta	02-06-1948
	Sr Nicodema Gemin	Prov. Francese	02-06-1948
	Sr Danila Cavasin	Prov. Veneta	02-06-1948
	Sr Ugolina Stecca	Prov. Veneta	02-06-1948
	Sr Barbara Ruff	Prov. USA	08-07-1948
	Sr Concetta Rondinelli	Prov. Romana	12-09-1948
	Sr Teresa Appetiti	Prov. Romana	12-09-1948
	Sr Celina Del Buono	Prov. Romana	12-09-1948
	Sr Piamichela Durigon	Prov. Veneta	13-10-1948
	Sr Filiberta Biagioni	Prov. Francese	13-10-1948
	Sr Teresiana Gasparetto	Prov. Francese	13-10-1948
50°	Sr Rosangela Bregani	Prov. Veneta	03-05-1958
	Sr Andreina Genovese	Prov. Veneta	03-05-1958
	Sr Graziella Celot	Prov. Veneta	03-05-1958
	Sr Marilisa Cavasin	Prov. Veneta	03-05-1958
	Sr Emanuela Antonello	Prov. Veneta	03-05-1958
	Sr Adriana Pozzebon	Prov. Romana	03-05-1958
	Sr Ines Pavan	Prov. Latinoamericana	29-06-1958
	Sr Anne Patrick Boddie	Prov. USA	13-08-1958
	Sr Raffaella Martelli	Prov. Romana	12-09-1958
	Sr Ludovica Salerno	Prov. Romana	12-09-1958
	Sr Patrizia Trivarelli	Prov. Romana	12-09-1958
	Sr Chiara Crescenzi	Prov. Romana	12-06-1958
	Sr Maria Paola Guida	Prov. Romana	12-09-1958
	Sr Annateresa Liatsou	Prov. Orientale	29-09-1958
	Sr Lilia Brondino	Prov. Romana	29-09-1958
	Sr Annagrazia Ghedin	Prov. Veneta	29-09-1958
	Sr Roberta Paris	Prov. Latinoamericana	29-09-1958
25°	Sr Alice Karothu Narothu	Prov. Francese	21-11-1983
	Sr Gracy Thuruthippallil	Prov. Indiana	21-11-1983
	Sr Gracykutty Puthiyadath	Prov. Orientale	21-11-1983
	Sr Mary Lukose Chamakalakunnumpurath	Reg. Apost. Africana	21-11-1983
	Sr Philomina Pendanam	Prov. Indiana	26-12-1983



STADISTICA SUORE

TRIMESTRAL INTERCULTURAL FORMATION JUNE - AUGUST 2007



“UNITED IN

DIVERSITY

LET US BRING

CHRIST

TO THE WORLD

INTERNATIONAL GROUP GEMONA - MOTHER HOUSE 12-16 JUNE 07

12 June: was the day of our arrival, full of emotions both for the sisters of the Mother House, who for the first time welcomed such a numerous group of sisters (31 of them) coming from different organism and continents and for the young sisters, who for the first time were able to visit the places of origin of the Congregation and could finally place visually in this context what they had so far learnt orally or from the pages of memories contained in our sources. There were not



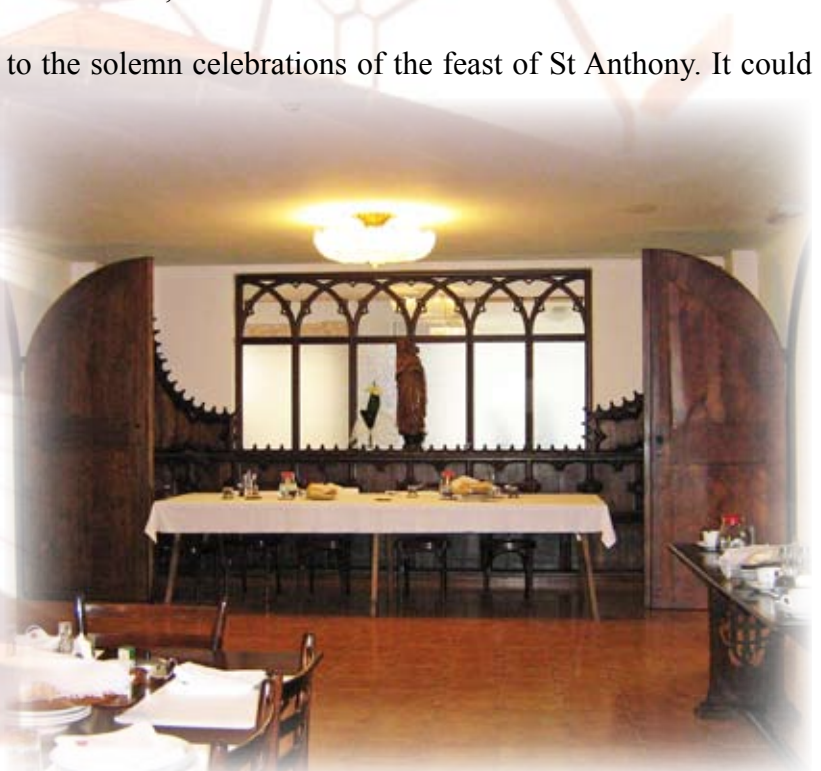
enough rooms in the Mother House to accommodate the whole group; therefore, some sisters spent the nights at St. Anthony Convent, others at our Franciscan Oasis community.

However, the big refectory of “St Mary of the Angels” Convent could hold us all: it is here that this extraordinary Community, which exceeded one hundred members these days, without taking account of the infirmity community, could gather together. And we could also gather all together in the Church for prayer and in the Chapter Hall for recreational moments.

The young sisters were accompanied by the general Councillor Sr Germana Tomat. They came from all the organism and their different somatic features clearly indicated that they came from different continents. The element of unity was Franciscan simplicity, the spirit of service, fraternal communion. They immediately took an active part in animating Liturgy, but they were also interested in learning fast new melodies from our musical tradition, even in Latin!

13 June: The first day of stay was dedicated to the solemn celebrations of the feast of St Anthony. It could not have been otherwise, since our foundation in Gemona is linked to the presence there of the first Sanctuary dedicated to St Anthony, of whom our Foundress was a big devotee. The entire group took part in the solemn celebrations of the Holy Mass and the afternoon votive Procession. In the evening they all were able to enjoy the traditional and increasingly accurate fireworks.

14 June – Visit to Gemona and its Cathedral. With the help of different guides and favoured by some lucky encounters (the mayor unexpectedly welcomed us in the Town Hall square, a history scholar accompanied us during the visit to the Cas-





tle, the access to which is still forbidden due to reconstruction works following the 1976 earthquake) we experienced our first direct contact with the town and its environmental, historical, artistic and Congregational aspects.

15 June – Feast of the Sacred Heart. The Province celebrated in Udine the Centennial of foundation of the Sacred Heart Boarding School. We attended with joy the Holy Mass celebrated in the nearby Church of the Capuchins, which was made livelier by the

presence of the current boarders and of many former boarders, authorities and friends; the “thanksgiving” continued in the familiar and artistically decent setting of the recently restored Boarding School. An interesting DVD guided the audience to the knowledge of the most

incisive stages of the hundred years of history of the Sacred Heart Boarding House, which experienced two world wars, welcomed the sisters of the Gemona infirmary in the post-earthquake years and was also temporarily the Provincial seat.

The proximity of the Marian Sanctuary of Our Lady of Graces, in First May Square, invited us to a devout visit which, after the moment of prayer in front of the revered icon of the Virgin in the central Chapel dedicated to her, became also quite interesting owing to the varied and detailed explanations provided by the Father Superior of the Servants of Mary





about the Sanctuary, the cloisters and the Confession Chapel.

16 June: the day was dedicated to the Congregational Museum. The earthquake has deprived us of our characteristic neo-Gothic Convent, but many mementos have remained, which have been made



even more precious by nostalgia for what we loved and is no more. Therefore, apart from the rooms specially dedicated to that end, everything in the Mother House becomes a Museum, a memento.

The big pictures of the neo-Gothic Convent, which welcome visitors at the entrance, accompanied us along the luminous halls that overlook the internal courtyards, all the way to the Chapter hall and the refectory. The big chapel, in which we gathered for the moments of

prayer during the day, sculpturally reminded us our congregational identity through the work of the artist Arrigo Poz. In the rooms dedicated to the Museum, many objects-mementos are displayed that recall our birth as a religious family, wanted by God's loving Providence, our life as a reality of death and resurrection, as was especially highlighted by the earthquake, and our hope, which is the certainty of life after death.

In the afternoon, the return to the origins brought us to visit again, this time in detail, the Sanctuary of St Anthony, to the presence of which we owe the choice of Gemona as the seat of our foundation. Within the walls of the Sanctuary, which was completely rebuilt after the earthquake and luminously decorated by the artist Arrigo Poz, there are still visible proofs of the presence of St Anthony in that place, where he wanted to build a chapel dedicated to the Virgin and where he performed some miracles.

17 June, Sunday – In that same Sanctuary the Holy Mass was celebrated at 11 o'clock by Msgr Luigi Morao OFM, Franciscan missionary and Sr Biancamaria's brother, who



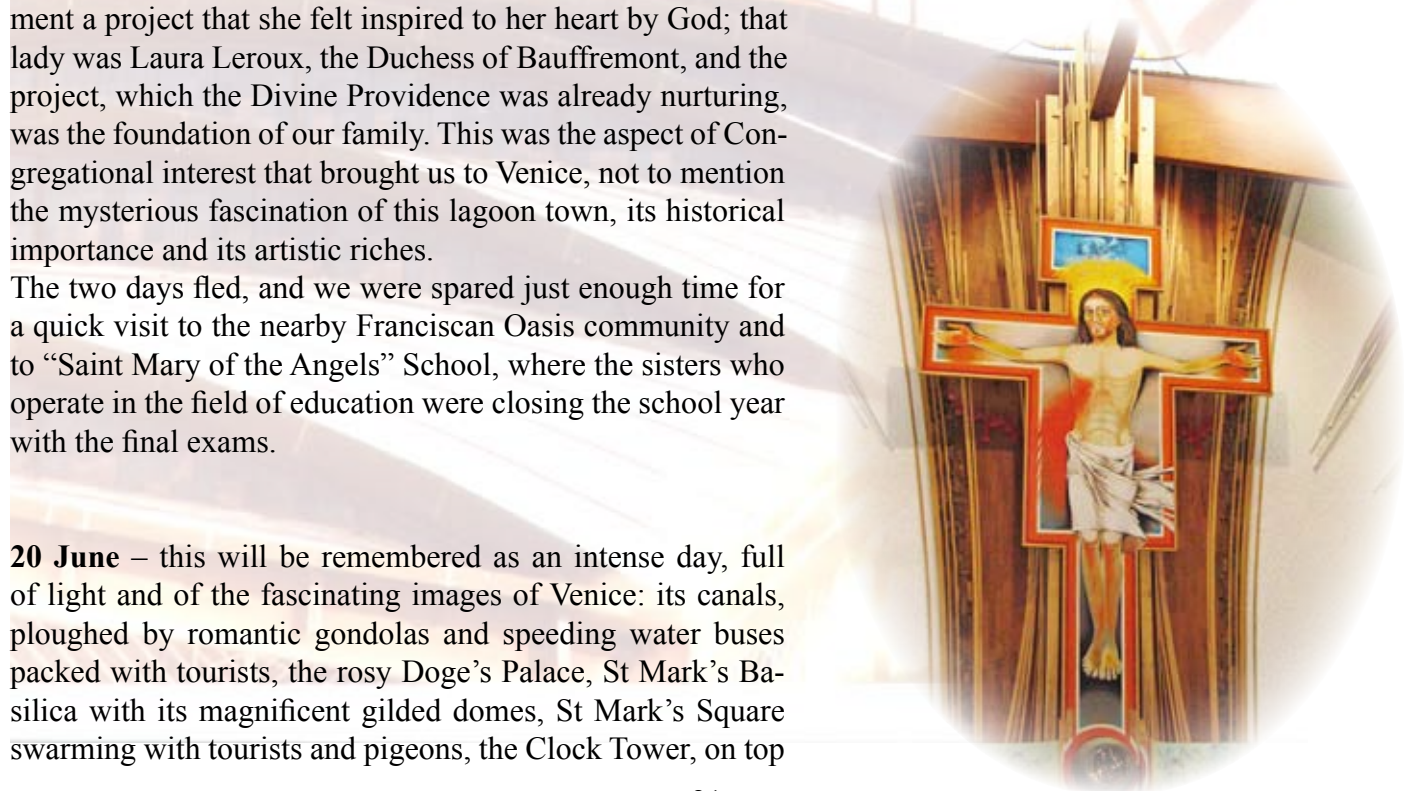


was recently nominated Bishop of Chalatenango, in the Central American Republic of San Salvador. As an international group of a Franciscan and missionary Congregations, we were invited to animate the chorus during this liturgy of praise and we did it with much joy and sincere participation. In the afternoon, we saw the documentary “Without stick, without sack”, which made us think back over the events of our origins that Father Gregory bequeathed us in his “Historical memoirs”.

18-19 June – Those were formation days which prepared us to other experiences; Father Gregory, in the first pages of his “Memoirs”, led us to Venice in St Francis of the Vineyard, where took place his first encounter with the mysterious lady who showed at his confessional clothed like a nun and then asked his help to implement a project that she felt inspired to her heart by God; that lady was Laura Leroux, the Duchess of Bauffremont, and the project, which the Divine Providence was already nurturing, was the foundation of our family. This was the aspect of Congregational interest that brought us to Venice, not to mention the mysterious fascination of this lagoon town, its historical importance and its artistic riches.

The two days fled, and we were spared just enough time for a quick visit to the nearby Franciscan Oasis community and to “Saint Mary of the Angels” School, where the sisters who operate in the field of education were closing the school year with the final exams.

20 June – this will be remembered as an intense day, full of light and of the fascinating images of Venice: its canals, ploughed by romantic gondolas and speeding water buses packed with tourists, the rosy Doge’s Palace, St Mark’s Basilica with its magnificent gilded domes, St Mark’s Square swarming with tourists and pigeons, the Clock Tower, on top





of which the two Moors always beat the inexorable flowing of time. The guided visit of the Basilica gave us above all a sense of great awe for its incredible beauty. Then, passing quickly through narrow lanes, small bridges and sunny piazzas, we reached St Francis of the Vineyard where, first of all, we indulged a short ice-cream break that was really needed!

The presence of Franciscans in St Francis of the Vineyard dates back to 1253, but the present church is the work of famous architects of the Renaissance such as Sansovino and Palladio. Inside, the chapels financed by the rich Venetian families reveal works of art of an unexpected high value. Among the wonders, we recognized the old confessional that marked our origins and was mentioned in the Memoirs and dwelled in grateful prayer before it. It is no longer used and is placed in a chapel that is important only to us.

On the road from St Francis of the Vineyard to the water bus, we entered also, for a short homage of gratitude, the nearby Church of the Franciscan Sisters of Christ the King, the “Poor Tertiaries” who, on Fr Gregory’s request, had taken in our Foundress for some months. Fraternal as always, surprised and happy for that unexpected missionary “invasion”, the sisters welcomed us and the Superior General congratulated for the initiative of our international formative meeting.

The lagoon, kissed by the setting sun, displayed its most fascinating aspect, while the water bus, ploughing the foaming waves, brought us quickly on our way back, during the sunset of this day of grace.

21 June – another formation day; we prepared for the following day, in which two pilgrimages were scheduled: to Sanctuary of Castelmonte and to Aquileia.

The pilgrimage to Castelmonte is part of the celebration of the Province Jubilees, to which the young sisters were invited to participate as a new experience, by bringing their contribution in terms of youth, gratitude and cultural variety.

The “Madone di Mont” Sanctuary, which belongs to the tradition of the Region Friuli, rises solemnly among crowning mountains, the Oriental Alps, and from there it is possible to enjoy a view that may reach as far as the Adriatic Sea.



We stayed at the Sanctuary for prayer, celebration, a devout visit and then we went down for lunch and a feisty break at the Pilgrim's House.

In the afternoon, the coach took us back to the plain, to visit what had been once the imperial port of Aquileia. Founded in 181 B.C. as a Roman military colony, the small town keeps visible rests of its past as the capital of the tenth Region, an outpost for the defence of the Roman civilization against barbarians. We came here to rediscover and venerate the evidences of the

first announcement of the Gospel in the region North-East of the Adriatic Sea. Indeed, the frescoes in the ancient Basilica still recount how St Marc was sent here by St Peter to first spread Christianity in this region, as well as the vicissitudes of the Saints Ermacora and Fortunato, martyrs from Aquileia. In the fourth-century Theodorian Basilica the polychrome mosaic floors show still today the expressive power of art and the didactic and catechetical function of images. We remind here some unforgettable scenes: the announcement of the Gospel by the Apostles and the Church "I will make you fishers of men"; the vicissitudes of the prophet Jonas, herald of the life of Christ; the fight between the cock (the light) and the tortoise (the darkness), between good and evil. We were able to rediscover there the sources of a tradition of faith and civilization that has marked for centuries a vast region, whose boundaries far exceed the historical and geographical limits of the Patriarchate of Aquileia.

22 June – The Jubilee celebration continued in the family. In the morning we experienced a fraternal meeting of prayer with our deceased sisters. We visited together the graveyard and we dwelled thoughtful among the tombs.

For many of us each name recalled a face, while for the sisters that had come there for the first time it was the discovery of a new part of the family that they had not known. We stayed a long time also next to the tombs of the priests, among which there was also the name of Father Gregory and the family tomb that made us think about our first sisters.

In the afternoon there was the liturgical celebration of thanksgiving, which was made particularly solemn by the chorus made up by the large group of young sisters, who gladly and rapidly learnt many new songs for the occasion.

We expressed our gratitude and congratulated to the sisters who celebrated 65, 60 or 50 years of religious life.

24 June, Sunday – We dedicated the early morning to an "official visit" to the infirmary. Indeed, the sisters had already met in other moments with the sick and elder sisters.

We had accepted the invitation from the parish priest, Msgr Gastone Candusso, to attend the Holy Mass in the Cathedral, at 10.30. The priest welcomed us lively, greeted us cordially and presented us with a nice small gift.

In the afternoon, the sisters of the international group, who were now about to leave, offered to all the sisters a varied programme of dances, songs and testimonies that cheered and moved us; the titles alone may be enough to reveal their variety and richness:



CONCISE REPORT OF FR GIUSEPPE BUFFON'S SPEECHES OFM

After a period during which our young sisters got to know one another and built their sense of belonging, the start of the formative course proper was entrusted to Fr Giuseppe Buffon ofm, professor of the department of theology at the Franciscan University Antonianum, where he holds the chair of History of the Church and of Franciscanism.

He guided the meetings on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th July with masterly reflections, above all about the figure of St Francis, then about the Order of Minors that he founded, with which we had the grace to establish and enjoy a special communion since our origins.

PART I

To present FRANCISCANISM in its basic traits, Fr Giuseppe chose two suggestive reflections about St Francis of Assisi:

- a) FROM SON OF PIETRO BERNARDONE TO SON OF GOD;
- b) FROM FRANCIS TO FRATERNITY.

INTRODUCTION

As a useful and interesting introduction to the two subjects, the speaker offered some reading tracks and interpretations of the Franciscan Sources, so as to make the most possible correct approach to them.

Here are some of his practical suggestions:

- In order to reconstruct Francis' historic experience, one must pay attention to the difference between his writings and his biographies.
- The writings had been ignored until 1970, also because of the prejudice that St Francis was not considered to be an author and therefore could not have a doctrine of his own.
- The presentation of Francis in the first half of the 20th century privileged biographies; then, a change of perspective took place, and studies turned to his writings. However, it appears that the latter are still read and interpreted in the light of the biographies or as their thorough analysis.
- However, even the writings do not reproduce the character ipso facto; a correct reading of such texts must take into consideration the context, as well as the author's addressees and objectives. In a word, even the writings require an effort of interpretation.

Subsequently, he touched on the different critical reading methods which are necessary to understand the development of a text:

1. The method of:

- textual criticism, which aims at providing a text that is as close as possible to the original;
- literary criticism, which investigates the author, the literary background and the language;
- historical criticism, which points out the forms that preceded the final draft;

2. Structuralist analysis: studies the text as it is.

3. Hermeneutics, which concerns the precomprehension with which the reader approaches a text:: why do I choose a particular text? What do I ask from it? It requires to investigate the reason why a text has

been written. Distortions of the historic truth must be avoided, such as when we make the text say what we want. I must therefore find out what can relate me to the author. What binds me to him, allowing me to understand his expressions, that is to understand the text?

4. Important questions: in which sense can a text be meaningful for me today? To use texts written in the 13th century for subjects as ecology, human rights, etc. involves ascribing to the text some issues that are absolutely alien to the context in which it was written. It is therefore indispensable to be aware of the historic distance that separates us from the texts.
5. In addition, it is necessary to be careful to avoid a “concordist” reading, that is the use of different sources by ignoring the characteristics of each one of them, that is passing over in silence their “literary difference”.



A. FRANCIS FROM SON OF PIETRO DI BERNARDONE TO SON OF GOD

Dealing with the first theme “FRANCIS, FROM SON OF PIETRO DI BERNARDONE TO SON OF GOD”, the participants were invited to ask themselves what had been Christian life in the experience of St Francis of Assisi.

In an attempt to identify the traits of the Christian personality of the Assisian, we must start from his vision of God: which is the image of God that emerges from the analysis of his Christian experience?

- a) From the Writings we draw a vision of God which is essentially Trinitarian (FS 233); the relation among the divine persons is given prominence; especially in the Letter to all the Faithful, the familiar character is fundamental for the understanding of God (children, mothers, spouses, brothers – FS 200).
- b) Most prayers are addressed to the Father, therefore it can be said that paternity is fundamental for the life of prayer (FS 66): gratitude, thankfulness, restitution.
- c) On the other hand, in the Biographies the Christological aspect is made more conspicuous; St Francis relates to the Father and this imprints in him the image of the son who gives thanks (FS 552). We shall develop the Christological-Bonaventurian itinerary when we talk of the stigmata.
- d) St Francis has a Trinitarian experience of God, which starts from the spirit (the feminine in God); the man of spirit in St Francis is the one who meets the other, the leper; the other is the presence of God that changes his nature: “from bitter to sweet” (FS 110).

Passing on to the spiritual journey of the saint, Fr Buffon made us reflect on an original aspect, by pointing out that:

- e) St Francis’ itinerary towards God can be defined as “an itinerary of non-appropriation and restitution”. The Spirit of the Lord makes man capable of living without possessing anything, open to restitution of all goods to God. This Christian path made by St Francis can be divided into three stages, which follow each other according to a logical rather than chronological order: restitution, living without anything of one’s own, possessing the Spirit of the Lord.

He then proceeded to examine the first stage: restitution

- 1 It is the Spirit, St Francis’ guide in his experience of Trinitarian communion, who opened him to gratitude towards the Father, the only one who was capable of qualifying him for restitution, by means of a fight oriented to overcome man’s fundamental temptation, which is to appropriate the goods coming only from God and belonging only to Him.
- 2 It is actually an expropriation from arrogance, pride, vainglory, envy, anger and anxiety as well as from a certain kind of knowledge, rather than from material goods (FS 18.47-48.156.157.160.161.163.166).
- 3 The expropriation, however, is not an end in itself; it must culminate in the restitution to God and to the brothers. That is, the expropriation is intended as an act of liberation, it must result in the restitution, which is an act of communion, for otherwise it would be an act of sterile asceticism.

- 4 The restitution takes place through words (through prayer, especially prayers of praise and thanksgiving, through the exhortation to the brothers, for example (FS 55), and through deeds (a consistent testimony, acts of charity to the poor, work (FS 88), illness (FS 34-35) and death).

FRANCIS AND HIS DIVESTING BEFORE THE BISHOP

Reference texts: 1 Celano (FS 344-345); 2 Celano (FS 597); Bonaventure (FS 1043); the Anonymous of Perugia (FF 1494); the Three Companions (FF 1419).

In 1 Celano it is described as a gesture bearing a symbolic meaning, a visible sign that refers to an invisible and hidden reality. The image of man fighting naked against the devil, according to Gregory the Great's expression, is stressed. Nakedness, of course, presupposes the renunciation of goods

Thomas of Celano wrote this text in view of St Francis canonization, for which a model of universal sanctity had to be indicated..

In 2 Celano, the author, who was asked to write a second biography, worked on material that all monks had sent him. Francis explains his gesture by making reference to the prayer of Our Father; he wears the cilice in order to "be" without appearing. He prays the Father in secret, to reach intimacy with him, because he does not covet any reward nor to be seen by others.

The text is placed in the context in which Francis became the object of persecutions on the part of his brother and his Father Pietro because of the choice he had made. In this text, it is Francis who intervenes with his own interpretation of his gesture, in which he stresses the contrast between his father Pietro and Our Father who is in Heaven. The merchant, the one who dreamed of knightly glories, deserved to be despised so that the son of God could emerge. Saying "Our Father" and not "father Pietro di Bernardone", in Francis's view, is made possible only through divesting and restitution of the possessions to the earthly father; among these possessions must be counted also the privileges on which he counted as son of Pietro di Bernardone.

Bonaventure composed the two versions given by Celano: in the first, Francis stays silent and there is only a partial divesting; in the second, Francis speaks and the total divesting is introduced, reiterating that it is not possible to meet or invoke the father without a total restitution, a repudiation of the regime linked to his "former earthly father".

The cross is the guiding thread of St Bonaventure's theology: it is the Easter mystery that brings the son back to the father and it is in the sign of the cross that his filiality appears, as a consequence of his abandonment (obedience) and nakedness (complete faith in his will); the deposition of the clothes is the sign of the deposition of the veil represented by flesh.

In the Legend of the Three Companions, the restitution of the possessions does not take place in the presence of people, it does not have the criteria of human justice as its foundation; it is rather a gesture rooted in faith: it is the service to God that requires restitution. It is not possible to use money taken with fraud in the Church; the end does not justify the means; therefore, a change of mentality is necessary.

From history to interpretation

1st Question: Which Christian experience by Francis emerges from the biographies?

By saying "henceforth I desire to say only 'Our Father who art in Heaven'", Francis discovers a pater-nity from God that replaces the carnal one; he recognizes in God the true father and walks naked towards him, as if nakedness was the sign of a new filiality, of a new birth (Baptism).

At the beginning of the conversion, rather than a fight against evil or a clear call to the imitation of Christ naked, we must see the actual fight against the earthly father and the discovery of God as Father, a discovery that Francis considers to be a new birth.

2nd Question: how can we grasp the meaning of his gestures for us?

In Francis' experience, the pater to whom he refers is not quite that of the Gospel but rather that of the daily prayer. Starting from the event of his divesting and for the rest of his life, the reference to the Father, under whose watchful eye the filial relation grows with the energy received from the spirit, becomes the central aspect in Francis' life.

All his prayers are addressed to the Father; even the prayer in front of the cross is addressed to the Most High Glorious God. In his daily life, the word Father is only used with reference to God; he does not refer to anyone else with this term, which appears to be censured in his writings. On the contrary, the word mother is used to describe fraternal relations.

B) FROM FRANCIS TO FRATERNITY

For this second reflection the speaker indicated a reading method of the texts called structuralist. It supposes that the text was built on the basis of a structure and therefore the content was passed on by the author by means of specific figures of speech. In this way the attention is drawn on the force of the language used in the text rather than on the author or the circumstances in which the text was written. In short, it is an attempt to escape the risks of subjectivity and individualism, as if a text depended totally from an author and not also from a culture, understood as an organization of thought, in which it was conceived.

**FRATERNAL RELATIONS IN FRANCIS**

As has been seen, the figure of God that emerges from the analysis of St Francis' writings possesses features that are essentially Trinitarian. It is a God of relation, who must therefore be understood through the experience of relation. The agent which moves Francis, in such experience of God, is the Holy Spirit, that is the spirit of communion, the gift par excellence, the osculo Dei (the kiss from God). It is the action of the spirit which makes the believers "Children of the heavenly Father, whose works they do, and they are the spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus" (FS 200).

The discovery of God as a Father takes place, according to St Francis, through the experience of restitution: but it is the Spirit who is the primary agent of such experience! That is why St Francis desires above all things to possess "the Spirit of the Lord and His holy operation" (FS 104). Then it is possible to say that, in his view, the experience of God is had by some kind of ternary rhythm itinerary: with the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father.

In this itinerary of discovery of God, the other, seen as a brother, is like a privileged place where the Father's will is revealed. Indeed, St Francis, in his Testament, reminds us how his experience of God – a transforming experience – was triggered thanks to the encounter with the other – the leper (FS 110). And it is again in the "Testament" that St Francis reminds us how God's will is made clear to his mind thanks to the gift-encounter with the brothers: "And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel" (FS 116). Therefore, the fraternal relation is, for St Francis, an experience of theological depth and not only an opportunity to perform an ascetical exercise (*vita fraterna maxima poenitentia est*). The relation with the brothers becomes the place where God reveals to us our path, mission and the choice we have to make.

Even the biographers point out, in their own way, the particular importance that St Francis gave to the presence of brothers, by dedicating many sections to this subject.

The other, the brother, seen as a sign of the presence of God, seems to be elevated to the dimension of sacrament in a broad sense. Based on this experience of fraternal relations, which are a manifestation of the presence of God, the relation with creatures too is considered the distinctive ingredient of fraternity. The sign par excellence of the presence of God, of a Eucharistic presence, however, is the church, although it is fragile, poor, limited and even a sinner (FS 112). "And I do not wish to consider sin in them because I discern the Son of God in them and they are my masters. And I act in this way since I see nothing corporally of the Most High Son of God in this world except His Most holy Body and Blood which they receive and which they alone administer to others." (FS 113).

DIALOGUE OF THE TRUE AND PERFECT JOY

The text is presented in the Little Flowers as a narration by Fr Leonardo of Assisi, who accompanied St Francis in his trip to the East (FS 278).

According to the historical-critical method, the narration hints to the fact that the Order cannot ensure a true and authentic joy. The Order has changed, as the settlements of the convent of St Mary of the Angels say: the door, the timetables, the friar doorkeeper, the number of friars. There are also traces of the clashes between St Francis and the ministers, which led to his resignation and the so called 'great temptation' (FS1568), that is

his absence from the places where he used to meet with his brothers.

According to the structuralist analysis, the text can be divided into three parts, corresponding to as many stages, which lead, progressively, to the final solution: A) a messenger brings the news that teachers and prelates have entered the Order; B) Main trial, in three stages, with increasing difficulties/oppositions; C) Decisive trial: Francis, the only one who is named in the narration, solves the question that was made at the beginning: “I tell you, if I have patience and am not upset...”.

Theological notes

The version of the text offered by the Little Flowers brings some quotations from the Bible that are of interest for the theological development of the text: 1 Cor 4:7: “... What do you possess that you have not received? But if you have received it, why are you boasting as if you did not receive it?” Gal 6:14: “But may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”. Francis, by means of the parable of the perfect joy, only wants to indicate the true term of conversion, that is being in the image and after the likeness of God, that is of Christ, who did not defend himself (Gal. 6: I boast in the cross of Christ).

In the theme of boasting we find again the concept of appropriation, which has already been examined in the preceding paragraph. Another interesting text to that purpose is the Praises of God Most High (FS 261), in which Francis’ I disappears to leave room only to God’s YOU.

PART II

In this second part of the speech, Fr Buffon, always by availing himself of Power Point presentations, attempted to introduce the audience to the History of the Order, at least to its main elements, from the origin to modern times.

These were classes of history of the church and of Franciscanism, which initially the audience find it difficult to approach and comprehend. In this context, we recall only the essential points, so as to be able to review the whole journey in broad terms.

I. IDEOLOGICAL CONTROVERSIES ABOUT POVERTY

With this title Fr Buffon wanted to dwell on the first centuries of the Minorite Order, which was shaken by the disputes arising because of the different interpretation of poverty by the current of the so-called Spirituals and the one that was called the Community (1244-1312).

Among the movement of the Spirituals there were three main groups: that of the Region Marche with Angelo Clareno (1337), that of Provence with Hugues of Digne (1255) and Pierre Jean Olieu (1298) and that of Tuscany with Ubertino of Casale (1329). Pope Clement V, who was willing to reconsider the Spirituals’ positions as a reaction to Boniface VIII, called a committee with the task of examining especially two points: the observance of the rule and orthodoxy. After several difficulties, the unity of the Order seemed to be safe: the pope himself had committed to protect the Spirituals, while he established for the whole Order some measures intended to eliminate abuses against poverty. However, by then the rebellion of the Spirituals was unrestrainable. Facing the possible condemnations that they would incur, Ubertino decided to enter among the Benedictines and Angelo Clareno took refuge in Subiaco, taking the lead of a group of followers called Fraticelli; subsequently, he fled to Basilicata, where he died. His followers, inquisited by Urban V and Martin V, decided, under Eugene IV, to become reconciled with the ecclesial hierarchy: placed under the obedience of the minister general, in 1517 they converged with other reforms in the Order of the Friars Minor.

The following period, until the famous papal bull “Ite vos”, was marked by many clashes between the Observance and the papal hierarchy (1318-1517), with the consequent decline of the Order, which was always due to the interpretation of poverty. In the debate within the Order, the idea of a “poor



use” of goods, supported by the Spirituals, and that of “sole absence of juridical domain *assenza di dominio giuridico*” on goods which belonged to the pope, supported by the Community, were the object of discussions.

The controversies outside the Order took place especially with John XXII, who claimed that poverty, as conceived by the Minors – Spirituals, was absurd and that the Apostolic See did not intend to manage the properties of the Order. The clash lasted for a long time and its consequences on the decline of the Order in the 14th and 15th centuries were heavily felt. Meanwhile, other groups were born in Italy in order to bring the religious back to the primitive observance. The group of Foligno, with Paoluccio Trinci, distinguished themselves, so much that they obtained the permission to receive novices and open new foundations. With the second generation, among those who joined them were St Bernardine of Siena (1402), St John of Capistrano (1414), St Albert of Sarteano (1415) and St James of the Marches (1416).

A reformist movement similar to the Italian one developed in the same period also in Spain (Aragon and Castile) and in Portugal, and the same happened in France as well. In 1438, Eugene IV named St Bernardine first vicar of the observance. The provincial vicarships were united in two circumscriptions, called *familia cismontana* (on this side of the mountains) and *familia ultramontana* (on the other side of the mountains), which were governed by their respective vicars general. In 1466, always Eugene, with the bull *Ut sacra*, decreed a regime of actual separation: the Observants were able to celebrate their own chapters every three years in order to elect general and provincial vicars. The general and provincial ministers were confirmed as a sign of residual unity.

II. FROM THE IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT TO THE INSTITUTIONAL SEPARATION (1517-1790)

The speaker went on to trace the history of the Minority by introducing the audience to the great internal reforms of the Observance after the division that took place in 1517, with the important bull *Ite Vos*, issued on the occasion of the 1517 general chapter. Through it, Leo X unified the reforms under the aegis of the Observance, separating this new body from the other one, called Conventual, which was made up of those who had not wanted to accept the renunciation of papal privileges in matters of poverty.

The multiform body of Observance soon met with several difficulties to maintain unity, because:

- it was made up of two big circumscriptions, *familia Ultramontana* and *familia Cismontana*,



with two separate General Sees, Rome and Madrid, with the Minister general being chosen alternatively from one of them.

- it was subject to nationalistic games (suffice it to think that in the 16th and 17th centuries, the ministers general were often Italian, but they came from Spanish territories: 26 Italians, 22 Spaniards, 1 French);
- there was an excessive proliferation of regulations that brought confusion and uncertainty in the actual practice (the Constitutions were renewed twelve times).

a) The reformist organization within the Observance

The so-called Ritiri (= retreats), the more austere and “contemplative” convents, which had been already conceived at the time of St Bonaventure to reproduce the spirit of the origins, spread with difficulty because it was hard to harmonize autonomy and unity, or better, creative freedom and submission to the provincial superiors. For this reason, the houses of retreat, with time, organized themselves autonomously and gave birth to the Custodies.

The movement of Retreats went on until the end of the 18th century with Bonaventure of Barcelona 1648 and Leonardo da Porto Maurizio 1751, giving light to internal organisms in the Order of Minors - Alcantarine, Reformed, Recollects – or externals – Capuchins and reformed Conventuals.

- Alcantarines (or Discalced), a Spanish group named after Peter of Alcantara, who in 1557 was named commissary of all the reformed Conventuals of Spain. In Portugal too a province of Discalced was created, directed by Alcantara (1542).
- Reformed. In Italy, Francesco da Jesi and Bernardine of Asti obtained the short In suprema (1532) for the foundation of a Custody with a right to vote in the general chapter. In 1579 the Reformed of Italy, following the example of the Spanish Discalced, obtained autonomy for their provinces, placing themselves under the direct obedience of the minister general. From 1620, this reform spread also outside Italy: Bavaria, Tirol, Austria, Bohemia, Croatia and Poland (at the end of the 18th century there were 37 provinces and 19,000 religious).
- Recollects (= reunited). The reformist movement started in a group of religious of the province of Aquitaine (France) and spread to the Northern countries. In 1626, the religious of the province of Cologne asked to be incorporated into the Recollects, and so did other provinces of the so-called Lower Germany (north) and of Flanders (at the end of the 18th century there were 25 provinces and 11,000 religious).

- Reformed Conventuals. The movements of the reform, the Alcantarines and the Capuchins, which for a certain time served under the jurisdiction of the Minister general of the Conventuals, ottengono forse una certa animazione anche di quella parte di religiosi che avevano scelto l'osservanza mitigata.

c) “The fine and holy reform”

That is how the reform of Capuchins was called. It was promoted in 1525 by Matthew of Bascio, an observant who, through a vision of St Francis, was confirmed in his intention to ask for a greater portion of freedom to observe the rule literally (permission to preach with the obligation to present himself once a year to his provincial superior). He was helped by the duchess of Camerino, Caterina Cibo, a friend of the pope's. Ludovico and Raffaele da Fossombrone too asked to retire to hermitic life and, subsequently, together with Matthew of Bascio and supported by the dukes of Camerino, asked for the protection of the minister general of



the Conventuals. In 1528 they obtained from Clement VII, through the mediation of his niece Caterina Cibo, the bull of approval of the new “Capuchin” institute: it was the bull Religionis Zelus.

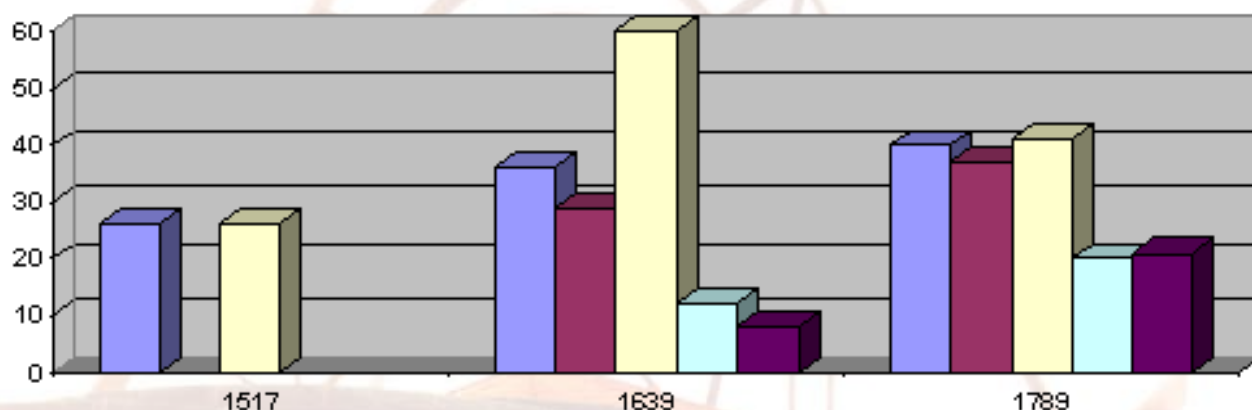
In the St Euphemia chapter (Rome, 1536), Bernardine of Asti was elected as superior and new constitutions, named after St Euphemia, were issued, which gave the coding of the institute its final framework. Matthew of Bascio and Ludovico da Fossombrone were expelled. “the Capuchins –it was said- have received their habit from Matthew of Bascio, their beard from Ludovico da Fossombrone, and their spirit and soul from Bernardine of Asti”.

So, the consolidation phase started: in 1574 the prohibition to spread beyond the Alps was dropped (in 1618 France would make up a quarter of the Order; from France to Belgium -1585; to England -1599, to Ireland -1616; in 1578 the expansion started in Spain, but only in 1600 in Castile; from 1581 in central Europe: Switzerland, Bavaria, Austria, Bohemia); Around 1620 there were 40 provinces with 15,000 religious.

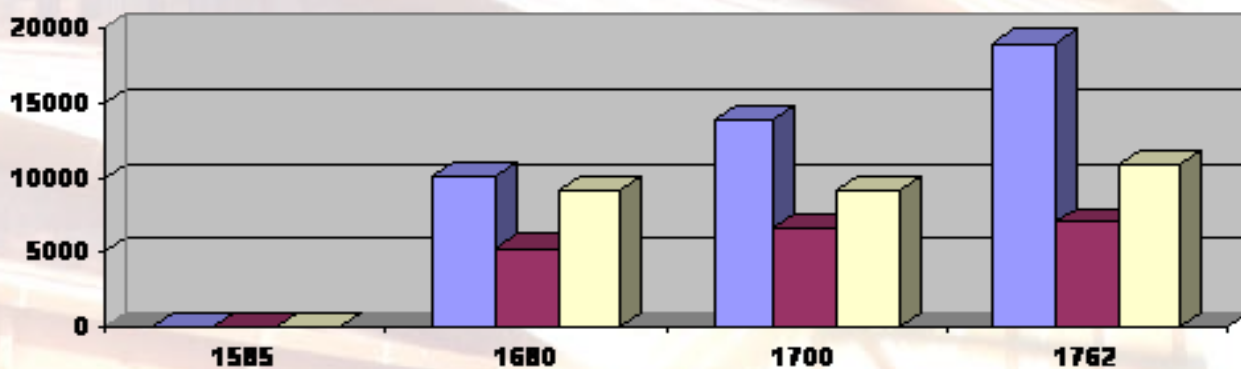
d) The reforms among the observant Minors, familia cismontana and familia ultramontana

The Observance (Observants), therefore, met with the greater number of reforms, or movement of internal renovation. The first graphic may offer a view on how the reform of the Observance developed from the 16th to the 18th century, in its various denominations: familia cismontana, Reformed, familia ultramontana, Alcantarines and Recollects, who were all part of one organism, the Minors of the Observance.

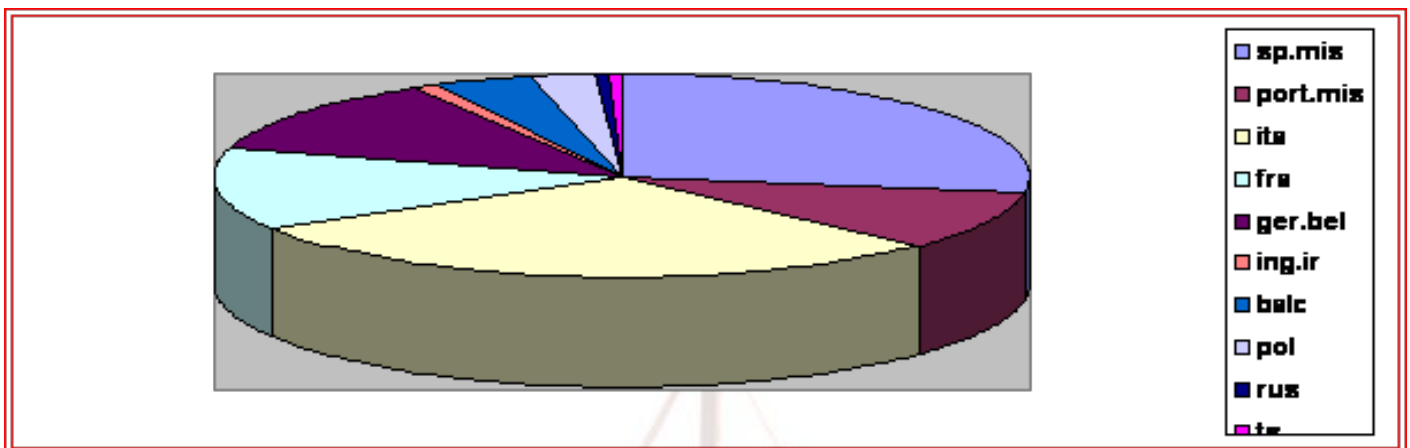
Table of the Observance internal reforms



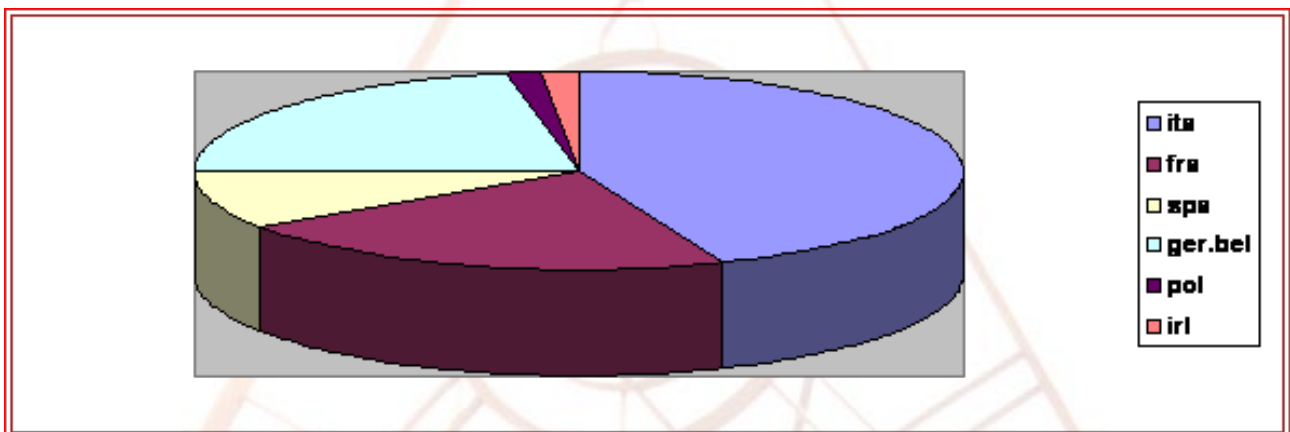
The reforms compared to the religious of the Observance: Reformed, Alcantarines, Recollects



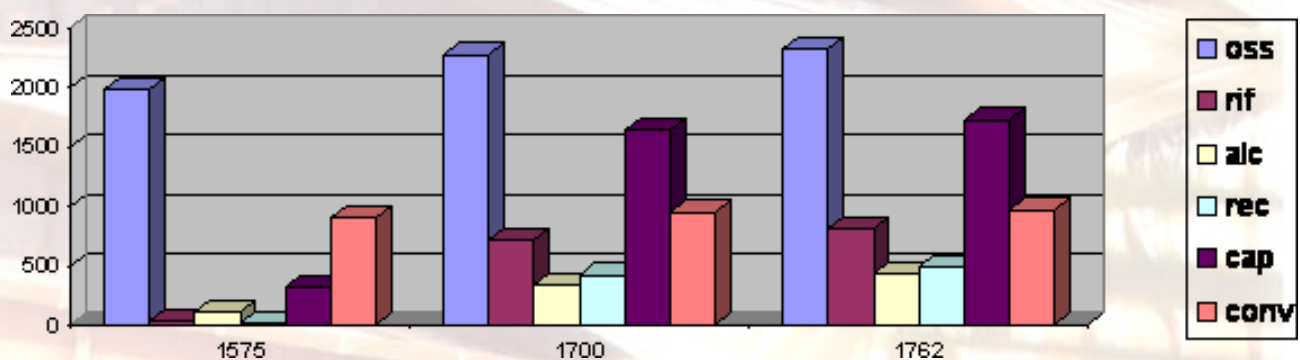
Geographical distribution of OFM 1762: Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, Germany-Belgium, England, Balkans, Poland, Russia, Holy Land.



Geographical distribution of Capuchins in 1761



Comparison between the various families: Observants (including Reformed, Alcantarines, Recollects), Capuchins, Conventuals.



At this point, Fr Buffon illustrated the so-called *Constitutio Ordinis* of each family of Minors, showing that, substantially, there were no big legal differences among them, although the time of granting of various authorities varied. The most complex roles were:

- The Cardinal protector, or the pope's representative, because of their excessive meddling;
- The Minister general (Master for the Conventuals - 1587, Vicar for the Capuchins - 1619) who was involved in the debate about uninterrupted succession;
- Definitors (12 of them, then 6 of them);
- General Commissary: governed the family in which the Minister general did not reside and therefore could belong to the familia Cismontana or to the familia Ultramontana;
- Procurator: in charge of relations with the Apostolic See.

After explaining also the sense of the formative structures and talking about the Instruments and forms of regulation which are proper to the Order, the Structure of the communities that was enacted along the centuries, the rules followed to recruit the candidates and their formation, the speaker dwelled on the Presence and apostolic activity of the Minors.

It was interesting to learn about the clash between the Franciscans and Protestantism, an essential chapter of their presence and apostolic activity in modern history. It certainly contributed to define the Friars' Counter-Reformation identity and the ideological importation of their pastoral proposal, as well as their strategies of settlement.

Indeed, many preachers and writers were busy at challenging the doctrine of the protestant reform: "Among Luther's opponents, there is no doubt that the quickest, most ingenious and most popular" was the Franciscan from Strasbourg Thomas Murener, of whom we must mention at least the *Christian Brotherly Exhortation*, in which he defends the Mass with a real fraternal tone and with religious depth".

An even greater role than that of the preachers and writers was played by the communities, guided by their superiors, which displayed their conviction that they belonged to Roman Catholicism. Indeed, there were numerous guardians who were busy defending Catholicism through their preaching and writing.

The opposition was strong in Holland too, as we can surmise from the violent executions in Gorkum, where Nicholas Pick and his companions died "chanting hymns in honour of the Eucharist and the Roman papacy". In England, John Forrest, Catherine of Aragon's confessor, after the publication of Clement VII's brief which annulled the wedding between Henry VIII and Anna Boleyn, was first jailed (1533) and then sent to the stake (1538). In 1534, after the killing of other religious, among which the guardian of Greenwich, who had dared accuse from his pulpit the attending Henry VIII, the immediate expulsion of all the Observants was ordered. In Ireland, on the other hand, the province was never extinguished; the religious were educated in colleges set up in various places on the continent, from Belgium to Spain and Italy, and then returned to their motherland to live clandestinely, sharing the lot of the Catholics who were discriminated by the English rulers.

At the end of the 16th century, there was a transition from a phase of defence to a phase of restoration, during which the Franciscans committed themselves especially as missionaries. The Observants were engaged in the task of reorganizing the Order in the regions of the Rhine, Sweden, Norway, Friesland and above all in Holland, as well as opening some missions in the very heart of Protestantism: as a consequence, the provinces of Saxony and Thuringia were re-established. A widespread reorganization of the religious fabric was carried out also in Bavaria, in the Palatinate and in Austria, where the religious met with many difficulties in reconquering the population to Catholicism.

In this second phase, were the missionary and catechetical dimensions prevailed, those who played the most important role were the Capuchins who, under the auspices of the *Propaganda Fide*, performed their apostolic ministry in the border territories such as Northern Italy (regions of Savoy and Piedmont), Switzerland and France.

Father Buffon next presented the missionary Spaces and strategies which were implemented, especially after a new missionary conscience developed also as a consequence of the irreplaceable support of *Propaganda Fide* (1622), as well as of the apostolic zeal of wise and conscientious Ministers General, such as Fr Francesco Quiñones, who was maybe also the drafter of the bull of Adriano VI *Omnimonda* (1522), which dealt not only with the handing





over of the organization management from the pope to the king, but also with an idea of missionary vocation which was perfectly consistent with the Franciscan spirit.

Then he presented the Areas where the Minors were mainly committed in their apostolate, such as:

- a) Eastern Europe and Balkans
- b) Middle East and North Africa
- c) The missions depending from the Portuguese patronate
- d) Those under the aegis of the Spanish patronate
- e) The Missions in the Far East

PART III

The Order of Friars Minor and the liberal suppressions, especially in Italy

Finally, in the last and maybe most interesting subject of reflection, despite the short time allotted to it, Fr Giuseppe briefly traced the nature, cause and scope of the suppressions of religious which took place in Europe, and especially in France and Italy, in the 18th and 19th century.

He dealt with the questions of why, when and where they took place, and he also spoke of the so-called denominational jurisdictionalism (in the Habsburg territories: Mary Therese and Joseph II; provisions in France: Louis XV's committee for the Regulars, 1766) and undenominational jurisdictionalism (French revolution and Napoleon's campaigns; suppressions in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Bolivia and Mexico).

Next, he went on to illustrate, with real life examples, the serious difficulties that the Church and the Religious Orders met to restore life in the suppressed convents, as it was necessary to restore all the buildings that had been destroyed or had remained forcibly idle for a long time.

The difficult course of restructuring, as Fr Giovanni liked to point out, started with the institution of an efficient authority system after the havoc caused by the suppressions, by looking for and reforming the individuals who could better guarantee the resumption of a regular discipline. After the individuals, superiors and subjects, it was then necessary to go on to build and rebuild the Conventual communities, by means of the difficult task of returning into the convents.

It was then that the serious consequences of the suppressions were better felt, which were often due also to the bishops' unwillingness to let the friars, whom they had taken into their service, free to resume their regular life, as well as to the refusal made by the individuals themselves to give up the autonomy that they had tasted during the time of suppressions.

Through epistular documents, Father Buffon also hinted at the interior drama that many friars experienced: their fight to rediscover and resume their own religious identity in order to resume the perfect common life, of dependence and poverty. Indeed, the key problem for every religious was money and its free use to which the friars had grown accustomed.

**CONCISE REPORT ON
SR. ANTONIETTA'S MEETING
WITH THE YOUNG SISTERS 6 - 7 JULY 2007**

The main theme on which the interest was focused was the reflection on the path

‘FROM CHARISM TO SPIRITUALITY’.

To get round the impression, often taken for granted, that the subject is now easy to understand and assimilate, we have opened and developed the speech around the historic foundations on which, in the mystery of incarnation, every charism always rests. It is clear that thinking about one own's charism with an ample and objective look raises a number of questions, in the same way it does when one wants to perform a historic analysis of some institute. Besides, the origins of the different congregations offer an impressing variety of situations that are difficult to classify.

The true question, however, does not reside in this, but rather it is always: “How can institutes possess and retain their own identity and distinguish themselves from the others?”.

No religious institute can feel to be such if it is not based on the church and refers to it continuously. The Apostolic Exhortation ‘Vita Consecrata’ already explained well that the religious undoubtedly belong to the Church not only as additional and temporary members, but as its constituent structure.

Therefore, every order, every family in the Church has a particular reason to exist, a reason that is revealed by the Spirit through the mediation of the founders. When we think about the initial vicissitudes of a foundation, we should never conclude that all happened because of a lucky concurrence of favourable circumstances or thanks to the intelligence and generous courage of a few people, or owing to the initiative of some ecclesiastic authority –even if all these are important factors- but because of the strength and fantasy of the Spirit sent by Christ resurrected to his church through each congregation.

However, it is always necessary to feel part of the church: indeed, it is the knowledge that one is a part of a whole that gives faith and hope, stimulates one's commitment, helps one to find out one's own character, to accept one's place in it and to understand the signs of times to find the right answer to give.

PART I: FROM HISTORY TO CHARISM



We have therefore tried to avoid any vagueness and carelessness in order to rediscover and redefine our vocation and identity, our own nature, our role, our particular spirit, which must make us even more unmistakable, so that our communities are perceived as the point of meeting, exchange and irradiation of our personal experience of faith and love, which is apparent in every history of the origins.

To help us in this task, we have thought of no better criteria than to review together the paths of our “human lives”, review the STAGES OF THE HISTORIC PATH, along which the gift of the Spirit has always emerged in its multiform and inexhaustible revelation of love, in the tangible signs of his providential, fatherly Presence.

Consequently, we have approached the history of our foundation, from its origins up to the official recognition by the Church of our “forma vitae”. We have done it through the detailed projection of many, mostly unpublished documents of our history, attempting to see it always like a “blessing”, a “mark of the Word” that we must decipher every time from a welcoming and grateful point of view.

The assembly of our youth was therefore invited for the entire first day, and even further, to admire the ways and the stamp of the Lord by looking at the images and captions that accompanied all the beautiful presentations, while the whole thing was completed by Sr Antonietta’s precise comments, as well as by her prompt and useful explanations.

In order to facilitate somehow the comprehension of the different passages, it was deemed preferable to divide the historic development into three parts, always based on direct documents, which were always completed, where needed, by quotations and photographs from the primary source of our historic heritage, the HISTORIC MEMORIES by Father Gregory.

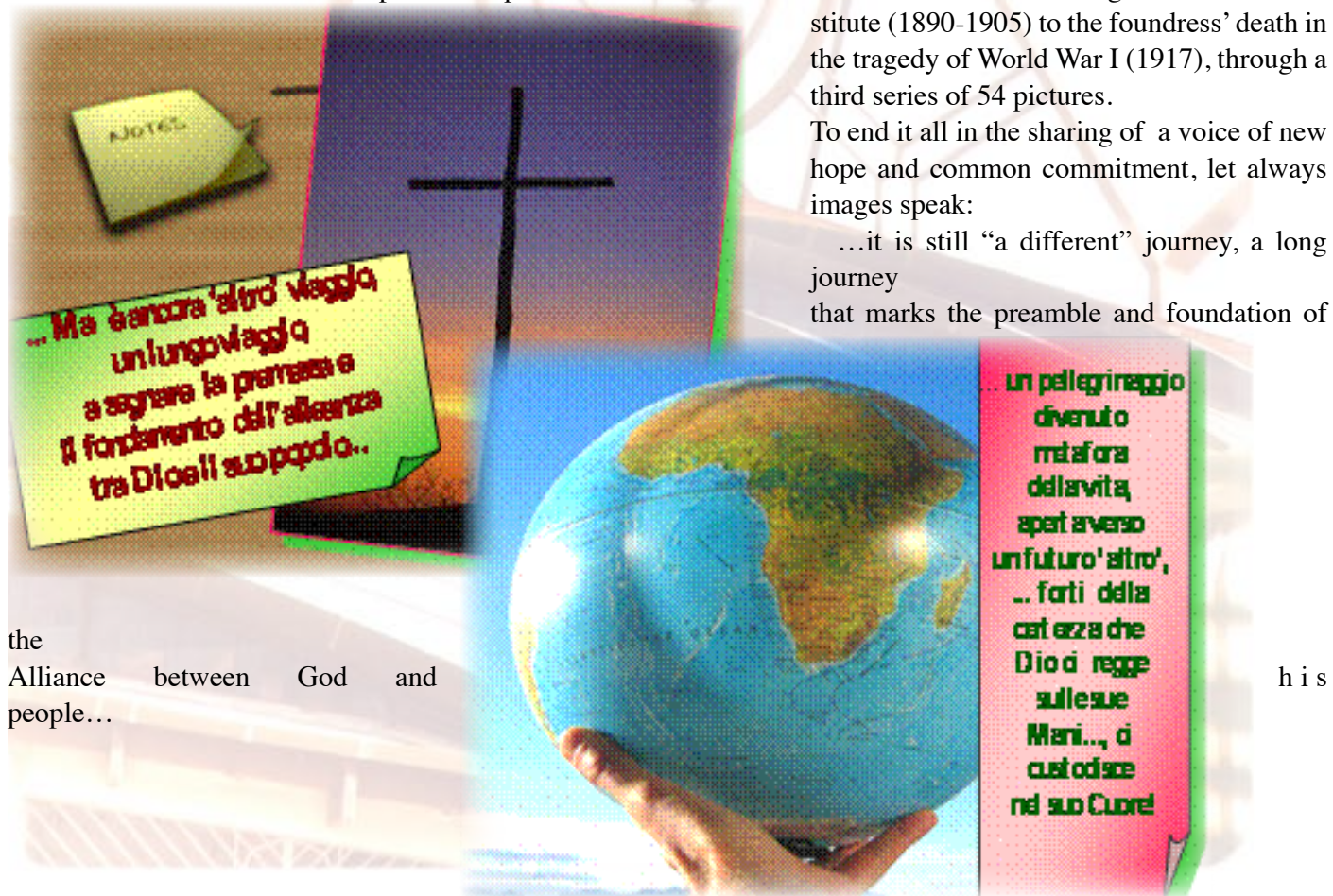
The itinerary was divided as follows:

1. from the first exchange of letters of our Founders (October 1859) to the departure of our Foundress (January 1863), through a first series of 40 pictures;
2. from the serious difficulties to survive in the first times (1863-67) to the enthronement of the Virgin of Perpetual Help in the chapel of the Mother House (1883), through a second series of 58 pictures;
3. from the apostolic expansion in the missions and the stabilization of the legal status of the Institute (1890-1905) to the foundress’ death in the tragedy of World War I (1917), through a third series of 54 pictures.

To end it all in the sharing of a voice of new hope and common commitment, let always images speak:

...it is still “a different” journey, a long journey

that marks the preamble and foundation of



the Alliance between God and people...

h i s



PART II: FROM CHARISM TO SPIRITUALITY

After having reflected upon the path that the Lord has opened for us into the Church, during the second day we dealt with the subject that maybe was less fascinating but certainly had

the same if not a bigger importance than the one that should be the main subject of our meeting.

We therefore had to deal with the selected theme “From charism to spirituality”

In order to better meet the formative requirements of the course, we thought it advisable to proceed by degrees, starting with the first basic concepts and following gradually the developments, based on the theology and teachings that have been developed in the last forty years, focussing in particular on the aspects that are of greater interest to our religious family.

Even in this case we had recourse to the efficient tool of visual projection, here especially of texts and documents which were meant to spur reflection, motivate adequate explanations and raise expected questions.

The practice was divided and run in two parts, based on the development of the following subjects:

1ST PART about CHARISM ITSELF, viewed in the light of the following pictures of interest:

WONDERFUL REVELATION OF THE SPIRIT

1. CHARISM, TERM...Is the term unknown?, used?, abused? How is it understood: talent?, gift?, mission?, service?
2. CHARISM/CHARISMS, in the general and particular meanings

3. UP TO THE FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL: what do we mean by charisms?
4. FROM THE FIRST VATICAN COUNCIL (1870) to Pius XII (1943): the role of the Church and of its Teachings
5. CHURCH AND CHARISMS: evolution of the concept of charism in the SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL
6. POST - COUNCIL VATICAN II: growth of interest and reputation
7. PRACTICE OF CHARISMS between Koinonia and Diakonia
8. Charism: CRITERIA FOR DISCERNMENT, their hierarchy and evaluation

9. Charism in CONNECTION WITH "CHARITY"
10. Charism in CONNECTION WITH SANCTITY
11. Charism in CONNECTION WITH VOCATION
12. Charisma and CONSECRATED LIFE
13. Charismatic nature of RELIGIOUS LIFE
14. Charism and RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS
15. Uniformity e originality of FOUNDATIONAL CHARISMS
16. Foundational Charism and ITS DISTINCTIONS,
a) Charism OF A founder, b) Founder's Charism, c) Charism OF foundation (also called of the origins):
17. Charism OF INSTITUTE
18. OWN IDENTITY and its peculiarities
19. WHERE does the specific identity come FROM?
20. PERPETUAL AND ALWAYS COMPLEMENTARY ELEMENTS which make up the identity of every religious institution
21. FIDELITY AND DEVELOPMENT of the charism
22. CHARISMATIC SYNTHESIS of us, FMSC...



2nd part about THE MORE PRECISE THEME OF SPIRITUALITY, according to the following points:

Our spirit draws its source from the contemplation of the ADHESION TO CHRIST
Mystery of Jesus Crucified proper to Francis
From his pierced heart we draw a profound benevolence,
Redemptive love and apostolic zeal...

23. SPIRITUALITY: what do we mean?
24. Spirituality: HOW DOES IT SHOW?
25. Spirituality, as a way of life
26. Spirituality: FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS and differences
27. Spirituality = LIVING ORGANISM
28. We FMSH: WHICH IS OUR SPIRITUALITY?
29. Spirituality and SPIRIT OF BELONGING...

30. Spirituality and PRIMARY GOAL of every institution...

31. FMSH and their lifestyle, relations and environments as typical manifestations of a spiritual identity



32. PRACTICAL SUMMARY: From Spirituality to the Charism of the Institute.

SUMMARY OF THE SUBJECT PRESENTED BY SR AUGUSTA VISENTIN ABOUT

“RULE AND LIFE”

Presentation

In the sequence of subjects proposed for the Quarter of Formation, we could not do without a reference to our Rule of life and a reflection on the basic elements of our spirituality. The occasion is propitious also because in this year all the Franciscan Congregations of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis celebrate the 25th anniversary of the approval of the Rule by Pope John Paul II. In addition, as a Family which is aggregated to the Order of Friars Minor, we take part, although in a different way, in the programme presented by the Minister General OFM, Fr José Rodríguez Carballo, in preparation to the celebration of the eight centennial of the foundation of the Order. Such programme provides for the year 2009 a reflection on the theme “to live the Gospel and the Rule”. It is in such a context and in line with the teachings of the Church, which in her last few documents has urged us to go back to the Gospel, that the subject was presented during the two-day course for the young sisters.

The VC Document says at no. 37: “An increased attention to the Rule shall certainly provide consecrated people with a safe method to seek adequate forms of a testimony that should meet present requirements without departing from the first inspiration”.

The Rule, together with the Constitutions and the Directory, defines the charism and the identity of our religious Family, its aspect, lifestyle, spirituality, the ways through which we can follow Jesus Christ following into the footsteps of our Founders, in order to accomplish the mission that has been entrusted by the Spirit to our Congregation in the Church.

On the other hand, to live in harmony, every human group needs a code of life. The Gospel is our first fundamental code of life. Saint Francis turned to it in a radical way as soon as he felt the need to provide a rule for his first companions. The habit of adding Constitutions to the Rule dates back to 1215, after the Fourth Lateran Council, which decreed that all the religious institutions that existed within the Church must adopt one of the Rules that had already been approved.



Short historical account

Our Rule too has a very long history, which dates back to Saint Francis himself. The Prologue that precedes the present Rule is the First Letter to all the faithful that Saint Francis wrote for those who wanted to follow his way of life but wished to stay in the world, continuing to live with their families or dedicating themselves to works of charity. In 1289, Pope Nicholas IV approved the first Rule for the Third Order Regular which



was gradually forming in small local communities. In 1521 Pope Leo X gave the new organizations of Franciscan religious life of his time a new Rule, which remained in force until 1927, when Pope Pious XI promulgated a Rule adapted to the Canon Law and more faithful to the Franciscan spirit. After the Second Vatican Council, the Institutes of consecrated life were urged to go back to the origins of their charism and specific spirituality, and consequently they started a common search among different Franciscan Congregations, first within the same nation, then at the international level, in order to draw up a new Rule of life. In March 1982, the meeting of the Superiors general of over 200 Congregations from over 30 countries approved unanimously the present Rule, which was then submitted to the Pope's approval and promulgated on 8 December 1982.

MEANING AND VALUE OF THE RULE

Our Rule is not St Francis' Rule, nor St Clare's Rule, but it draws abundantly and directly from their writings as sources of the only spirituality and only charism that unites all female Franciscan Congregations, so much so that it is possible to claim that it is written with words or echoes of expressions from St Francis and St Clare. It is an inspirational text, that is, it presents lines of spiritual nature that define our form of life, indicate fundamental values and attitudes to lead an evangelical life according to the example set by St Francis and St Clare. It is a text that is based on the Gospel, like St Francis' Rule, because our form of life consists essentially in observing the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a text in which every Franciscan sister can and must find herself, because it contains common values that characterize Franciscan evangelical life. It is a non-juridical text, in the sense that all what could be considered as a rule pertaining the CJC or the Constitutions has been purposely omitted. It is a classical text, in that the form of life was meant to be described with a few simple words from St Francis and St Clare. It is a universal text, that is, it is valid for all

male and female Congregations of the Third Regular Order of St Francis; therefore, it is an instrument of communion among the Congregations.

The value of our Rule resides in the Gospel. In order to be disciples of the Lord it is indispensable to obey the Gospel. Obeying the Gospel lived in the Church is like walking ori-



ented by a light that traces the path and prevents us to go astray amid the thousand proposals of today's world, a light that is a guarantee of truth. We feel that the words of our founder, Fr Gregory, are still topical: "How great, elevated, sublime, excellent is the obligation to observe the Rule faithfully! By walking this path, the religious walks on the most secure path. Led by her rule, the religious is taken by hand by God, who directs her towards perfection and blessedness. By submitting to the Rule of her community, she has contracted an obligation that shall sanctify her and place her further ahead in the heart of God".

THE STRUCTURE OF THE RULE

The text of the Rule contains mainly expressions drawn from St Francis' First Rule. There are also many quotations from other writings from St Francis and St Clare. The Rule is divided into nine chapters, preceded by a prologue made of the first Letter of St Francis to all the faithful. The Rule ends with St Francis' blessing drawn from his Testament. The text is filled with the four fundamental values, which are not unique, not the most important ones, but common and shared by all Franciscan Congregations. They are: evangelical conversion, spirit of prayer, minority and poverty.

The overall presentation of the Rule to the young sisters was completed by reflections on the values that are of particular significance to our religious Family, such as evangelicity, fraternity and minority; the reflection was made by comparing the text of the Rule to St Francis or St Clare's Rule and to the texts of the Sources of our Congregation.

It was offered to the young sisters as a tool through which they can examine more thoroughly the commitment that they have undertaken through their Religious Profession to live the Gospel, the essential "form of life", "without gloss", just like St Francis wanted.



VISIT TO GROTTA DI CASTRO



REPORT OF THE MEETING SR. CECILIA SUBIABRE VICAR GENERAL 16 - 17 JULY 2007 - ROME

THE COMMUNITY IN MISSION

Formation term to interculturality

On 16-17 July, the Vicar General, Sr Cecilia Subiabre, suggested to the young sisters a study and reflection on the theme: "the Community in Mission". The subject was divided into two parts, which were entitled: "The Community, a reality of faith" and "The whole fraternity is missionary".

Sr Cecilia presented her report availing herself also of new computer technology tools, through which she offered to the youth incentives for further analysis by actively involving them in individual and team work.

The first part started from the points in which our Congregational Sources and the present Constitutions recall our commitment to live community life profoundly. In particular, the attention was focused on the following texts: "In this Institute, the mother and the daughters, all the sisters love one another, help one another in their needs, bear with one another in their shortcomings, practice every virtue to keep the sanctity of their vows, especially by denying themselves... with humility and meekness, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and imitating our Seraphic Father St Francis" (S 3, page 32). "The Congregation of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters



of the Sacred Heart is formed by local communities, to welcome and live together the same charism, as a meaningful testimony of the presence of God's love in the world...

The bond of charity of Christ Crucified must be kept among the sisters... The community is the place where every one is the other's servant and where the sisters show mutual respect, bear with one another in their shortcomings, encourage one another and think highly of all" (Constitutions 1982).

In our religious family, therefore, community life, intended as communion in love, takes a fundamental significance and, in the spirit of St Francis, must be lived as a reality of faith that finds its source of fecundity in the Eucharistic mystery. Our communities are called to live Easter every day to receive and express the unifying strength that only Jesus, present in the Bread and Wine, can give us.

In order to be a visible sign of this grace, the sisters:

- help one another in their commitment of personal sanctification;
- offer themselves and all their talents to make the community grow and renew itself;
- accept one another with benevolence and forgive one another;
- back one another up in their initiatives and difficulties (Const. 30).

As Franciscan Missionary Sisters, we must incarnate every day Christ's redemptive love, which emanates from the Heart of the Crucified. We are called to this as individuals, as a community and as a religious family, in order to live our mission.

Moreover, the Community becomes a credible sign of God's love if every one of us is committed to:

- venerate fraternity as a gift from God and an icon of the Trinity;
- build a fraternal atmosphere based on faith and lived with benevolence, respect, politeness, self-control and sense of humour;
- share what we are and what we have;



live in dialogue: a) with the Lord of History, to find out and welcome the project that He has prepared for each one of us; b) with ourselves, to be able to perceive totally our own reality in truth, humility and love; c) with our sisters, by looking for spaces that allow everyone to express oneself freely, sincerely and in mutual respect.

- Cultivate a positive and welcoming attitude toward every sister in her diversity, favouring the complementarity of cultures, in order to build up communion.

The Constitutions blaze the trails that we must follow to keep our Congregation's fraternal life and live it fully. Let us mention some of them:

- regard every sister as a gift from the Lord;
- imitate the communion of life that Christ practised with the apostles;
- share an intense life of prayer and apostolate;
- make the community environment a place of silence and meeting...;
- keep our heart free from earthly goods, as if we were pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility;
- consider the local Charter to be an important expression of fraternal life, in order to verify, discern and reflect on the community project;
- create an atmosphere of trust, openness and listening so that a dialogue between different persons becomes a reality.

Sr Cecilia, by reflecting on the above mentioned points, dwelled especially on the vow of poverty and remarked that we have all experienced the Lord's call: "Go, sell what you have; then come, follow me" (Mark 10:21). Therefore, we have abandoned everything because we have found something more important, but, with time, it happens that we take back, little by little, almost inadvertently, all what we have left generously to follow Christ. By asking ourselves why this happens, we identified the main reason in the fact that we are not committed seriously enough to permanent formation. To conclude the first part, the Vicar General introduced the theme of internationality and enculturation.

The fact that our Congregation is multicultural makes it more evident, at the local Church level, that the universal Church is catholic and urges our communities to witness that the Kingdom



of God has no boundaries. Since we belong to different cultures and nations, we are urged to overcome cultural and religious ethnocentrism and helped to be closer to people and to better integrate in the local Churches, overcoming the risk to make them a copy of our own church of origin.

In imitation of Jesus, model of enculturation, as yeast with the flour and light in the house, we must live in this world with love, in order to find in it the Lord and announce his presence as Franciscan Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.

The second part, entitled “The whole fraternity is missionary”, started by recalling 21 April 1861, the day of canonical opening of our Institute. In that event was displayed, in all its beauty, the gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church in the form of the group of young novices who, accompanied by our founders, Laura Leroux and Father Gregory, started the unending procession that still keeps giving off the scent of charity throughout the world.

In 1865, our first sisters left for the United States of America with few material resources, but with their heart full of hope, faith and love.

Sr Cecila pointed out that we must keep the spiritual heritage of our first sisters who, following the example of St Francis, lived radically their vocation by offering their life for Christ’s sake.

Our Sources declare that the goal of the Institute, apart from the sanctification of its members, is to pray for the propagation of catholic faith, help personally the apostolic Missions and teach young girls for free, privileging the poorest and most neglected ones. (S 3, page 31).

From the origins of our religious family we have been sent, as women of God, into the world for a mission of testimony of Evangelical and typically Franciscan values, such as fraternity, minority, simplicity and joy. We are also called to open up new horizons in a changing world, to create a culture of dialogue and solidarity, to accept our different realities and face the new poverties dynamically and creatively. The present context of evangelization is quickly changing and each new aspect or new situation requires from us an appropriate Christian answer, which must summon up and involve the whole religious family.

In order to be able to carry out this mission, we must continuously prepare ourselves by means of a good initial and permanent formation and we must encourage and sustain ourselves mutually within our communities. It is necessary to prepare rooms for the Spirit in the heart of all the sisters, so that new prophetic fraternities may rise among us in which we can: a) recover true relationships with people; b) tune in and link our spirituality to daily life; c) interpret the deepest aspirations of the persons who live next to us.



The renewal of our Franciscan quality of life will have positive implications on the way we live the Community in Mission, that is feeling that we are sent forth by the same fraternity. Simultaneously, however, a new awareness of the mission will impress a new lifestyle to our communities.

As Pope John Paul II wrote: “Faith is strengthened when it is given to others! “(RM 2); the mission strengthens the consecrated life, gives it new enthusiasm and new motivation, and elicits faithfulness” (VC 78).

Next, Sr Cecilia went into the meaning of the words “Evangelization” and “Mission” thoroughly, by pointing out that, in

the biblical sense, evangelization is synonymous with mission. Through Vatican Council II, the Church has overcome the vision of mission as a particular activity of some people and has rehabilitated the theological vision that makes mission a building element of the Church itself.

John Paul II, in his Encyclical Letter “Redemptoris Missio”, stated that the mission of the Church is unique, since she has one origin and one goal, but she forms a complex global reality, in which there are different activities and tasks, such as: 1) the Mission ad Gentes; 2) Pastoral Activity; 3) the New Evangelization or Re-evangelization.

The papal document makes it clear, however, that the boundaries of the specific missionary activity, the pastoral care of the faithful and the new evangelization are not clearly definable and that it is not possible to raise barriers between them. There exists a real and growing interdependence between the various redeeming activities: each one of them influences, stimulates and helps the others.

The mission, so intended, is challenging the third millennium and, therefore, it is necessary to prepare tomorrow’s missionaries very well, by teaching them above all to be able to perform a synthesis of mission and contemplation. Indeed, without a deep interior life it is non possible to live the mission, which is nothing else but the testimony and manifestation of the love of the Heart of Christ for mankind.

In addition, it was observed that, facing today’s continuously changing society, we cannot afford to be “distracted”. The cultural and institutional environment is marked by individualism and the principle of “laity” and characterized by many fractures: between the North and the South of the planet; between ethnic groups; between employed and unemployed people; between the citizens of a nation and immigrants; between the different religions.

From this situation, there arises a big CHALLENGE and a strong question: How can we love God and all our brothers? Are we capable to live conviviality and respect the differences, first in our communities and then with the recipients of our apostolate?

Subsequently, the Vicar General reminded another important aspect of our missionary path: involvement and mobilization of lay people. They are important for our services and the tasks that they could and should undertake within the local church. However, we should make the most of lay people especially for their work of “mediation” and “enculturation” of the Gospel. It is they who must combine the spirit of the Gospel with reality, with the workings and logic of contemporary world.



The Congregation, heir to the spirit of St Francis, must feel the need to open to the lay world, by offering its charismatic richness as an instrument of growth in love and encouraging the creation of communities of associated laypeople.

**SUMMARY OF THE REFLECTION GUIDED BY
SR ELIODORA BATTISTON
ON THE SUBJECT "THE SERVICE OF AUTHORITY
20-21 JULY 2007 - ROMA**

The delicate but important subject of the service of authority was dealt with in two days. The speaker, availing herself of a Power Point presentation, was able to explain with competence and great clarity the contents of the related regulations, both those which are easy to understand and those that are more implicit.

After briefly recalling the spirit of the origins, which is so well expressed by the familiar and topical quotation from our Founder Fr Gregory: "How sweet is the dominion where ordering is more of a burden than obeying, where every one is the other's servant and where there is no other rule than that of modesty and sweetness" and by another quotation from the first Constitutions (1862), "in this Institute, the Mother and the daughters, all the sisters, love one another.....", the audience was led to a thorough and neat analysis of the single rules from chapter VII of our current Constitutions.

The long review gave the speaker the opportunity to provide very useful and interesting explanations, comments, references and examples, dealing with the most important and incisive subjects of the complex material of governance, which quite easily kept the attention of the young audience focused.

Now, it is difficult to tell whether a subject that was treated by means of an analytical approach to the single rules was more or less interesting, because each one of them undoubtedly resounded in the mind of the audience, who showed their eagerness to learn, understand and compare.

The audience was favourably impressed by the constant reference to parallel Franciscan themes, by the faithful comparison between the respective Sources, for which the audience was naturally favourably disposed.

The same was true for the careful and accurate comparisons with the rule of the Third Regular Order, while the reading and comment of the so-called CIC, which is not always familiar to the young sisters, sometimes required more attention and patience from both parts.

Therefore, with the clear intent of entrusting the commitment to formation to the responsibility of each member of the audience, the reflection was conducted from point to point along the following main subjects:

CONGREGATION: a small society approved by the Church and subjected to it.
RELIGIOUS PROFESSION as an alliance pact;
LAW as a road sign that points to love;
INTERNATIONALITY: unity in diversity, welcome and adaptability, relation and sharing, availability.
AUTHORITY: to grow – to make grow – to give life.
RELATIONSHIP AUTHORITY– OBEDIENCE
AUTHORITY as practice-service of charity, to teach, guide to sanctity and govern.
OBEDIENCE as listening;

Since what was treated was the service of authority, a subject that was dealt with as a matter of course was that of STRUCTURES, within which and through which the service of authority is performed. Therefore, a reflection was made about:

CHAPTERS, in their various expressions and implementations;
ORGANISMS: provinces, apostolic regions or vice-provinces, del-





egations and communities;
SUPERIORS at every level, councils, formation teachers;
PROGRAMMES.

Passing to the animation tools used to sustain the structures,
the important principles of:

SUBSIDIARITY
CO-RESPONSIBILITY
COLLABORATION

Sr Eliodora then resumed more carefully and specifically the
main subject of the meeting, dwelling on:

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE SERVICE OF AUTHORITY
AUTHORITY = POWER OF GOVERNANCE
KINDS OF AUTHORITY, personal, collegial and delegated;
CHAPTER as spir-
itual dimension

and collegial body of responsibility and com-
munion;

CHAPTERS: General - Provincial – Local, in their
respective competence, implementation, goal
and procedure;

SUPERIOR General, Provincial and Local;

PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION BODIES: Vicar
and Councillor, Secretaries and Treasurers;

EXTENDED GENERAL COUNCIL

CANONICAL VISIT

PROVINCIAL STATUTE

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOTE

VOTE: various Expressions, Modes and Sphere; its essential Elements;

MAJORITY CRITERIA of the Vote;

CANONICAL REQUISITES for each service of authority.



After concluding the subject of the Service of authority in all its complexity and diversity, the speaker presented all the aspects relevant to the forms of possible separation of a single member from her institution. Therefore, all the possible forms were reviewed, often with the aid of examples:



ABSENCE FROM THE RELIGIOUS HOUSE
SEPARATION FROM THE CONGREGATION AND POSSIBLE
READMISSION
PASSAGE TO ANOTHER INSTITUTE
EXCLAUSTRATION
EXIT (voluntary or imposed) AT THE EXPIRATION OF
TEMPORARY VOWS AND EXIT WHILE THE VOWS ARE STILL
VALID;
SECULARIZATION;
RESIGNATION; RESIGNATION “IPSO FACTO”, and resig-
nation due to juridically proven facts;
OTHER SERIOUS CAUSES: external, chargeable and ju-
ridically proven;
EXPULSION IN URGENT CASES.

The speaker concluded appropriately by pointing out that “above all let there be fidelity, the fruit of the liberating strength of love, of the trust in God and of the joyful commitment of observance.

Indeed, Sr Eliodora wanted to finish her long cultural disquisition on this difficult subject by presenting a profile of St Francis traced by Celano (FS464). By it she meant to outline the profile of the good superior and the good obedient and focus the attention on the profound spirit of this meeting, in the same way in which it was opened by recalling the congregational sources:



“How beautiful, how splendid, how glorious did he appear in the innocence of his life, in the simplicity of his words, in the purity of his heart, in his love for God, in his fraternal charity, in his ardent obedience, in his peaceful submission, in his angelic countenance! He was charming in his manners, serene by nature, affable in his conversation, most opportune in his exhortations, most faithful in what was entrusted to him, cautious in counsel, effective in business, gracious in all things.

He was serene of mind, sweet of disposition, sober in spirit, raised up in contemplation, zealous in prayer, and in all things fervent. He was constant in purpose, stable in virtue, persevering in grace, and unchanging in all things.

He was quick to pardon, slow to become angry, ready of wit, tenacious of memory, subtle in discussion, circumspect in choosing, and in all things simple. He was unbending with himself, understanding toward others, and discreet in all things.”



FRANCISCAN PLACES WELCOME THE FRANCISCAN MISSIONARY YOUNG SISTERS AUGUST 2007 - ASSISI



In the ongoing formation program of the latest professed sisters, coming from different parts of the world ,couldn't be missing a time exclusively dedicated to Assisi and other different sanctuaries where st.Francis lived his adventure with God and man.

Always speaking about a person you must consider that his fullness is made up of body, spiritual skills and even of those characters coming from environment, that is relationship with people and things.

Therefore when we went through Assisi, Rieti valley and mount Alverna something wonderful happens : stones, houses, all nature and sanctuaries seem to tell about st. Francis more than words.

So our young sisters immersed fully in st. Francis' experience, starting from Assisi. his natal land so pregnant with encounters with God, with his searching for Jesus, poor and crucified for man.

Pilgrimage through Sanctuaries went on in a chronological order according to the events in the holy man's life.

We did not lack of a good spiritual and tour guide along the journey, so that the experience of Francis could question , enlighten and be contagious for our lives of pilgrims.!

The visit at st.Damiano, besides the biographic events of st.Francis, offered us a god reflection on the meeting with the leper and with the Crucifix, that so deeply questioned the holy man, but finally... even each one of us felt to be called , to give an answer. This feeling came out during the group sharing we had with some difficulty because of different languages. The reflections were able to help us to know better each other and to actualize values we were meeting.

A similar experience we had at st.Mary of Angeles, sanctuary of Pardon and at Ba-





silic of st. Clare and st. Francis.

In each one of this sanctuaries we had a little time for personal prayer, that all would like to be longer.

In st. Rufino cathedral, where Francis and Clare were baptized ,we all had a very special renewal of baptismal promises by the baptistery where the two saints were baptized, finding the source of their consecration to religious life, too.

From Assisi we moved on to the Holy valley of Rieti , which witnessed so many important events of the life of st.Francis, who as a good itinerant friar didn't like to stay only by his natal city, but preached the Gospel in many other parts, by his witnessing.

Therefore Thomas of Celano calls him a living tongue, reaching many places of Italy till the Land of Jesus among Muslims.

There we felt conquered by the beauty of mountains, dressed up by savage forests, which are recalling long times of Francis' solitude and contemplation staying before his Lord in prayer.

At Greccio he wanted to celebrate the mystery of God's incarnation in a very special way: In the crib he wished to see by his eyes the poverty of Jesus ,who has been born again in men's hearts during the mass celebration, when Francis sung the Gospel of nativity in the cave at Greccio. In the same place we too, had a mass celebration in and it seemed, too, Jesus was born in our heart in a very special way.

Fr Alessandro Partini, novice master for the Roman Province of the friar, helped us by his homely to enter more deeply in the mystery of Jesus, born as a babyand already looking at Passover.

Indeed observing the faces of the sisters there with different colours and nationality, you may think to those Magi, who visited the Baby with his Mother, offering the homage of all people of the world, to whom God reveals Himself as Lord, on the day of Epiphany.

Even at Fontecolombo, sanctuary of the Franciscan Rule, and at Poggiobustone, very high hermitage, where Francis loved to stay for quite long time in contemplation, passing later on to meet simple people along the way, very brotherly to them. " Good morning good People!": it was his friendly greeting to whoever will meet.

The top of the " Christic" experience of St.Francis led us on mount Alverna.

The emotion of our sisters was increasing more and more, meaning of their awareness of the full likeness of Francis to Jesus. This conformity goes



through the experience of suffering and Cross: who is not met by such experience so human, whether for fear or for living awareness.?

In such step of life is present creature's limitation but even the urge to trustingly abandon oneself in God's fatherly hands, to whom Francis hands up fully hi life :”My God and my all” .

At Alverna we are guided by the wise, sober and deep reflection of fr.Paolo Fantaccini, minister provincial of Tuscany. He tries to give his best to our unusual Group of international sisters, that maybe will never come back to see this place, that witnessed the impression of Stigmata on st Francis, meaning the full conformation to the Crucified Lord.

All this spiritual journey has been alternate with some free time for fraternal relaxing and interiorizing all that riches.

Shouldn't be forgotten the two lectures very interesting of Franciscan formation we were given by Prof.B.Brufani, ordinary teacher by the I.T.A. of Assisi. He told us about the Personality and religious relevance of st.Claré's experience.

Later on Fr. Francesco de Lazzeri gave a lecture about forgiveness (I the Testament of st.Francis), in preparation to the indulgency's celebration of the pardon of Assisi.

What can we say more? Only a great Thanks! To our communities in st.Mary of Angels and Viole, that facilitated in any way this experience of international fraternity, which was strengthened by times of group sharing: in prayer, reflection and recreation. Many thanks even to those who wanted, thought and realized with many efforts this very event.



SUMMARY OF THE SUBJECT PRESENTED

BY ELIODORA BATTISTON

AUGUST 2007 ASSISI

THE CONVERSION ACCORDING TO ST FRANCIS

We are in the seventh centennial of the words addressed by the San Damiano Crucifix to St Francis and therefore of his path of conversion. Being in Assisi in this period is a unique opportunity to reflect on this important aspect of life. Conversion is a continuous process of conformation to Jesus and the basic commitment for the consecrated, for each one of us.

Francis, in his TESTAMENT (verses 1-3) tells us about the beginning of his path of conversion. I thought it could be useful to offer some considerations on this subject.

“THE LORD GAVE TO ME, BROTHER FRANCIS, THUS TO BEGIN TO DO PENANCE”

Francis seems to be saying: “The Lord has called me by name to build a precise history with me, it is man who receives from the Lord his history and adheres to it with force and responsibility.

Francis defines “doing penance” as a gift from God, it is not a contradiction! However, which penance is a gift from God?

“WHEN I WAS IN SIN IT SEEMED TO ME VERY BITTER TO SEE LEPERS”

“To be in sin” means, according to Francis, to refuse the Presence, the lordship of God over one’s life; therefore, it means to appropriate one’s own will, where each desire and aspiration is directed towards oneself in a movement of unjust appropriation and selfish glorification, which consequently entails disclaiming and refusing the tie with and dependence from God.

Simultaneously to this movement of undue appropriation of one’s own existence or self-centralization, there



begins also the break with one's neighbour, seen as a competitor, and the sin of envy arises which makes it impossible to praise God for the good that He does for the others, because one would like to have it all for oneself. Envy is, after all, directed towards God and makes man fall into blasphemy against God.

In practice, in this passage of his Testament, Francis seems to tell us; "I was in sin because I lived a self-centered life".

The movement that happened in Francis through his conversion was indeed the shift of the centre of his existence: no longer Francis, but the other. It is the new logic that was found by the youth in his encounter with the lepers; in the annoyance that he instinctively felt at their sight, he recognized that he "was in sin".

Francis seems to tell us: since my ego was the universe towards which everybody should turn, I refused all what was not the search for my own will and glory. To see lepers was for him too bitter and unacceptable.

Owing to a gift from God, he was able to understand the deeper root of his bitterness: it originated from his selfish lifestyle, which prevented him to live in the presence of God; bitterness, that is, was the fruit of a lifestyle resulting from an absence, that of God. He understood the evangelical value of the words "deny yourself".

"AND THE LORD HIMSELF LED ME AMONGST THEM AND I SHOWED MERCY TO THEM"

What did Francis mean by the verb "led"? The verb indicates, first, a period of research by the young Francis, his journey towards joy, success and glory. The arrival of the lepers is certainly linked to some facts that preceded it and prepared it, through which God led Francis: the imprisonment in Perugia, the departure for Apulia, the dream in Spoleto.



In the verb it is possible to feel the educational pedagogy of God, who uses long periods of time, as well as Francis' amazement; it is a process of labour and fight of man against the mystery of his life, in which God enters and lets himself be found.

To show mercy is Francis' free answer to God's action; he shows mercy, that is he answers with the tenderness from his heart.

For us FMSC, the subject of mercy is a charismatic value, because it is the highest expression of the redeeming love of the Heart of Jesus Crucified.

Like Francis, we are called to identify the feelings that we must use to show our mercy, by putting the other forward by means of a real process of empathy.

In Francis' view, mercy does not humiliate, but it is rather a process of substitution, through which the "rich" takes the "poor's" place, the healthy becomes like the sick, the virtuous like the sinner. It is from there that the feelings of humility and patience spring, which mark true mercy and tenderness of heart.



By "showing mercy" Francis enacts, therefore, a radical transformation of his ego: from feeling and wanting to be the centre, towards which all the rest must be turned, he accepts to become one who goes towards the others with humility and patience, in order to give them something very precious: his heart and mercy. In this way, Francis finds the source of his joy and strength for further courageous choices:

"and when I left them, that which had seemed to me bitter was changed for me into sweetness of body and soul. and afterwards i remained a little and I left the world".



2. INTRODUCTION TO GROUP REFLECTION ON INCULTURATION AND INTERNATIONALITY

Inculturation is a topical subject, because the world is speeding fast towards globalization. Cultures are getting near and meeting in dynamics of knowledge and integration or clashing in dynamics of refusal.

The encounter of cultures, therefore, does not happen without pain and sometimes sufferings. It is a reality in motion and it would be a great mistake not to recognize it.

Inculturation is an active and laborious evolution which requires mutual acceptance and dialogue, a critical conscience and discernment, fidelity and conversion, transformation and growth, renewal and innovation. (Work of formation).

You are making a little experience of all this, but just a few years ago nobody would have organized such a meeting, even if it was dreamed and desired.

For us, FMSC, the inculturation process is a big challenge. We live in the world and therefore we are called to live this reality which is an integral part of our being Franciscan missionaries and internationally oriented.

The Word of God, which talks of Exodus and Incarnation, may help us reflect on this subject. These are two themes that enlighten the attitude that we must cultivate within us.

Exodus: to get out of oneself. **Incarnation:** to make oneself someone else's neighbour.





Every culture undoubtedly carries some values and needs to be purified to become welcoming; it needs to know in order to understand; it needs to grow in love in order to be able to propose rather than impose, and it also needs dialogue.

No culture must become absolute, because they all possess seeds of revelation. God has loved the whole mankind and left in the cultures of all times the signs and marks of his action.

For a FMSH, who has the mission to bring the Gospel in the different cultures, the Biblical image that enlightens me now is the parable of the yeast which makes the dough rise.

This simple element does not analyze the quality of the flour used (if it is first or second quality), because its function is to make it rise.

Like the yeast, we missionaries are put in this world with the task of evangelizing it by starting from reality, that is by approaching respectfully the different cultures in which we are sent.

In order to walk a true inculturation path, it is first of all necessary to possess a clear and strong personal and charismatic identity. Only a strong charismatic identity helps

understand that values can be lived in different ways and helps implement unity in diversity.

I must realize who I am as FMSH and which are the values of the Charism to which I must be faithful.

(The principles of our identity are well described in the Constitutions and in the Directory and listed in the P.F.)

Secondly, the inculturation process requires a deep sense of humility to be able to listen, talk and look together for the riches and poverties of each culture.

This work of knowledge will help us also recognize our problems of character and temperament, which must be the object of a continuous conversion, in any culture.

Finally, the process requires from us to be aware that inculturation does not take place without effort: Exodus and Incarnation show us the concrete itinerary to be followed in meeting sisters from other cultures and the people that we approach.

We should also remember that today there are not only different people's cultures, but there is also a cultural diversity between generations, young, adults and elderly, and a diversity of formation received in the past.



SUMMARY OF THE SPEECHES ON THE VOWS GIVEN BY P. VITTORIO BELLÉ, OFM JULY 2007 - ROM



Father Vittorio, with his typical spontaneity which reveals his Franciscan spirit of fraternal simplicity, and with the wealth of wisdom that marks him out, easily drew the attention of the audience, which was enthusiast and heedful.

Our young sisters listened to him with a lot of interest, as was also proven by the numerous questions that they asked the speaker at the end of each meditation.

We report a summary of what the priest shared with us about each Vow.

OBEDIENCE

Inspired by article 9 of our Constitutions and frequently referring to the Consecrated Life document, the speaker stressed the following aspects: Obedience may translate the particular expressions of the above-stated norm of “full, loving and faithful acceptance” and therefore become “redemptive” only when it penetrates the logic of the cross. What is this logic? It is simply Christ’s, who gives himself up to the Father and gives himself up to us as “broken bread and shed blood” so that everything in us becomes life and resurrection, that is, so that obedience be-

comes redemptive and saving.

St Francis fully penetrated this logic, so much so that he declared that obeying means “offering oneself, giving oneself up, letting oneself be broken”: it is dying out of love!

The seal of the stigmata is the divine answer to the prayers that he used to repeat in front of the Crucifix: “That I may die for love of Thy love”.

Obedience takes us back to this dynamic, to this pure love, which asks death from the Lord “as Thou didst deign to die for love of my love”. This is the evangelical mentality, and therefore the Franciscan mentality.

According to Francis, the relationship “authority – obedience” starts from mutual love, that is from what makes it possible for the one who performs the service of authority to take the characteristics of the one who builds the communion, by having recourse to typically feminine qualities: sweetness, warmth, tenderness, availability and patience.

This ministry, however, must be reciprocated with an obedience based on the constant will to discern God’s Will in one’s life, expressed also or exactly by means of human, external mediations.

The mystery of Incarnation takes place in the human dimension, to the point that it can make us pray, like Christ in the Gethsemane, “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me”. Discernment makes us look at the situation in its entirety, so that we are led to say with Him: “Still, not my will but yours be done!”.

By putting his own life into his Father’s hands, Jesus deprives himself of his will, he gives up everything about himself. Our obedience too requires a radical self-deprivation (expropriation). When, during our profession, we put our life into the hands of our religious Family, we mean –with reference to obedience, which is the foundation of each vow and virtue- to deprive ourselves of our will, that is to make the transition from our ego to God and from our ego to “us”.

This fidelity helps us overcome the serious evil that Pope Benedict XVI keeps denouncing, the so-called “relativism”, which undermines us too. When my ego becomes my constant reference, the centre and the starting point for my evaluations, and when my acceptance or refusal of something depends on whether it corresponds or not to my own interests, I am mistaken and I trample on Christ’s logic, the logic of sacrifice, which will never become renunciation – offer out of love.

Only the expropriation in an Evangelical-Franciscan sense may help us not to make our ego the absolute reference, not to look at each person, action or thing based on our ego and our own ideas.

Hence the other important aspect of Franciscan obedience: joint-responsibility in sharing. What does that mean? Building fraternal communion is the task of every member of the community, it is a common responsibility, it is everybody’s commitment to act one’s part, it is, better still, the Evangelical actualization of “wash one another’s



feet". This often implies, from both superior and subject, depriving oneself, painfully lowering and humbling oneself, bearing the brunt of other people's poverty, sharing the consequences of our limitations, mistakes, wounds, sufferings... We are jointly responsible when we truly feel responsible for all our sisters, which are all entrusted to me, like I am entrusted to them, as individuals and as a group. Here obedience really becomes redemptive, if I manage to see and welcome God's Will which is expressed in the human reality that is in me and the sisters, with whom I share His love project.

To make obedience "full, loving and faithful", according to the Constitutions, we must overcome some obstacles, one of which is indeed the difficulty to accept to be helped by someone else, be it a superior or a brother-sister.

Another obstacle which is present also among us is our desire to be at the centre of attention, that is the sin of selfishness, which becomes egocentrism and foments our anxiousness to be unique, distinct from the others, and reinforces our ridiculous, childish claim to go it alone, following our wishes.

Another hindrance to Franciscan obedience is the difficulty to distinguish our own responsibility from the excessive attachment for our service. This attitude leads someone to refuse any comparison, to condemn all remarks coming from others, to accuse the others of inappropriate meddling, to lord it over the others: those are all behaviours which are contrary to the spirit of communion, of joint responsibility, of sharing and are far away from St Paul's call to "anticipate one another in showing honour".

However, we must first of all remember that obedience is not something spontaneous, nor can it be easily learned: it requires a long, painful and demanding path, the attitude of someone who continuously entrusts one's life to God through daily experiences and relations, who constantly converts and examines oneself. It is not enough to utter the vow to become obedient, sometimes the contrary may happen, because slowly, gradually, if we do not walk along a virtuous path, we take back our will with all its deviations.

Hence the application of what norm no. 10 dictates. Indeed, it simply makes clear what only the fascination for Christ, the true passion for Him can do and make do.

If, in truth, nothing else has an influence on our life except the attraction for the Lord, if we are in love with Him, and welcoming his love project moves and directs our every step, then our donation to God through obedience is complete and takes place within us day by day, leaving us always in joy and peace. If we are sincerely fascinated by this one love, we can gradually come to say, like Francis: "that which had seemed to me bitter" or despicable only to think of it, "was changed for me into sweetness of body and soul".

Father Vittorio ended his interesting speech by inviting the audience to reflect on:

1 - some meaningful biblical images: God as a wonderful architect of our life (Hebrews 11:10); God as a potter who gives shape to our clay (Jeremiah 18:6); God as a farmer who works on our plant (1 Corinthians 3:9), and other similar ones.

2 - St Bernadette Soubirous' spiritual testament, of which he read some quite moving passages about the way she testified to her life of obedience by fully denying herself.

POVERTY

Moving from norm no. 14 of our Constitutions, the speaker focused immediately his attention on the Evangelical and Franciscan experience and, more specifically, on Matthew 13:44-46, about the merchant looking for the precious pearl, for which he is ready to sacrifice every other good.

Francis of Assisi, a promising young man who was guaranteed a happy future life, was able to discern among the goods he possessed the one which was not transient, went searching for it and found it. The hidden treasure of Poverty is the pearl of immense value which was found by Francis, for which he did not hesitate to abandon everything, to leave "father, mother, brother, lands... to receive a hundred times more".

He was thought to be mad, but the fascination emanating from his pearl, from his Lady or Spouse Poverty, was such that he considered every higher price to be modest, every bigger ordeal to be simple. Francis united to Lady Poverty glowing with joy for having found her: it is the joy of the man in love who is finally able to find the treasure of his life.

This episode upsets us and makes us think: is poverty for us the joy to discover the true good or is it rather a limitation, a burden, scarcity of room, hindrance to movements, a mortifying tie, a loss?

Francis, who had the mentality of a skilled merchant, was convinced that he had made "a bargain", the most lucrative transaction in his life: to wed Lady Poverty! What was considered a folly, a ridicule and incomprehensible sacrifice by all the people from Assisi who knew him, was for him the best bargain: a total renuncia-





tion to all material goods, the freedom from every human tie, because for him God was enough, He was his supreme and only Good.

Here lies the Evangelical sense of poverty, the finding of the treasure, the priceless, invaluable pearl: choosing God as one's supreme Good and longing for his Kingdom and his justice.

Everything is closely related with having found the pearl, having considered it as the absolute treasure, for which it is worth giving up everything else, mustering the courage to change radically one's behaviour, maturing sincerely a style of belonging to Christ.

Unfortunately, we intend poverty as privation, discomfort, or it bothers us because it means dependence, humiliation, sobriety, limitation... We do not always consider it to be the main path to reach the Whole, God; we do not always see it as the means that enables us to experience true joy.

The logic of poverty leads us to understand, or better penetrate the spirituality of abandonment and peace, as asserted Teresa of Avila who, happy to possess everything in God, beaming intoned everywhere her song: "Let nothing upset you, let nothing startle you: God alone is enough!"

In the present situation, like was already observed by John Paul II, common people do not understand the Vows: they do not believe in chastity, they think of obedience as a form of repression, of annulment of one's personality, but facing poverty, they are surprised, amazed, they feel that it is really meaningful.

Poverty cannot be explained, it must be lived; the treaties on it are of little value, what counts is real witnesses. It is not measured by structures (although these should express it in a certain way or, if they had to display some wealth, they should do it only for the purpose of charity, evangelization and welcome), but rather by a personal attitude of freedom, detachment, good sense, which translates into adaptability, Franciscan temporariness, the use of things in terms of charity rather than possession or, least of all, gain.

It is also necessary to beware of those who feign poverty, refusing common structures and countering them with a selfish, independent and extravagant freedom; they might even do a lot of good, excite great admiration, but, maybe without realizing it, they often use inconsistent means and methods, which extol the individual and make it the centre of attention.

For us, living poverty means being able to adapt ourselves to the necessities and realities in which we live, using the goods that are available to us soberly and modestly. Essentiality should be for us a virtue to be cultivated and taken care of; it must not be confused with destitution and lack of means, which are still unjustly experienced by many people; it is rather balance, a measure of life which is able to enjoy the little it has and always shares. In particular, we religious, who are never in a state of destitution, should be like water, which receives to offer and keeps nothing but feeds itself in order to give itself.

The vow of poverty is linked to the virtue of poverty, which is not measured with respect to possessions, but with respect to the being and the use of material things and the end of this use. Here are then all the virtues that guarantee the purity and truth of the vow: the ability to always be serene while experiencing hardships, fear, discomfort, sickness; being ready to suffer every privation; welcome every contradiction and unexpected event; being patient in the face of every shortage, not only material; in short, letting oneself be guided by the spirit of perfect joy.

Referring to norms no. 16 and 17, Fr Bellé stressed other interesting aspects of the virtue of Poverty.





It is the dimension of the so-called ‘temporariness’ and of Franciscan ‘minority’. Both dimensions are ingredients of one “Sequela Christi”. To follow Christ means to imitate him: St Augustin already talked about the following in terms of imitation.

The examined aspects all affect the imitation-following of Christ! Sobriety, temporariness, essentiality, frugality, adaptability, contentedness, detachment and so on are all attitudes that we find in Jesus and in his Gospel, and later in Francis.

In addition, we should, especially in the context of a consumerism that can undermine us too, re-examine what is the value that we give to the so-called little things. Francis seems to be suggesting the recipe to practice the supreme virtue of Lady Poverty: start from little things, those which are humble, hidden in daily life, the small opportunities that show up every day, the small spaces of fraternity, sharing, vigilance, self-examination.

The well-being that we should be seeking cannot be based on our own convenience, on modern items that we deem indispensable for our personal use; our well-being does not depend on what we have and is available to us (goods, gifts, relations, friendships), but on quite different values, always

measured and to be measured with the One who must be our only Good.

It is only this Good that allows us to live in poverty, that is in joy, even our passing from one house to the other, from one service to the other; it is again this Good that allows us to use all the goods, even technological goods that modern science offers us, but to do it simply and with a personal detachment, while we actually always direct everything towards the call and mission to which we must answer.

CHASTITY

Father Vittorio dedicated his last meditations to this Vow-Virtue, dealing with a special emphasis with all its aspects, so much so that he aroused the undivided attention of all the audience, as is shown by the interesting questions that were addressed to the speaker.

Chastity –pointed out immediately the priest- is a particular gift, which calls each one of us to stay always active and vigilant. Indeed, love cannot be improvised, but must rather be built and discovered; we learn to live it during all our life and therefore -and this applies to every virtue- we never can say that we are successful, expert at it.

Our identity of consecrated to Love is based on living the three famous verbs “go, sell, follow me”, and therefore requires a sincere expropriation of our ego, a radical detachment from ourselves, so that the gift par excellence can unfold in us, the gift to God and to our brothers, following the example of Christ. Therefore, chastity cannot be suffered, lived with resignation, passively or, worse still, in an ambiguous, contradictory, conflictual way, like it may unfortunately happen and often actually happens.

We are all frail, limited, feeble, and we all feel the wounds of being human creatures, selfish, basically driven to enjoy the pleasures of the senses and listen to our instincts; we all find it hard, at a personal level, to deal with the conflicts in our life, especially if it clashes with a community life which is spiritually poor, closed or hard, selfish, and where we easily grumble and utter negative statements.

Our personal history is made of thousands of experiences, conscious or unconscious.

What is first of all required from us is to truly make peace with our personal history, which is however possible only after making the effort to know it deeply and then wholly accept it, with its positive and negative aspects. Our complexes, our aggressiveness, our inhibitions, as well as our judgements and relations, are the result of a poor knowledge of ourselves, of a lack of personal reconciliation. It is therefore necessary to:

- 1. go deep inside myself, fathom my life and take my vow seriously, without somewhat dragging it, but living it;
- 2. recognize and call my reality by name, without hiding or disguising it;
- 3. read and reread my story in the light of God, who knows me and loves me as I am, the only one who can strengthen my gift;
- 4. take every shadow or wound or limitation as one’s own, as “mine”, in order to manage to bless and thank God for all, recognizing that everything is an instrument and means of salvation and sanctification.

This operation of reconciliation with ourselves –which is the prerequisite for our fraternal life- must be performed by means of an adequate self-esteem, a sufficient confidence in ourselves, which is never illusion, repression, laziness,



superficiality, but is rather... life!

In addition, it requires the ability to integrate the dependence with the independence from personal relationships, by living serenely the relationship with ourselves and the others, by having genuine, friendly relations, which should also be sunny, without ambiguity, exclusivism, lies and tricks. Sensuality is not a sin, it is part of us, like emotionality, but it must be well managed instead of being repressed or stifled.

We should not confuse existential authenticity with moral authenticity: every moral principle must be interpreted with reference to a specific situation, which is always unique, separate.

Hence also the importance of communication, dialogue, exchange, with sincerity, openness and humility, without any scandal or discrimination, especially in our religious world which is not open to mutual relations and to family-style communication.

Today's formation is no longer marked by the prohibition of friendships like it once was, nor by the prohibition of relations with persons of the opposite sex. In this context too, the crucial test, the guarantee of excellence, is when the action takes place openly and, above all, the fact that this particular friendship or meeting opens me even more to others, and sustains my enthusiasm and my zeal to donate myself to God. Men and women need to interact, to complete one another, to enrich mutually, and this applies to us too, especially today, when we live everywhere in mixed environments, where males and females are no longer separated. Here lies the value, the beauty and the difficulty of a relation, which requires much help from God and his clear presence within and outside of us.

When it is clear that we belong to Christ, when our adhesion to the Lord in the absolute purity of our love for him is strong, we can live in a sunny way any friendship, which is often positive not only for us personally, but also for the community. In this sense, relations with the opposite sex can strengthen our vow of chastity and make it even more genuine. It is beautiful to experience the joy of consecration also through strong, robust and sincere relations! Even our sense of belonging to the institute, clear and well-grounded, the sincere attachment to our religious family, our love for the community can be formidable tools in such experiences. Certainly, we must never stop to control ourselves, but we should not fear that emotions and stimuli can arise in us and trouble us when we experience situations that lay bare our humanity and are linked to nature. There is sin only when we channel such feelings in a certain way of living, enjoying and participating that is selfish and totally contrary to our choice of life, to our having given ourselves to God.

Therefore, chastity is not a mortifying vow, which limits and restricts us: our identity as consecrated remains based essentially on giving and our ability to become a gift. It is natural that this implies for us a lot of renunciation, sacrifice, readiness to let ourselves be pruned, worked by Christ, by Love, but everything takes place in the true joy thanks to his love and our love for him.

The greatest difficulties and poverties regarding this vow often arise, especially in our female communities, from the rising of rivalries, jealousies, incomprehension, prejudices, which breed suspicion, mistrust and grumbling.

Cheer up! The Lord asks us to build a great history with him, through the beauty of our Vows. We shall be ready to welcome this privileged delivery if we are alert to achieve, day by day, the qualities implied by the three famous verbs that the Lord repeats to us: "Go... sell... follow me!".





Province "S. Mary of the Angels"

CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENNIAL OF PRESENCE OF THE FMSC

Vedelago - Parish 14 October 2007

On Sunday 14 October, the Vedelago Parish (Province of Treviso) gathered around us, Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, to express its gratitude to God and to the Congregation for 100 years of presence, which was defined by the Pastoral Council *"a precious and unique gift, which has left in the village and its territory a mark of great spiritual and human depth"*.

The participation of the faithful, sisters and priests was numerous and lively. The Vicar General Sr Cecilia Subiabre greeted the parish community with these words:

I am happy to be here among you today on behalf of the Superior General, Sr Emmapia Bottamedi, who is presently visiting the missionary sisters in Lebanon, and on behalf of all the sisters of the Congregation.

I would like to thank the parish priest, Don Florido Feltrin, who invited us to share with you this celebration day, to praise and thank the Lord for 100 years of presence of the FMSH in this parish community. Indeed, it is first of all the Lord that we must credit with all the good that the sisters have been able to accomplish in the community of Vedelago.

It is to the active and painstaking cooperation of many people of good will from this well-deserving village that we owe the abundant results achieved in the work of religious animation, teaching and every other activity linked to the presence of the sisters.

In this memorial day, our thought goes to the initial difficult times, when Msgr Luigi Brusatin, animated by a great zeal for the good of his parishioners and in order to inspire in them the true religious life, as the chronicles of those times say, asked and obtained from Gemona some nuns for the Nursery School and for the purpose of teaching in the Primary School.

Thanks to the generous and free contribution of the population and to the gratuitous hospitality of some benefactors, such as the countess Virginia Zuccareda, and Ida Basso, who died in the odour of sanctity, our sisters could start their mission here despite the difficult times. Among the pioneers that reached Vedelago from Gemona in 1907, we recall





Sisters of the Community, Vedelago in 1957

Sr Elena Facini, the first superior of the community, and Sr Joseph Mets, who did not spare herself to cooperate with the parish priest in order to develop many pastoral activities for the benefit of the population. It is with pride that we read on the chronicles that the works supported by the community have been numerous and fruitful: the nursery school, the primary school, the oratory, the after-school-time activities, the sewing

school, catechesis, spiritual assistance to the elderly, etc. Thanks to all these activities, the people from Vedelago, right from the first years of our presence up to now, have loved the sisters and have always helped them by offering them foodstuffs, free labour to maintain the house, as well as all what has been necessary to their life and mission.

The example of Franciscan life, simple and laborious and measured by prayer, of many sisters who alternated in this community during the years have yielded, especially in the past, a lot of vocations to religious and priestly life.

There was a time in which the religious fervour that existed in the village prompted the sisters to set up an aspirancy to religious life, where several youth were able to take care of their own Christian formation. The sisters' vivid imagination left no stone unturned in order to spread the good news of the Gospel. This is confirmed by their extraordinary printing activity in the difficult years of the First World War.

In the Annals of the history of the Church of this Diocese, as well as in those of our Congregation, the printing works will leave an indelible mark. They "helped in spreading Christian press and fighting the holy battles so that truth and justice may prevail", as the Blessed Msgr Giacinto Longhin, Bishop of Treviso, once said while he was blessing the work of the printer sisters of Vedelago. The constantly close cooperation between the local Church and the religious community was the first reason of such fruitfulness in building the Kingdom of God in this land. Your deep Christian sense of welcome and your disinterested readiness to come to the aid of those who are in need were particularly evident towards our Congregation during the two world wars, as well as in recent times, when the sisters had to leave Gemona because of the disastrous 1976 earthquake that destroyed, among other buildings, also our Mother House.

On behalf of the General Council, of the Provincial Council and of all the sisters of the Congregation, I would like to renew the feelings of gratitude to all of you, who keep still today an attitude of warm opening and generous helpfulness towards the sisters that are now present in this community of Vedelago.

It is also on their behalf that I would like to thank especially Don Vanni Pistore, who presided the celebration, Don Florido Feltrin, who has always placed much faith and esteem into the community sisters, and I would like to thank also the Mayor and all the civilian and religious authorities.

I wish that in this community the genuine faith and fervent charity that have characterized the simple and active life of this village do not extinguish but rather become increasingly vigorous.

May this day, dedicated to give thanks to the Lord, renew in the heart of every person and every family the joy of belonging to such a lively and helpful Christian community, and may it make holy vocations for the Church of God flourish again.

THE PASTORALE COUNCIL OF THE PARISH OF VEDELAGO THANKS FMSC SISTERS

Vedelago, 14 October 2007

The Pastoral Council, on behalf of the whole community, would like to express their gratitude to God and to the Institute of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart for one hundred years of presence of the sisters among us: a precious and unique gift, which has left a mark of great spiritual and human depth and melded in the history of the village and its territory. Let us not think back over historical facts and events here, as others have already done it in a text that we advise everyone to read. We would rather like to stress the meaning of a celebration that is attended by so many priests, religious and faithful, gathered together to recognize in the presence of the Sisters the mark of attention that God has bestowed on our community.

The Old Testament obliges the people of Israel to remember, to call their past to mind, not to let anything of what God has done in their favour sink into oblivion. Israel shall be a wise people on condition that they do “remember”, “keep in their heart” all the events of salvation that God has operated for them...

Each one of us is an instrument in the hands of God for the good of our brothers and therefore, all the good that has come from so many Franciscan Sisters who alternated during the long years of their presence among us is a work of God, it is a sign that God acts among us day after day, through the words, the silence, the smiles, the gestures, the humble and hidden work of 127 Sisters, who have walked alongside every child, youth, adult and every needy in his body and soul, as caring sisters always ready to help. That is why the first feeling that springs from our heart during this celebration is a feeling of praise, of immense gratitude to God, who made himself a gift, a presence. This celebration helps us recognize that everything is a gift and everything is grace. In the Bible, memory always has something to do with life: it studies the past to understand the present. God, who acted in the history of Israel, keeps acting in the present: so, going back with one's mind to past events makes it possible to know the Lord who acts in present history: each one of us could tell an experience, an anecdote or an encounter that marked his own life, his own existential path and that has enriched his own way to see life. Our Sisters show us a way, the way of following the Lord humbly and ready to assist the Christian community in its needs. To contemplate the graces that we have obtained along this path encourages us to pray the Lord so that an increasing number of religious vocations may flourish and there may be Christians who courageously testify to their faith.

We hope that today's memorial is not only a celebration for us, but turns, thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit, into a source of life and fruitfulness of deeds. For this reason we implore the presence of the Holy Spirit, so that the past of the Vedelago Franciscan community becomes a guarantee of life for their and our present as well as for their and our future. It is with all our heart that we say: **thank you, thank you, thank you.**



Gruppo variopinto di bimbi con le suore (2007)

The Parish Community

FROM OUR MISSIONARY WORLD



Pace e Bene

Province "S. Louis IX"

FRAGMENTS OF APOSTOLIC MISSIONARY LIFE IN LITUANIA

THE FRANCISCAN YOUTH MOVEMENT CELEBRATES ST. FRANCIS.

"Francis: the path to freedom" is the theme of the show that involved the youth from the Eucharistic movement. On January 23, the anniversary of Fr Gregory's death, we outlined this meeting with St. Francis together with the animators. The youth were quite enthusiast, they talked about it at school, they gathered to study how



to better make the show, which, maybe just because of its simplicity and the deepness of its message, involved them and carried them away. It seemed that the sisters' community had no respite, since the youth, when they were not busy at school or studying, came there to see one another, offer their help, prepare invitations, etc...





And finally the wonderful and much expected day arrived: March 23, the eve of the Parish Patronal Feast dedicated to the Annunciation. Everybody was full of joy and emotion. The hall was filled with friends and parents, who came to rejoice together and praise the Lord not only for having given them Francis, but also all those boys and girls, who found in Francis the joy and simplicity of staying together.

MISSIONARIES IN THE TOWN OF KLAIPEDA

Klaipeda: Lithuania's third largest city, a port on the Baltic sea, about 300,000 inhabitants. In the Soviet period there was only one small Catholic church, where the most courageous Catholics, or those who had nothing more to lose, went to attend celebrations or be christened. When the borders opened, a second church, which had been turned into a theatre during the 40 years of communism, was restored and two other big churches have been built in an attempt to proclaim the Gospel in an easier and more organized way. Klaipeda faces all the problems of a port city, and has also been spreading out after the country joined the European Union. And it is right here,



where the needs are so numerous, that the Bishop of the Telsiai Diocese asked for our presence, since in this open and vast working field there is no religious community. On the third Friday in Lent we were called by one of those parishes to pray, guide the Way of the Cross and bear witness to our missionary and Franciscan life.

CONCLUSION OF THE APOSTOLIC ACTIVITIES

Friendship with God, ourselves and the others – this is the particular aspect that we have taken care of together with the Eucharistic Movement youth. The end-of-year outing, which is now a tradition, brought us to the Hill of the Crosses. This pilgrimage was an important moment for testing the path that we had walked together during this year. It is with great joy and enthusiasm that we have seen and thanked the Lord for so many things we have rediscovered in the itinerary along which He guided us. The youth stressed various aspects where they felt the presence of



the Lord in their path towards true friendship: reconciliation, goodness, trust in the others, in God and in themselves, the discovery of their own personality. They also stressed the elements in which they want to grow further: faithfulness, prayer, generosity... It was a bright sunny day, full of humour and the grace of God. The youth thanked the Franciscan Friars of the Hill of the Crosses Community, who welcomed us with much benevolence and love.

On the trip back, the older youth were invited to take part to a camping-retreat; the suggestion was welcomed by all with joy and enthusiasm, and it was possible to do it at the beginning of June. During the short 6.km march to our destination, we reflected on the Gospel passage about the Emmaus disciples, and we shared and reflected on how it is possible to recognize God's footsteps in our life. The Lord blessed us also on this occasion, by giving us a wonderful sunny day. Once we pitched the tents and lit the (friendship) fire, which remained alight nonstop until we departed, we gave room to reflection and prayers guided by Sr Beniamina and Brother Tomas Zymantas, OFM. There were unforgettable moments of sharing, game and prayer, during which the youth vied in generosity and creativity. I really believe that such moments remained deeply impressed in their hearts. Those strong and wonderful experiences marked the end of their school year, and they are waiting joyfully to meet again next year.





Province "Saint Anthony"

PERPETUAL VOWS

SR PETRONA OF THE CHILD JESUS

SR CLAUDIA OF THE EUCHARIST,

SR GLORIA ARANGUIZ OF THE CHILD JESUS

SR GLADYS OF THE INCARNATION

2th september 2007 - SANTIAGO - CHILE

In the San Damiano Chapel of the Provincial House, we celebrated with joy the perpetual vows of our sisters Sr Patrona, Sr Claudia, Sr Gloria and Sr Gladys, who uttered wholeheartedly their YES to following Jesus poor and crucified with the generous commitment of their lives.

The solemn Eucharist was presided by the Diocesan Vicar of Zona Sur, Fr Cristián Precht Bañados, together with other priests, Fr Juan Rovegno and Francisco Núñez, Chaplain of the Arriarán Barros School, in the presence of our Provincial Superior Sr Inés Pavan Turcato, the sisters and friends.

The ceremony was characterized by a welcome, family atmosphere, which is typical our Diocesan Vicar who, during



the homily, with his spontaneity and simplicity, invited our sisters to recount their call, so that we could appreciate the creativity of God who never ceases to call.

The readings showed us a God who allows his creature to make an alliance sustained by the fidelity of his merciful love.

Father Cristián Precht urged the youth who were present to listen to the voice of God who calls and to give a generous answer, ready to do his will.

It is in this way, with songs, offers and much joy in our heart that we celebrated our sisters' vows by giving thanks to God for his call.



Province "Holy Family"

TEACHERS MEETING

On 7 June 2007, in Pamarru, the school professional orientation day was held for the 26 participants who belonged to different communities. The speaker was Fr Selva Raju SJ; the theme was *"the role of the religious in the educational mission"*. Fr Seeva stressed the importance of the transmission of values in a consumerist and frenzied society, where we must introduce a creative dynamism. We are called to live a prophetic role and, if we live our values as priorities, we will also be able to transmit them, because what we "are" is more valuable than what we "teach".



GOD LOVES THOSE WHO GIVE WITH JOY

Sr Giovanna Uppenmakkal was available to serve the sick elderly sisters in the infirmary of "St. Francis" Province – Peekskill – U.S.A.

While we thank her for her generosity and love for her sisters, we offer her our best wishes and prayers.



MEETING WITH THE SISTERS WARDENS OF THE ORPHANAGES

Sr Maddalena Moro, our Provincial Superior, gathered all the sisters wardens of the Hostels on 14 June 2007, so that they take up their mission as welcoming persons, as elder sisters to our guests. Following the example of Abraham, said Sr Maddalena, we too are called to welcome children with great love so that they are able to get to know God and love him through us. During this meeting, the sisters had also the opportunity to share their views, experiences, joys and difficulties.

MEETING OF THE JUNIORS

In April, our young Juniors attended a three-day refresher course, guided by Fr Francis OMI.

The theme was “*God’s personal love for me*”. The speaker urged the audience to always try to do “something beautiful for God”.

PROVINCIAL SECRETARY

Sr Annie Thomas was designated as Provincial Secretary. We wish her all the best in performing the new task that was entrusted to her.

WELCOME BACK!

To Sr Mariangela Madappallil, Sr Ancy Myladoor, Sr Agnes Kadamthottu and Sr Laisamma Sebastian, we say: “*Welcome back!*”. We hope that you may benefit from the experience you had in Italy for a fruitful apostolate here, in your home country.



SR MADDALENA’S NAME DAY

The name day of Sr Maddalena, our Provincial Superior, was a beautiful one. The sisters from the various communities came to the Provincial House; some of them had even travelled by night, but they were all happy to take part in the common joy and express their gratefulness to the one who gives us an example of unconditional donation. The most important moment was the meeting in the chapel for Liturgy, breaking together the

bread of fraternal sharing, joyful to stay together and singing the songs that cheered up our day.

Sr Maddalena, it is with all our heart that we say “THANK YOU!”

GOODBYE TO SR TERESINA

Sr Teresina Mookenthottathil had been transferred from “Mary Immaculate” Roman Province to India because, being very sick, she had expressed the desire to spend her last few days in India. She fought with great energy against illness but, in the end, she put herself completely in the hands of the good Lord. All the community and her dearest ones gathered around her as she went to heaven, where she will meet the One whom she always loved and served generously.

Good bye, Sr Teresina! We hope to meet again in heaven...

“God with simplicità of heart I offer
with joy all the my being to
you”



SR AFRA PICCOLI
of Infant Mary
Geltrude Piccoli
Born a Paese (TV),
02.12.1902
Died a Gemona,
09.09.2007

“So teach us, O Lord, to count
our days, that we may gain
wisdom of heart [...] May the
favor of the Lord our God rest

upon us; establish the work of
our hands for us— yes, estab-
lish the work of our hands.”
(Psalm 90).

At the enviable age of almost
105, Sr Afra Piccoli greeted us
with a silent but rich “see you
in heaven”.

Geltrude (our Sr Afra), the first
of twelve children, was born
in a deeply Christian family.
Both parents were very devout
and practising, members of the
Third Order of St. Francis, and
they edified each other in the
practice of Franciscan virtues:
humility, patience, tolerance,
industriousness and seren-
ity. They were not materially
rich, but they were spiritually.
The Rosary was their strength,
their weapon to overcome se-
rious difficulties. The young
Geltrude grew on those solid
foundations, which contributed
to make vocation mature in her,

which she cultivated by plac-
ing her energies at the dispos-
al of her family and the parish at
every request.

The arrival of nuns in Paese
and her participation to the var-
ious activities gave substance
to Geltrude’s will to consecrate
herself totally to the Lord and
so, after a period spent in Vede-
lago, the young woman arrived
in Gemona, where she made
her religious Profession on 14
December 1926 together with 4
other youth. Now Sr Afra was
filled with an indescribable hap-
piness. The sequel, however,
requires us to leave everything
for the “whole Good, supreme
Good, total Good” as recalls
today’s Gospel which says: “If
any one comes to me without
hating his father and mother,
wife and children, brothers
and sisters, and even his own
life, he cannot be my disciple.

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26-27) and so Sr Afra, well knowing that the cross is the expression of self-donation and that obedience does miracles, went serenely and readily where the Lord called her. Various are the communities where Sr Afra gave her best energies: Pontebba, Idria, Rhodes, where she stayed for 18 years with very destitute children and orphans, Treviso, Borgo Cavour, Artegna, San Giuseppe, Camino al Tagliamento and Vedelago until 1988, when she came definitively back to the Mother House to continue her apostolic activity, especially through prayer and the offering of her suffering, but also by remaining at the disposal of her “former children” in Rhodes, who kept writing and phoning and even visiting her... It is with this open heart that Sr Afra went towards the Bridegroom, helped by the Heavenly Mother who, in the last few moments of her life, she so invoked with her eyes turned upwards: “Beautiful Lady, take me with you in Paradise... Mary, conceived without sin, pray for me... Angels and Saints in heaven, take me to Jesus...” And Mary, the Mother of Jesus, handed today, September 9, our dearest sister Sr Afra to her divine Son so that she can celebrate with Him the eternal Easter and unite to her parents, her sisters nuns, Sr Graziana fmsj and Sr Maria Salesian and all the other relatives who had preceded her in heaven.

Sr Afra, now that you have reached true peace, obtain for your loved ones, for us sisters and for the entire world, the

grace to live in the Love that Jesus gave us with his own life!



SR M. BERNARDETTA COMPARRATO

of the virgin of Lourdes
Geltrude Piccoli
Born in Tursi (MT),
08.04.1931
Died in Rome,
13.09.2007

Maria was born in Tursi, in the province of Matera (southern region of Basilicata). Antonio and Rosa's family was gladdened by six children, who were raised with the principles of a robust Christian faith, which had consolidated in the tradition handed down by many generations.

Mary was baptized on the same day she was born in Saint Michael Parish and, step by step, she modelled her life on the examples that she could look around her with careful eyes. She learnt from her family the values of honesty, industriousness and sacrifice.

When she was a teenager, she took actively part in the life of her Parish and found the natural environment to grow

in the love of the Lord in the youth groups of Catholic Action. It was there that her vocation matured and, when she was 19, she asked to become a postulant to embrace religious life. In the Holy Year 1950, she left Tursi for Rome with a lot of emotion and, as we can imagine, with quite a lot of anxiety, to be welcomed as a postulant in the formation house in Saffi Avenue, in the quarter of Trastevere. After the initial formation years, with the enthusiasm of a newly professed, she went to Ostia to help in the nursery school. Her liveliness, courage and industriousness always marked her out, as well as her need for an expansive and welcoming fraternity. After Ostia (province of Rome) she went to Tollo (province of Chieti) where, besides helping in the nursery school, she also collaborated with dedication with the Parish catechesis. There followed her long stay -39 years- in Duronia, her adopted country.

Of a playful and jovial nature, she confidently got along both with children and elders, entertaining others and having fun herself during games and animations, being very likeable with her witty remarks. However, this did not prevent her to be determined, so much so that Sr. Filomena, the superior who has always been close to her, used to repeat kind-heartedly an old Italian saying: “When the Duce orders, the king obeys”. Sr. Bernardetta guided the Duronia community as a superior from 1973 to 1976. Her serv-

ice in Villa Serena with the elderly women was precious and carried out with simplicity, affection and kindness. Her hobby was embroidery: she cultivated it especially to ornate the Parish church, which she loved and cared for with Franciscan devotion. In its first years, the community in Duronia met with several difficulties, even financial; those were courageous years lived with strength and spirit of sacrifice; they marked the life of those who faced them and shall always be kept in their heart.

In 2003, struck by a serious illness, sr. Bernardetta had to leave Duronia for ever and, since she needed to be cured, she moved into the Saffi Avenue infirmary, in the house that had seen her religious life bud. Her health, which was quite precarious, obliged her to remain almost inactive: the only thing that was left for her was embroidery and then... not even this. Days of suffering and crises alternated with more peaceful days, in uncertain ups and downs whose outcome could not be predicted. On 13 September 2007, due to a sudden worsening of her conditions, which she perceived as final, she passed away, after asking those who came for help to say a prayer together



SR LORENZINA MILANESE
of St Joseph
Giuseppina Milanese
Born in Paese (TV),
05.04.1914
Died in Gemona,
15.10.2007

*Every person's life
is a gift and a mystery:*

A GIFT, in that it is the expression of the love of God, who keeps revealing Himself, making his dwelling with every creature;

A MYSTERY, in that it is a tabernacle which contains the "almighty, living and true God". Sr Lorenzina Milanese's life opened out in the light of this couple of definitions.

Giuseppina (this was her baptismal name) was born in Paese on 5 April 1915, the firstborn of a numerous family, and she was raised after the example of her parents, daddy Giulio and mom Angela, cultivating the most beautiful human and Christian virtues, which nurtured in her the desire and will to consecrate herself totally to the Lord in religious life, so much so that she soon submitted a request to be allowed to enter the Franciscan family.

For a better discernment, the youth was sent to the Aspirancy in Vedelago, but God's grace worked intensely in her and transformed spiritually this creature of His, so that it betrayed in her His Divine Beauty.

And our dear Giuseppina, who was always more deeply in love with Jesus, her only Good, was finally able to don the religious habit, taking the name of Sr Lorenzina of Saint Joseph, and enter the Mother House of Gemona.

After her religious Profession, she was sent by obedience to several communities of the Province, where she carried out different services: assistant in the nursery school, knitter, wardrobe-keeper and community animator, a role that was entrusted to her many times. She remained in the Sedegliano Parish for 30 years, then she went to Ospedaletto d'Istrana, Ampezzo, Treviso, Postioma, Artegna, etc, and everywhere she went she sew peace, serenity and love, and all this as a fruit of her "remaining in God", like the Gospel tells us: "Remain in my love. Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him." (John 14:23)

Her deep communion with the Lord brought Sr Lorenzina to live every period, the time of efficiency as well as the time of illness, as a gift and a mystery, in an attitude of constant silent prayer and open acceptance of everybody, adopting the words of Saint Therese of Avila, Doctor of the Church, whom we celebrate today, on



To the other side

the day of her birth to heaven: "Let nothing upset you, let nothing startle you, whoever has God lacks nothing. Let nothing upset you, let nothing startle you, God alone is enough".

Sr. Lorenzina, you now enjoy the beatific vision in heaven, please obtain graces and blessings for your dearest ones and for the whole Congregation!



SR DANIEL ORSO
of saint Francisco
Giovanna Maria Orso
Born in Bagnaria Arsa (UD),
25.03.1933
Died in Gemona,
02.10.2007

This morning, November 2, in the yearly memory of the deceased, the Word of the Lord rang in our heart this way: "I know that my Redeemer is alive... I shall see him myself, and my eyes shall contemplate him closely!"

The faith in this Word has accompanied and sustained Sr Daniel during her whole life! And today, it is with this renewed faith that our sister left this world and went to the Lord: now her eyes are admiring the glory of God in the Kingdom of the living.

Some minutes before "sister death" came, Sr Daniel had exclaimed: "My mission is accomplished!" A simple but intense mission, lived in the sign of charity: that was Sr Daniel's life.

She was born in Bagnaria Arsa on 22 March 1933 from daddy Antonio and mom Emilia. She was baptized only four days later and named Giovanna Maria.

She was raised in the simplicity and industriousness of the families at that time, who were Christians to the core, and it was in such a serene and religious environment that her call to consecrated life matured, which she was able to seal with the religious profession that took place on 2 February 1955 in Gemona.

From that moment on, Giovanna Maria was called Sr Daniel of St. Francis. From the Seraphic Father she inherited the spirit of simplicity and humbleness as well as a sincere and concrete love for the fraternity. Everywhere she stayed she left the sign of the true fraternal love that becomes service, always ready to offer herself for the well-being of her sisters.

Indeed, she constantly practised charity, benevolence and the spirit of sacrifice in various communities, in Rome, in France and finally here, in the Mother House; she was always ready to witness, not with words but with actual deeds, the love that she carried into her heart and that she drew, in prayer, from the Heart of Jesus Crucified.

That is why she felt ready to overcome the last trial of her life: "When the Son of Man

comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne... Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world... for whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'" (Matthew 25)

Her sudden death took us aback, but not Sr Daniel, who was waiting for it like a sweet reunion with all the sisters who had already passed away, with all her dear deceased and above all with her sister Maria, who died on this same day one year ago.

Just the day before yesterday, she confided: "My sister Maria will soon come to take me!" And so it happened right today, November 2, on the first anniversary of her death. Sr Daniel, dear sister, you now live in God, but keep staying in our minds and in that of your relatives and obtain holy vocations for our religious family, so that your mission of love can continue in time and still yield abundant fruits of charity.





SR ANTIDA MURELLO
of Christ the King
Anna Murello
Born in Codroipo (UD),
23.12.1909
Died in Gemona,
03.10.2007

Today, November 3, Liturgy has offered us St. Martin de Pones as an example and model for our journey of faith. In memory of “this Saint of charity, who practiced with great care and diligence the commandment of love given by the Divine Master and treated his brothers with the living charity that arose from an unshakeable faith and profound humility...” we instinctively unite our prayer for our sister Sr Antida, who has gone to heaven: she too has entered the communion of Saints. Her life, filled with typical Franciscan virtues, brought her to conform herself totally to Christ and his Gospel, as she wrote herself: “Today Jesus tells me: “The Diadem on your forehead, the King of your heart, the treasure in your hands, the guide of your journey, the peace of your soul, the reward of your

life..., that is Me!”.

In the light of this Divine Wisdom, Anna Morello, together with her sister Ausilia (Sr Piafernanda), grew in her natural family cultivating Christian virtues and maturing her vocation of total consecration to the Lord. In 1932, she expressed her desire to her parents and went to Vedelago for a period of discernment and formation and in 1934 she had the joy of wearing the Franciscan habit in Gemona.

In 1935, after her religious Profession, she was sent by obedience to the Solagna community, in the vocational school, and after that to other communities of Carnia and Veneto.

The religious consecration of her sister Sr. Piafernanda revived Sr Antida’s enthusiasm so strongly that she wanted to offer her life, especially for priests, and she prayed this way: “O Lord, I offer myself to You to be the true Host of your priests, I want to be sacrificed to help your ministers, in the hope that their priesthood be holy and fruitful” and she had as a point of reference 3 mirrors in which she continuously looked at herself and that is:

1. Jesus Eucharist., Love of Donation
2. Jesus Crucified: Love of redemption and sacrifice for us all
3. the Blessed Virgin, our Mother: Love of obedience, poverty and virginity that must cover a consecrated soul.

Sr. Antida was subsequently sent to the Roman Province, where she continued her serv-

ice of wardrobe-keeper; she was the local Superior many times, giving her best energies for priests and missionaries, offering her every action... “While I go upstairs, I must think about the Angels to invite them; while I go downstairs, I must think that I am going towards the souls in Purgatory to pray for them; while I am kneeling down, I must think that I am close to Jesus, intimately; while I am standing, that I am with the Missionaries to evangelize; while I am sitting, that I am next to Our Lady to learn everything!”

In 1994 Sr Antida returned to the Venetian Province, in the Mother House... but her mission was not yet fully accomplished: she had to complete her crown with the gems of prayer, suffering, the offering of her life for the greater glory of God... an offering that the Lord welcomed by calling her to the eternal nuptials: “My friend, come higher!”.

Sr Antida, you have reached eternal beatitude, obtain that our hearts stay open to the voice of the Lord, alert while they wait for Him and his saving Presence and... pray for all!





SR BELLARMINA PIGOZZO
of Jesus Crucified
Angela Maria Orso
Born in Briana the Noale
(VE),
09.09.1920
Died in Gemona,
09.12.2007

Today, the second Sunday of Advent, the Word of God urged us to prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight his paths, with John the Baptist's words: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!". And, truly, the Kingdom of God, who was already present among us in his Son Jesus, revealed itself in this same day by calling our sister Bellarmina. Accompanied and supported by Mary, the humble and faithful handmaid of the Lord, of whom she was a strong devotee, she generously answered "here I am".

Angela Maria was born from a numerous family, from deeply devout Christian parents, who did their best to make the desire of what is beautiful, good and sacred grow into their children's hearts. Little Angela grew in such a fertile soil. She cultivated human and Christian virtues together with her sisters, and it is also together that they later

matured their religious vocations.

Following the example of her sister Benizia, who had already joined the FMSH in 1937, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the young Angela took the big decision to consecrate herself totally to the Lord in 1940. She asked to be welcomed in the Mother House in Gemona and was then followed in her choice of religious life by another sister, Silvina, who entered the Congregation of Dorothean Sisters in Vicenza, and by a niece, Franca, a Pauline sister.

After her religious profession, Sr Bellarmina was sent by obedience to several nursery schools: Ampezzo, Posioma, Badoere, Ospedaletto d'Istrana, Santa Maria Maggiore, where she stayed for 16 years, Ospedaletto di Gemona and finally the Mother House. Everywhere she displayed the typical Franciscan virtues that she had embodied, especially simplicity, spirit of sacrifice, humility and generosity, which made her available to all requests for help from her sisters... those virtues revived in her the will to live in communion with everybody and made her feel at ease with anyone.

Sr Bellarmina found in the apostle Paul the strength to let her life speak out one love sentence: "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify God... Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, He who be-

came a minister and mercy."

The prayer, her faith and her strong devotion to Our Lady were the pillars that sustained our sister's life, that helped her look favourably on every event and turn every moment of her life into Grace and Blessing and this is why we would all like to turn to her with faithful hope.

Sr Bellarmina, you who now enjoy the peace of the Saints, ask for us true peace, which only finds its source and its destination in the communion with the Lord Jesus.





SR AGNESE DE SANTIS
of the Child Jesus
Attilia de Santis
Born in Stimigliano (RI),
15.06.1920
Died in Rome,
12.12.2007

Attilia was only 15 years old when she resolutely left her family in Stimigliano, province of Rieti, and knocked at the door of the convent in Giulia street. Her admission request already revealed enough maturity and knowledge of the “state of life that is professed here... Jesus has called me and for Him I shall make any sacrifice”. In her prompt answer to her vocation, she followed the example of her aunt Sr Maddalena, a Franciscan of the Child Jesus. So great was her desire that she had taken care to let the sisters know about her coming in advance! Just a few notes to stress her roots of solid and robust faith in which she had been raised by her parents, Antonio and Caterina, in the sobriety of a simple, laborious life, used to sacrifice. At 17 she donned the Franciscan habit with the name of

Sr Agnese of the Child Jesus and at 18 she made her first profession of the Holy Vows. Soon after we find her in Saffi Avenue, where she dedicated herself seriously to her studies to get a teaching diploma. Behind her self-assured demeanour, she revealed a reserved character, almost shy, but tenacious and open to relations, an important quality for the life in fraternity that she embraced.

She finished rapidly her studies and started her teaching mission in the Saffi Avenue School, where she showed her preparedness, her attitude to teaching and her skills of patience and careful dedication. After that first experience, in 1947 she went to Ostia Lido, where she offered all her apostolic efforts, organizational skills and projects, with intelligence and availability, for a good 52 years, at the School in Queen Maria Pia Boulevard. “Sr. Agnese?” - “A sensible woman ” they used to say of her. Tireless, she had made her pupils and their families the goal of her apostolic commitment: to them she dedicated all her time, without pause and without carving out any moments for herself. Her thoughtful nature brought her to ponder carefully the initiatives that were presented to her, without refusing to cooperate in all what could be useful for the improvement of the educational service.

The school had obtained the official recognition many years before, was well attended and had made a good name for itself in Ostia and the vicinity for the quality of its teaching united with its humanity and openness to all social classes. The nuns were highly

esteemed and well liked, especially her, Sr Agnese. With her affable and welcoming touch, she knew how to start and develop friendly relations with the families, who loved her and thought very highly of her, with the “Regina Pacis” Parish, run by the Pallottini Fathers and, above all, with her community. She governed it with fraternal serenity during all her superiorates: from 1963 to 1967, from 1968 to 1974 and from 1980 to 1986. Despite the sacrifices that she made during her poor and simple life, she was able to face even privations without neglecting the apostolic service that she had undertaken with generosity and love.

It cost her a lot to leave this place in which she had grown and put all her energy into offering a consecration that she consciously and generously matured in her 79 years! However, she had to accept the separation owing to her precarious health conditions. Although her heart bled, she went back to the original house, which was now the provincial infirmary, where she kept volunteering for some service until the end. Her sudden departure, on December 13, saddens us, but we know that she is waiting for us, with her welcoming smile, in the house of the Father, where she rests in peace.





SR PIAVITTORIA PIOVESAN
of the Passion
Norma Piovesan
Born in Paese (TV),
26.12.1934
Died in Roma,
26.12.2007

Today, 26 December 2007, Sr Piavittoria went to heaven to celebrate her birthday. Her health conditions, which had been serious for a long time, further deteriorated before Christmas: her loss saddens us, but the Lord, in his provident love, did not want to extend her years of pain.

We accompanied her continuously along her itinerary of suffering, a time of trial that sharpens the spirit, and we recognized her ability to bear, her patience and acceptance of the Lord's will. Truly, Sr Piavittoria had been preparing for the meeting, that she felt was nearing, and she passed away serenely, comforted by the grace of Sacraments that she received when she was fully lucid. She welcomed the invitation to prayer and accompanied it with devotion until she could... then she slowly went to the One to whom she had consecrated her life.

She was born in Paese (province of Treviso) on 26 December 1934, and after four days

was brought to the christening font. Subsequently, following the practice in the parishes of the Region Veneto, Norma, like many other children in her age group, attended daily catechism classes during her primary school years and she received the Sacrament of Confirmation when she was eight.

Maria and Sante raised their six children in the principles of a consistent and serious Christian life and with a steady participation to the life of the parish. In the simple and genuine environment of the Venetian countryside in the years from 1930 to 1950, sacrifice was familiar, like faith and gratitude for the daily bread. When she was 21, following the example of her brother Vittorio, who was already in a Jesuit seminar, Norma expressed her will to consecrate herself to the Lord.

In Paese there was a very favourable vocational climate; the parish vicars and the nuns were committed to testify to and present the beauty of religious life; they also followed spiritually the youth who showed their interest! Norma too was among them and, docile to her spiritual guides, she prepared anxiously to enter postulancy, which happened on 29 November 1952.

After the canonical novitiate year, she took the holy vows on 2 February 1955 and, soon afterwards, was sent to mission far away from her land, to Monte Porzio, in the region Marche. That distance might have seemed incredible to her at the beginning! Another region, another dialect, other customs... But with the passing of time, custom prevailed over distance and Sr Piavittoria certainly felt at home in that part of the con-

gregation which is "Mary Immaculate" Province: indeed, in 1975, when she was staying in the "Asisium" General House, she asked to remain there although she had been given the opportunity to leave!

Her life was spent in the communities of the region Marche, in Rome, in the Boroughs of Latina; in 1957 she stayed also in Umbria, in Marmore; in 1978, she obtained admission to the third year of the teachers' training school, which was necessary to start a nursing course, and soon afterwards she registered as a nurse.

She lived her life at the service of the community. Maybe it cost her, maybe she would have liked something different, but her daily commitment with the sisters and the children in Lido dei Pini (province of Rome), day after day, in the constant effort to accept the Lord's will through obedience, is now her crown in heaven, next to the Lord, whom she undoubtedly loved with her shortcomings, but also with her virtues.



*“THE LOVE GROWS THROUGH THE LOVE. THE LOVE IS “DIVINE”
BECAUSE IT COMES FROM GOD AND IT JOINS GOD TO US AND,
TRANSFORMS TO US IN WE THAT
IT EXCEEDS OUR DIVISIONS AND IT
MAKES US TO BECOME ONE SINGLE THING,
UNTIL THAT, TO THE END, GOD IS ALL IN ALL”
(BENEDICT XVI)*

