

Capuchin Presence at COP21 November 30 - December 10

by Br. Benedict Ayodi

For the first time in history, the whole world has made a public commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and deal with the impacts of climate change. For us Capuchins and Franciscans at large, the Paris agreement is a meaningful step forward on the path to protecting and caring for the poor and most vulnerable from climate change. While it fails to address such important aspects like climate finance for developing countries and human rights issues, we recognize that Paris accord is a turning point in the conversation on solutions to the ecological crisis that Pope Francis called for in his Encyclical. Paris is only the beginning of the journey. Following our charism as Franciscans, we will not rest until the vulnerable are protected, till the poor achieve a better living standard and our common home, our mother earth, is cared for and dignified.

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which is the internationally accepted authority on climate change scientific matters, states that we need to keep the global temperature increase below 1.5 degree Celsius (relative to pre-industrial levels). Based on what is suggested to us by our charism

and by the call to action from Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato si'*, let us unite ourselves to other Catholics, to other religious groups, and to society in order to preserve our common home.

Key elements of the Paris agreement: To peak greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and achieve a balance between sources and sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century; To keep global temperature increase "well below" 2°C (3.6°F) above pre-industrial levels and to "pursue efforts" to limit temperature increases to 1.5°C; To review progress every five years; \$100 billion a year in climate finance for developing countries by 2020, with a commitment to further finance in the future.

A delegation of twenty Franciscans including four Capuchins represented the Franciscan family at the historical climate summit, COP21. Organized by the Roman VI and the inter-Franciscan JPIC commission, the delegation included representatives from the Franciscans International (FI), Franciscan Action Network (FAN), Capuchins, OFMs, Conventuals, OFS, FFC, TOR and Franciscan family of France. Fr. Michael Perry, General

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Minister OFM, also joined the group for few days.

The Franciscan family invites us: Our Franciscan faith is the foundation of our lives and we believe that it is very important to share our spirituality with the world; *Laudato si'* is our guide for how we will approach this work (the Roman VI created a study guide - www.francis35.org); We must pay attention and take action for the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth; Inter and intra community collaboration within the Franciscan Family, with other faith groups, and with other members of civil society; We will work to change our economics model, decrease extractions from the earth, and encourage transformation of lifestyle in our actions. We recognize lifestyle as the ways that we engage in our personal, communal, and public life.



The Diocese of Lolo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

by Br. Ivan Milazzo

in dialogue with Bishop Jean-Bertin Nadonye Ndonge OFM Cap., bishop of the Diocese of Lolo

Seeking to get to know better the new reality that Bishop Jean-Bertin Nadonye Ndonge OFM Cap. where has found himself since being ordained bishop, we took the occasion of his presence in Rome this past October to have a fraternal chat with him.

Regarding the history of his new home, he says that, "In 1913 the first missionary Premonstratensians from the Abbey of Postel (Belgium) arrived at Moenge, today a parish. The diocese of Lolo is found in the northwest of the country, almost at the center of the curve of the river Congo. It is one of the 47 dioceses of the Church of Congo. It belongs to the ecclesiastical province of Mbandaka-Bikoro and is about half way between the civil province of Equateur and that of Orientale."

Lolo, the seat of the diocese, is situated 75 kilometers from Bumba in the province of Equateur, while the other three parishes, such as Moenge, are in the territory of Basoko in the Orientale province. The diocese of Lolo is the result of the division of the former apostolic prefecture of western Uélé that covered the whole current region of the dioceses of Buta, Isiro-Niangara, Bondo, Dungu Doruma, and Lolo. The diocese of Lolo was erected canonically on July 2, 1962 under the guidance of Bishop Joseph Ignace Waterschoot, who had been Apostolic Prefect since September 21, 1949. Bishop Ferdinando Mambemba was the second diocesan bishop. Currently it is Most Reverend Jean-Bertin Nadonye Ndonge, OFM Cap., who is the bishop of the diocese. There are twelve parishes with the possibility of building many others, because the distances between them are enormous.

Regarding the demographic, social, economic, and cultural dimensions,

Bishop Jean-Bertin says that, "since 2000, the cities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have grown in terms of dimensions, because of the massive flow of refugees from all sides. Their presence has made more tragic the misery of the population which was already in a precarious situation. As a reminder, since 1997, the DRC has known the bloodiest war of its history. From 1997-2009, we speak of five million dead from repeated conflicts: the rebellion of Kabila that threw down the autocratic power of Mobutu, the war with neighboring Rwanda, Burundi. The majority of these victims were civilians who died from the precariousness of life: hunger, disease, insecurity, continual displacement. The social life is based on women who are at the economic center of the village, they are in the fields, in the small businesses, in the education of children; many men, on the other hand, are without paid work, unemployed and unable to maintain their homes. Polygamy is very common is the life of the villages.

"The principal source of income is agriculture: rice, corn, peanuts, cassava, soy, and some fields of coffee. The cultural attitudes of the ancestors are still in effect, in particular the fear of evil spirits and belief in witchcraft and the evil eye. Because the buying power is very low (less than a dollar a day), the people eat one meal a day and more easily use traditional medicine to cure disease. And many diseases are caused by bad water quality."

With respect to the south of Congo, where there are schools, hospital structures, and a good communications network, in the northwest of the country, where the diocese of Lolo is located, there is very much a lack of such things. Bishop Jean-Bertin informs us that "the diocese has lost its health centers. Currently there is no health center depending on the diocese. It is necessary to help this population.

"School is a big challenge. All the schools are abandoned and the infrastructure of the state has undergone a strong structural decay. You think of being in a cemetery or at the end of the world."

The welcome of the people of their new bishop was extraordinary, en-



couraged also by the fact that he himself is from Congo, a factor not to be passed over in a land where the question of ethnic belonging is very strong. Also the diocesan clergy gave a very positive and welcoming response to their new bishop. The relationships are also good with the other bishops of the region and also with the local authorities who have high hopes for Bishop Jean-Bertin, above all also because of his long international experience accumulated while living in the Order.

Bishop Jean-Bertin has set as an important objective the ongoing formation of the his clergy, which he feels is urgent, as is attention to the formation of future priests. Currently the diocese has a minor seminary, St. Charles Borromeo in Isamba, with 28 students; there are 12 seminaries in preparatory studies at St. Paul; 16 studying philosophy at Bamanya and 6 in theology at Lisala. From the numbers there is a good hope for the future of the local church.

To the question of how he feels about leaving the Capuchin Order for a different ecclesial commitment, Bishop Jean-Bertin responds that, after the initial surprise, the thing that was most emotional was the great pain of having to abandon the plans already made with the General Council, namely that of deepening the Capuchin-Franciscan charism in Africa.

"I don't want to live alone!" These are the words that Bishop Jean-Bertin used to describe the big change from the fraternal life in the Capuchins to life in the Diocese entrusted to him. To make his wish more concrete, he has begun a common life with the treasurer of the Diocese, the Secretary, and the Rector of the preparatory seminary, sharing prayer, meals, and hours of work!



"He had a dream, to create a children's city...today it's a reality"



by Br. Hugo Mejia Morales, General Councilor

60 Years of the Children's City From Sand to Green Gardens

During this 60th anniversary of the 'Children's City,' we wish to recall its founder, Father Illuminato di Riva Ligure, OFM Cap., known as "Father Illuminato," and also his 20 abandoned street children, who beginning on October 29, 1955 lived on the outskirts of the city of Lima, Peru, in a sandy place that now belongs to the district of San Juan de Miraflores. They had only a basket of potatoes, a basket of onions, a barrel of water, a tent, and the certainty that God would provide for their needs.

In the 1970s, an issue of a popular newspaper in Lima mentioned the work of this Capuchin friar who asked alms on the street, with his long beard and straw hat. The amazed journalist speaks of how the work was advancing: bed-

rooms, chapel, workshops...and a number of children that was constantly growing.

In the course of these 60 years of life the heritage of Father Illuminato has remained in the Children's City of the Immaculate, which has given well-being, instruction, and a plan for life to many generations of children and young people under its care. This mission continues today for the Capuchin friars of the Province of Peru, and the challenge now is that of adapting themselves to the changes of the XXI century without losing what is essential: "to be a center of human, Catholic, and Franciscan formation, a place of opportunity for children from Peru who lack resources."

(www.ciudaddelosninos.com.pe).

From the Office of the Delegate of the General Minister for the OFS

by Br. Francis Bongajum Dor, General Assistant to the OFS

In the last trimester, among many commitments in the service of the Secular Franciscan Order, there were two events of greater importance: the Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation to the OFS of Great Britain and the meeting of the CIOFS Presidency.

From this past September 23 to 27, with Tibor Kauser, General Minister of the OFS, we made the fraternal and pastoral visitation to Great Britain, culminating with the elective Chapter. Meeting the brothers and sisters of the OFS of Great



Britain and the delegates for the Chapter for the first time, I was able to note right away that they know each other well, notwithstanding the great distances that separate them. The same spirit of fraternal love was also seen among the National Spiritual Assistants: Br. Patrick Lonsdale, OFM, Br. Jesmond Pawley, OFM Conv., and Br. John Cavanaugh, OFM Cap. These divide among themselves the spiritual care of the regional fraternities that exist in the national territory, such that each busies himself with a specific area. During the elective Chapter one could also note something else very meaningful; despite the very advanced median age of the members there was among those present a great willingness to service in national fraternity in various offices. The differences in personality among some members of the Council are welcomed in an evangelical spirit and this becomes a strength for the Council and for the national fraternity. We wish the national fraternity of the



OFS in Great Britain a new age of flourishing, by the work of the Holy Spirit and the witness of the brothers and sisters. At the present moment, the OFS of Great Britain commits itself anew to founding YouFra, with a small seed found in the region of Gibraltar. We wish the best for the new Council and its Minister Paula Pearce, with the necessary



support of the Spiritual Assistants. "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

The CIOFS Presidency, under the guidance of the General Minister of the OFS, has the duty of "coordinating, animating, and guiding" the whole of the OFS. By now the 14 members of the CIOFS Presidency (10 secular members and four Assistants) know each other well a year after the elections of the General Chapter of the OFS of 2014 held in Assisi. One notes this right away when we gather for the biannual meeting of work that is generally held in March and April at the Seraphicum of the OFM Conv. in Rome. In the second meeting of 2015, held from November 7 to 14, there was from the beginning a strong fraternal spirit among the members and a great desire to work together with mutual respect, despite the language barriers that come from the international nature of the group. Along with the customary reports of the Councilors and from the members of the various commissions and projects, a central element in the agenda of this recent meeting was the planning for next year: presence at chapters and the fraternal and pastoral visitations, as well as making ourselves present at World Youth Day in Cracow, Poland in July 2016 and at national and continental congresses. Many decisions were made. Among them: the decision to redo the translations of the official documents of the OFS. The General Chapter was made to vote on this revision of base documents because of errors and inconsistencies noted in the official translations of the Rule, General Constitutions, and Ritual of the OFS. In the meantime, there is still noted among the brothers and sisters of the OFS and their assistants a worrying ignorance of these same documents. The formation of the members of the OFS in their proper identity according to their Rule and their Constitutions is a priority for the whole Order.



The Alma Mater Artis Association

by Br. Fernando Ventura

"We can't take hunger out of the world, but we can take a person out of the world of hunger!" The Alma Mater Artis Association began three years ago with this motto, and the principal objective of taking street children, bringing them to an artistic stage, and then launching them into the artistic stage of life. Born in a public school on the outskirts of the city of Porto (Portugal), this association, which became a non-profit organization a year ago, grew, became independent, and has already broadened its presence to a good 6 school groups in the area of Porto, currently touching the lives of about 200 children and young people. Dance, theater, music, creative writing, painting, and circus arts are offered to these young people, who live in disadvantaged communities, as a unique opportunity for growth and the development of fundamental values.

Beyond artistic formation, there is also human formation, above all at the level of solidarity. In this area, the Mam'Africa show, a two-hour production realized entirely within the Association, which has already been seen by 20,000 people, serves as a leitmotiv and for the visibility of the whole work. More than 100 children and young people on stage, for two hours, tell the story of Africa, of their lives, of themselves. With these shows we pass on our message of solidarity and of life; we have a

way to 'preach' in another area, to present an experience of life made of many different lives, many diverse experiences. We have children from families of all political and religious sensibilities.

Some months ago we began to broaden the formative activities to disabled children and young people. This past June we saw for the first time the result of the beginning of this new path to be followed; on the stage for six and a half minutes, the people saw children with Down syndrome and cerebral palsy dance together with the others.

I came to know this first group of these young people when I organized four years ago a production for solidarity for the Milk Bank of São Tomé and Príncipe, which I manage thanks to the public visibility given me by TV. They presented themselves to dance, after which, we stayed together and began to 'dance' together. Still together, we succeeded in feeding about 50 orphans from the orphanage of São Tomé which is managed by the diocesan Caritas. We helped to bring about a thousand glasses of milk to other children in elementary school, as well as a whole series of other goods to dress, feed, and teach them.

All of this is done with great imagination and with great generosity on the part of the poor.

