Pope Francis

by Massimo Rosina ofmcap

Pope Francis is a pastor who immediately entered the heart, into the fondness and the feeling of many, priests and laity. We were all struck by the little gestures he made—calling himself the bishop of Rome, the thought right away of his predecessor, pointing toward, according to the language of Vatican II, the primacy of the holy people of God, which is expressed in the local church. Having prayed together, having asked the blessing of the people gathered to welcome him, his blessing became like a response of faith and prayer that gives the sense of a strong communion between pastor and people. The beginning of the pontificate of Pope Francis has been full of gestures and words that have known how to make their way into the hearts of millions of people. One image was placed above all the others, that of a poor church. Not only that, but a poor church also for the poor. It is an invitation that touches, along with the institution, each of us: the use we make of money, the simplicity and sobriety of our style of life, the generous sharing with the poorest. With his recalling of St. Francis of Assisi, “man of poverty, the man who loves and cares for creation,” he moves us to reflect on our model of development and the well-being of the western countries weighing on the planet in terms of environmental imbalances and conflicts engendered by economic interests. On the other hand, he reminds us with extraordinary effectiveness how much personal example can mean in terms of the power to convey the Good News to the world. And this is the mission to which, in the final analysis, we are called: to communicate Christ, that is, “the true, the good, and the beautiful in person.”

Most Holy Father,
Peace and all good!

With the well-known and simple greeting of the Franciscan tradition I address you, offering the greetings of every brother of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin on the occasion of your election, and assuring you of our prayers from this moment forward.

I invite you as a Capuchin friar, that you keep in your heart the profound and vital reflection that, during the papal visit to his native country in Brazil, Pope Francis was given. He uses the occasion to call for a Church that is poor and for the poor.

It is true that the Church of Rome, with its sees and cities, its parishes and dioceses, its institutions and people, is a vast and beautiful edifice, but its centre is the Eucharistic altar, on which Jesus Christ, in his death and resurrection, has consecrated the Church. For this reason, at the beginning of the papal visit, Pope Francis said: “This Church of Rome is a large and beautiful building, but the Church of Rome is the altar itself, in which the Lord himself is present.”

In your first encounter with the Church of Rome, looking out last night from the balcony of the Vaticano Basilica, you invited us to walk together and to pray for each other as a sign of brotherhood, love, and trust.

Thank you, Holy Father, for this invitation that we accept and make the commitment of our fraternity as a sign of that fraternity that Christ taught us in the washing of the feet of one another.

St. Francis of Assisi, in having us pray the last verse of the Canticle of the Creatures, helps us to pray for the realization of this great fraternity: “Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks and serve Him with great humility.” There here is praise pleasing to the Lord there is thanksgiving for his love manifested in the great humility.”

Holy Father, assuring you of our filial obedience and our daily prayer to the Lord, I ask you to bless the Capuchin friars.

Meeting of the General Definitory...

(continued on p. 3)

Rome - The General Definitory met on Monday, March 11 to Wednesday, March 20. After sharing information about activities carried out since the January meeting, the Definitory concentrated its attention on a wide variety of subjects. The issues of the day are many and complex, and to them had to be added other items beyond the agenda.

These are the most noteworthy decisions:

Circumscriptions:
• The Province of Maranhão-Pará-Amapá will assume responsibility for the Delegation of Cuba, beginning June 1, 2013.
• The date for the unification of the Provinces of Alexandria and of Piedmont was accepted for May 9, 2014.

Appointments for the General Curia and houses dependent on the General Minister:
• Br. Dariusz Mazur, PR Kra- kow and Br. Manuel de Gama Santos, PR Bahia-Seripipe, for fraternal service in the General Curia, beginning April 1, 2013.

Happy Easter!
Take a look at the candles before the Virgin Mary in the courtyard of “Our Lady” (Liebfrauen) by the entry door of the “Francis Gathering.” Advent is always now: the door is open every weekday and even on holidays. And for us friars and our co-workers in the “Gathering,” God always arrives too, often making us marvel at our grateful guests, who in poverty know how to keep their dignity. Every day is like Christmas: in the church of Our Lady those who receive become those who give, benefactors of the “Francis Gathering.” In the center in Frankfurt there is a little “hotel,” in which our poor and homeless brothers are welcome. About 160 come each day.

This year we are particularly joyful: with the seasons of Advent and Christmas of 2012, “Our Lady” begins the jubilee marking the twentieth anniversary of the “Francis Gathering.” Br. Wendelin, who died in 2010, wrote this of the beginning of his work: After a brief period of training in Stuttgart I began my new work on November 24, 1992.

Without the energy of the founder we would not have this place of welcome characterized by trust for poor and homeless people, who come to the church of God, far from the noise of the “camps” of city life. So down to today for Br. Wendelin and for us Capuchins it is a miracle to be able to prepare a table each day for people who are poor and homeless.

**Passing on God’s gifts**

Br. Wendelin considered “Our Lady” as a place of God’s own charity. He had chosen the Capuchin life in order not to have anything for himself, but to live only for God and his children. His daily prayer in church bound him to those who, day after day, came to “Our Lady” to find “peace on earth” in the “tent” right from their own homes. Kind coworkers in housework and decent men and women serving at table are renewed in the light of beautiful experiences of times forgotten. At least for a moment we wish to pick up the broken threads of trust. At the “Francis Gathering” this happens without any pressure. Each one can take his time. And with the faithfulness of the benefactors we wish to offer such a space where trust can grow. In this way the bread given freely and without any obligation leads not a few to try again a new step out of difficulty. For us, the fact that all our guests have to pay 50 cents is part of the freedom: such a small contribution says to our guests that they are indeed our guests and that their dignity is respected.

Blessed are those who share

On June 21, 2013 at “Our Lady” we celebrate the 20th year of the “Francis Gathering.” We are happy that our bishop Franz-Peter has promised to be present that day. In the preceding weeks four important conferences will be held at “Our Lady” to highlight the strength and commitment of Christian love of neighbor. At the same time We Capuchins will prepare a foundation with which we want, together with you, to continue to work of Br. Wendelin at the church of Our Lady after these 20 years of its existence.

The poor and homeless that come to us must always find an open door and a table set, because God takes care of them.

**A place that gives hope**

The “Francis Gathering” is one of many places that give hope. We Capuchins together with about 1700 benefactors reweave the worn out garment of trust of those who come to us. They who find the way to the door of welcome in front of the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, who have known God in poverty and flight, they don’t have to tell us their names. You don’t ask them about their story. Instead: hot coffee or hot chocolate, fresh bread. Often also some jam or sweets that our dedicated supporters bring.
**ROME, Italy -** In the month of March a new brother was added to the fraternity of the General Curia: Br. Francisco Lopes De Sousa Neto, of the Province of Ceará and Piauí. He takes the place of Br. Hermínio Bezerra, of the same Province, in the work of Secretary for the Portuguese language. During these past years he was a student at the International College specializing in Theology of Communication at the Pontifical Lateran University. Br. Hermínio left Rome on March 20 to return to Brazil.

**The Order in Numbers**

**ROME, Italy -** From the statistics office we get some data on the fraternity of Capuchin Friars. As of December 2012 there are 10,286 Capuchin friars (compared to 10,364 in 2011). Some details: 625 postulants, 367 novices, 1,490 temporarily professed, 8,796 perpetually professed. We have one brother Cardinal among 91 brother bishops. 208 Friars have died. The Capuchin Friars, present in 108 countries are distributed in the various geographical areas: 1,357 in Africa, 1,657 in Latin America, 664 in North America, 2,339 in Asia-Oceania, 3,500 in Western Europe, 769 in Eastern Europe. The world-wide fraternity is structured in 81 Provinces, 9 General Viceprovinces, 17 Provincial Viceprovinces, 17 Custodies, 9 Delegations, 24 Houses of Presence, and 13 Conferences of Provincial Ministers. We must listen to how the numbers speak to understand the historical moment of our Family; above all to boldly promote the culture of collaboration and to seek with clarity the paths that will let us deepen our life.

**Arrivals and Departures**

**ROME, Italy -** The report of the General Minister and by the dialogue with the Assembly.

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...News from Central Africa

continue with violent actions. Already in the last three weeks the mission at Gofo has been visited by the rebels on two nights. Here is what Br. Serge Mbremandji, Viceprovincial Minister of Chad-Central African Republic, writes to us:

Peace and good, brothers.
A s you know through the media, the country is in trouble. A new strongman has declared himself, but there is still a long way to go. Unfortunately, misunderstandings are reported from all sides: looting, abductions, witch hunts. There has been a lot of damage to property. The country, already beaten down, now finds itself underground. A s for the friars, especially the fraternity of Gofo, which was the hardest hit, the friars were “visited” several times. During these “visits” there were stolen three cars, two laptops, and the sum of 2 million CFA (about 4,000 USD). The friars were terrified, exhausted, and stressed...Fr. Danisimo, of the Province of E Milia-Romania, who experienced the first “visit” while we were in chapter, came to Bangui for a week before the final assault of March 14. He is now in Italy. Currently there are still four friars in Gofo: V. Aleardo, V. allard, A. tonio Tiani (the two Italians), Roland Beyene (of Central Africa) and V. Aleardo Mbatmegue (of Chad). The priests of Batangafo (ten kilometers from Gofo) have joined them and together they are staying close to the people in their sufferings. The other missions are quiet. The fraternity of Bangui (Simbo) has not yet been “visited.” Other communities of priests and sisters have received “visits” from the people of Seleka. Remaining in place are our friars Christopher, a French, and Marial and we are in continual contact with them. At Bouar, the amount of noise made it clear that Seleka could eventually arrive, but up to now nothing has been seen. However, the information frightened the sisters in the center of Bouar, who came to us Sunday evening in St. Laurent: The Poor Clares, the Polish sisters at the community center. Here it is calm, but one can still see fear in their faces. Our fraternities of Bonang, N dim, N goon-daye are quiet. This, brothers, is the situation.

Prayers for Christians

PAKISTAN – Br. Clarence Hayat, Viceprovincial of the Capuchins in Pakistan, has asked us to pray for the Christians of his country, who have undergone many acts of violence in these past days. The events were followed by protests to demand that the government of Pakistan provide justice and peace for religious minorities.

I invite you as a Capuchin

MEXICO – Taking up the social networks as a tool of evangelization, Br. Nestor Wer, of the Mexican Viceprovince of Capuchin friars, has launched the initiative, “I invite you as a Capuchin,” which seeks to be a Franciscan presence on the digital continent, a means of interaction between religious and laity fostering unity and to be a space to know the life of some Capuchin friars, leading to communion and a way to spread the Capuchin-Franciscan charism as an authentic expression of the Gospel.

Assembly of the Provincial Ministers of the Four Franciscan Families of Italy

LORETO, Italy – From February 25 to March 2 was the XXXVII Assembly of the Provincial Ministers of the Four Franciscan Families of Italy (19 OFM, 13 Convventuals, 21 Capuchins, 2 TOR). The theme of the meeting, on the new evangelization in the Year of Faith, “With Francis...Catholic and Apostolic: a challenge for us today” was treated by two presenters. During the 5 days, the Ministers met with the speakers and deepened the content and themes proposed in an exchange with their own experience. There was also a Marian liturgy at the Holy House, at which Archbishop Giovanni Tonucci presided. The assembly reappointed for another three years the outgoing Secretary and on the last day held the general assembly of the Franciscan Movement of Italy.

Four Franciscan Cardinals at the Conclave

VATICAN CITY – There were three OFM Cardinals present at the recent conclave: Claudio Hummes, Carlos Amigo Valles, and the South African Wilfred Fox Napier. Next to them was another Franciscan, though a Capuchin, Sean Patrick O’Malley, a significant figure in the episcopate of the Unites States.