My hope is that, more than a celebration of sport, this World Cup can be a celebration of solidarity among nations. This, however, presupposes that the football matches should be considered as what they really are: a game and, at the same time, an opportunity for dialogue, understanding and mutual enrichment of the human person. Sport is not only a form of entertainment, but also — and I would say above all — a tool to communicate values which promote the good of the human person and contribute to building a more peaceful and fraternal society. Just think of loyalty, perseverance, friendship, sharing, solidarity. There are, in fact, many values and attitudes which football promotes and which prove to be important not only on the field but in all fields of existence, and specifically in building peace. Sport is a school of peace; it teaches us how to build peace. In this sense, I would like to point out three lessons for practicing sports, three fundamental attitudes for the cause of peace: the need to “train”, fair play and respect for the opponent. First, sports teach us that it is necessary to train in order to win. In this practice of sports, we can see a metaphor for life. In life it is necessary “to train”, to strive to achieve important results. The spirit of sports becomes an image for the necessary sacrifices in order to grow in the virtues that are necessary for the character of a person. For a person to improve, extensive and consistent “training” is necessary, and much more is needed to achieve an encounter and peace between “improved” peoples! It’s necessary “to train” a lot...Football can and should be a school for building a “culture of encounter” which allows for peace and harmony among peoples. And here the second lesson of the practice of sports comes to our aid: we learn what fair play in football has to teach us. When we play on a team we must first think of the good of the group, and not of ourselves. In order to win, we must overcome individualism, selfishness, all forms of racism, of intolerance and of the instrumentalization of the human person. It is not only in football that being fominha [individualistic and egoistic] is an obstacle to positive results for the team. Because, in life, when we are fominhas, ignoring those who surround us, the entire society is damaged. The final lesson for sports which bear the fruits of peace is also in life, is to respect my teammates and also my opponent. No one wins by himself, not on the field or in life! May no one isolate themselves or feel excluded! Be careful! No segregation, no racism! And if it is true that at the end of the tournament only one national team will win the Cup, likewise, it is also true that, by learning the lessons that sports teach us, we will all be winners, strengthening the bonds that tie us together.

(Vatican Radio)
St. Paul, in the First Letter to the Corinthians, wrote: “Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.” (9:24-25) We know how demanding is the life of an athlete at high levels. The demands become ever greater. Frequently the other becomes not only an opponent, but a competitor to defeat. This is not about the simple adversary of another team; my own companion who wants to exclude me to take my place in the race. What could have been a time of celebration becomes a real and proper battle, cruel and excluding: in the field there is only room for eleven. If another arrives, you have to exclude someone. What is important is to win, to defeat, and, if possible, to humiliate the other. For this to be possible there exists a coach who guides and motivates, includes and excludes, and always demands more physically and emotionally. Nevertheless, the best coach in the world will not succeed in anything if he does not have able athletes, ready to give their own blood for the cause. The athlete much match, outdo, overcome, or be released from the scene. How much sacrifice, how much commitment, how much renunciation and dedication! How much time given, how much training, how much exercise, how much effort to be always better, to be the best! And why all this? For a perishable wreath, a transient glory. It is not my intention to make a moral judgment on this, but only to ask myself: what lesson does all this offer me? What teaching can we draw for our life as friars? In a particular way, what does it suggest to me for initial and ongoing formation? We can, indeed, must disagree with many of the things that happen on football fields and apart from them, but we can’t but realize that our life, compared with this whole reality, lacks luster, vibration with a cause that impels us to a life given to the end. I think of the Christians of the first age of the Church, of the countless martyrs of yesterday and today, of the child Tarcisius, the little girl Agnes, the elderly Ignatius. These have left us a message of radicality without concessions! Some environments, called formative, sometimes give me that feeling of a gray sky, without sun, without hope. Often we fear the challenges and content ourselves with many beautiful reflections that do not motivate or go anywhere. To form for our life becomes possible when reflection is transformed into practice, exercise, and continuous training. But constant exercise, not momentary. The values of our life will be interiorized in the measure in which we exercise them in a regular way, daily and over the long term. In this process, the principal agent is the one being formed. Without his particular commitment, not even the best formator (coach) in the world, and nor the Holy Spirit, first formator, will succeed. The formation process for our life, at all its levels, is a grace of the Lord and a human work. Therefore, may the one being formed, the formator, the formative fraternity, in a team, participate with commitment, trust, and perseverance that this process becomes possible. I hope, perhaps naively, that all of this energy of the so-called greatest sports spectacle on earth will contaminate us, will involve us and resonate with our life, with our formation process and our mission. Certainly we will have been a more meaningful presence in the midst of this world, so in need of witnesses and teachers. I conclude: on the team of Jesus Christ, there is no one excluded. Everyone can participate without injury, exclusion, or expelling anyone.
India: First Meeting of New Ministers

BANGALORE, India - At the “Franciscan Institute of Spirituality (FISI), from June 1 to 2, was held the meeting of new ministers (7 Provinces) elected between January and June 2014. It was the first time in the history of the Capuchins in India that there was this type of meeting. The animators of the meeting were Br. Stefan Kožuh, General Vicar, Br. Albert D’Souza, Vice Procurator, and Br. Clayton Fernandes, General Secretary. Also present were the President of CCMSI, Br. Raphie Paliakara and the Secretary of the Conference, Br. A.J. Mathew. There were 36 participants in all.

New Vicar of the Fraternity

ROME, Italy – As usual, the meeting of the General Council coincided with the local Chapter of the fraternity of the General Curia. On this day, June 20, the General Minister, Br. Mauro, announced the appointment of a new Vicar of the fraternity, Br. Joaquim Hangalo, “lay brother” coming from the Custody of Angola and currently responsible from the IT Office of the Curia. We wish our confrere a good path in this new service, and express gratitude to Br. Massimo Rosina, Personal Secretary of the General Minister who carried out this task until now in a fraternal and generous way.
The Questionnaire for PCO VIII has been Sent

ROME, Italy – With a letter of this past June 8, the Solemnity of Pentecost, the General Minister, by means of the Preparatory Commission he established, sent to the Ministers, Custodes, and to all the friars of the Order, the questionnaire for the next Plenary Council of the Order – PCO VIII – on the theme “The Grace of Working.” This tool is intended to listen to every brother on this important event, involving all in the reflection and preparation of the instrumentum laboris to offer an ever-broader view for the delegates to the PCO. Two types of questions are proposed: personal – reserved to the reflection of each individual frari – and for the fraternity, shared in a local chapter or assembly, for which the summary will be given in the on line form (www.ofmcap.org & www.ofmcap.net) available only to the Major Superiors, as indicated in the same letter of the Minister. The responses must arrive for the commission by next October 4.

A Street Dedicated to a Capuchin

CÓRDOBA, Spain – On May 31 in the area of Sotogordo (Puente Genil – Córdoba), a street of the city was dedicated to a Capuchin priest, journalist, and founder of the “Asociación Paz y Bien,” Br. Rafael Pozo. It was a proposal welcomed unanimously by the whole group of the politicians of the city. Together with the mayor, Br. Rafael cut the ribbon in the presence of various civil representatives who admire him and thank him for his social work carried out above for disabled persons. In his words of thanks Br. Rafael recalled above all the need to not lose “the way” of values, the only path that really counts in life.

Apostolic Administrator Appointed

CHAPECÓ, Brazil – The Holy Father has appointed as Apostolic Administrator of the diocese of Chapecó in the south of Brazil our confrere, former General Definitor of the Order, Most. Rev. José Gislon, ordinary of Ereirim.

Assisi Pax Mundi: International Festival of Franciscan Sacred Music

ASSISI, Italy – Assisi is preparing the first “ASSISI: PAX MUNDI” international festival of Franciscan Sacred Music, which will be held from October 16-19, 2014 in the Franciscan places of Assisi. The event is sponsored and organized by the Franciscan Family in collaboration with the choir of the Papal Basilica of St. Francis. It is a non-competitive event in which choral and instrumental groups of any country or nation can participate. The purpose of the festival is to contribute to the promotion of a culture of sacred music, and music that is linked by composition or inspiration to the figure of St. Francis and the Franciscan world in particular. The meeting of various choral and instrumental groups means to show that it is possible, in the spirit of Assisi, to grow and develop a culture of peace and cooperation among different peoples and cultures. To participate and to sign up: www.fraticappucciniassisi.it assisipaxmundi@libero.it

The Face of St. Anthony is Reconstructed

PADOVA, Italy – The face of St. Anthony of Padua was reconstructed and presented publicly in Padua from June 12-22, 2014. It wasn’t a miracle, but the result of technology and of the collaboration between specialists. The Brazilian 3D designer Cicero Moraes reconstructed the face of the saint without knowing his identity. When it was revealed to him that this was not a philosopher or a knight but St. Anthony of Padua he was at first shocked and then deeply moved. “And really, this is what strikes – he comments – the strength and the force of that face... a window to an intense and passionate life for the Kingdom!” And he continues – “I was sent a message that said this was the name of the reconstructed face: ‘St. Anthony of Padua.’ At the moment I did not understand... it felt like an electric shock. For me is was a great honor and also a great fear to look into the eyes of the saint. Also my colleagues when I let them know the identity of that face, very Portuguese, were astonished. They had communicated to me only the essential data: male, 36 years old, Caucasian. At every step I wondered who this man was. When I heard, I was speechless. Although I am not particularly religious, I felt a great responsibility. Millions of people in the world would see the face of their Saint.”