

Saints Pio and Leopold at the Vatican

Surely it was one of the most anticipated moments in this Jubilee of Mercy for the faithful. The relics of St. Pio of Pietrelcina and of St. Leopold Mandić arrived in Rome in order to be presented in St. Peter's Basilica before the altar at the tomb of St. Pe-

ter. On Tuesday, March 9, 1,200 Capuchin Friar Minor gathered, guided by the General Minister of the Order and by his Council, to pray with the Holy Father in the Vatican Basilica in the presence of these two Capuchin saints.



The two Servants of Mercy, as the Holy Father called them, called to Rome in order to give witness to the infinite Charity of God, rose above every expectation and statistical forecast [...] Holy friars! For us Capuchins it is important to know the holiness that has been manifested in the five centuries of the Order, because if there is not a formation for holiness, our life as friars becomes a useless life [...] Friars of the people! There is no name more used or more beautiful to say who they are—not only who they were—because the holy life is in God's time, his eternal present. This is what their pilgrimage

from Padua and San Giovanni Rotonondo says to us: friars of the people who were among the people, without protest or declaration or denunciation, or worse still accusations that things weren't going well. These are friars who declare only the announcement of the Gospel, the good news that is the mercy of God, the forgiveness to be received and given. Friars who let the Kingdom of God and the presence of the holiness of God shine through in the midst of people. This is what they teach us. [...] The Holy Father told us to be like "these two who are here," ready to be in the confessional for hours, to remain for days, years,

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even a whole life in suffering, to be intercessors in prayer for all people. [...] What to do in the concrete? Recover, remember our charism, and let it be transformative in the Spirit, without eliminating those characteristics that are our own and that identify us before the people: a simplicity in encounter, kindness, austerity, obedience to the Church, absence of objections, readiness to be with those who suffer, a heart big enough to go beyond the circumstances that are more or less favorable. [...] Once again God has said to us that he loves us very much, that we might not fail to undertake and join ourselves to his call: "Be holy because I am holy."

*Extracts from the letter of
br. Carlo Calloni,
General Postulator*



On retreat with St. Augustine

*“Longing desire prays always,
though the tongue be silent. If you
are ever longing, you are ever
praying. When sleeps prayer?
When desire grows cold”.*
(St. Augustine, Sermon 80,7)

The first buds have blossomed on the trees that new fruit may come. Right at this time of the year, from February 28 to March 4, 2016, the majority of the fraternity of the General Curia of Friars Minor Capuchin settled down to listen to the Word of God. The spiritual retreat was guided by Father Gabriele Ferlisi, OAD, Prior General of the Order

of Discalced Augustinians. He presented the person of St. Augustine of Hippo, bringing him very close to those who listened. The theme of mercy was highlighted, that the hearers might experience this mystery of God in the Year of Mercy. The retreat was held in the friary at Frascati, near Rome.



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New brothers in the General Curia

In recent months there have been some changes at the General Curia at Via Piemonte 70 in Rome. The following have arrived: br. Paul Martin Torres Zegarra (PR Peru) as new

Guardian of the community, br. Thomas Pullattuthadathil (PR St. Joseph, Kerala) for fraternal service, and br. Paweł Teperski (PR Cracow) as new director of the Communications Office.



At the same time, br. Marek Przewski (former Guardian) and br. Tomasz Gawroński have joined

the Capuchin community in Frascati (Rome).

Easter Greeting - Mauro Jöhri

Swiss TV - interview with Mauro Jöhri

A word to priests - Raniero Cantalamessa





Bharananganam Chapter of Mats for the Capuchin Conference of Major Superiors in India (CCMSI)

br. Clayton Jaison Fernandes General Secretary

For the first time in the history of the Capuchin presence in India the General Council met with all the Major Superiors and their Councillors as well as the superiors regular of the Provincial Delegations at the Chapter of Mats celebrated from the 17-22 January 2016 at Bharananganam, Kerala – India. In all, 83 brothers participated in the meeting that had as its theme STRENGTHEN – RENEW – WITNESS THE CAPUCHIN CHARISM IN INDIA TODAY.

Br. Mark Schenk, Gen. Councillor, presented a statistical panorama of the Capuchin friars in India that provided important leads to organize the life and activity of the Capuchin Circumscriptions. Following this the General Minister in his opening address stated that the purpose of the meeting was “to dialogue with you and to have a peaceful exchange on various points regarding our life as Capuchin Friars Minor”. He further added that “the Order of Capuchin Friars Minor looks to the Indian Brothers with trust and hope” and that “it is very important to be clear and to speak to each other in an open way, having always before us the desire to improve and strengthen the bonds of fraternity that exist in our Order. It is these bonds that allow us to be present on every continent as a sign of diversity and of unity.”

The dialogue, among many topics, focused on the following themes that are important for the Indian Capuchin circumscriptions: formation, economy, fraternal collaboration, and mission.

Br. Sebastian Chundakattil, (PR St. Joseph, Kerala) spoke on the ‘Formation of the Capuchins in India’ highlighting the reality, difficulties and challenges encountered in Initial and Ongoing formation. Br. John Arumai Nathan, (PR South Tamil Nadu) spoke on ‘Economy – a perspective from the concrete reality of India’, stressing especially ‘Transparency, Accountability and Self-Sufficiency’. Br. Alwyn Dias, (PR Karnataka) presented the theme of ‘Fraternal Collaboration today: A wake-up call to the Capuchins’. He stressed the need to bring about a change which is transformative with focused action, which should be a “Second Spring” for the Order as well as for the Indian Provinces. Br. Raphie Paliakkara, (PR St. Thomas, Kerala) spoke regarding the ‘Situation and exigency of Mission and missionary activity’. Every session was followed by a lively discussion and exchange of views with the aim of arriving at concrete proposals.

While at the beginning of the Chapter every Circumscription presented the challenges, strengths

and weaknesses encountered in the animation of the life of the friars in the circumscription, on the final day they presented “Five Priorities” for their life and activity. The General Minister and his Council in turn also presented their “Five Priorities” for the Capuchin presence in India.

The Chapter of Mats also provided a unique opportunity for the provincial and custodial councillors in India to meet their counterparts from other circumscriptions, an opportunity that they never had before. The joy that radiated on meeting one another was evident in the fraternal and lively exchange among brothers. A special word of thanks to all the brothers of St. Joseph Province, Kerala along with the provincial minister and the councillors who took great care to prepare and organize this meeting. As the General Minister remarked “the ability to be self-critical” is the need of the hour. This facilitates growth and progress. Towards the end, he urged that brothers publish and make known to all the brothers in their respective circumscriptions the “Five Priorities” that they presented at the meeting. He concluded by saying that his heart is full of gratitude and that he felt that the Holy Spirit was present in our midst during the Chapter of Mats.

General Curia
Rome, Italy

Meeting of the Institutes
of Consecrated Life asso-
ciated with the Capuchin
Order

br. Leonardo Gonzáles



Joining with the whole Church and the path of this year dedicated to Consecrated Life, we as a Capuchin family have also given thanks to God for our shared history, helping each other in fraternal relationship to live the present with passion and with the strength of our charism, in order to embrace hope for the future.

On January 31 the superiors or their delegates from six congregations in mutual communion met at our General Curia: The Capuchin Tertiaries of the Holy Family, the Capuchin Tertiaries of Our Lady of Sorrows, the Capuchin Sisters of Mother Rubatto, the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Incarnate Word, and the Capuchin Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

The aggregation of institutes of consecrated life to the Capuchin Order has a long tradition in our history. At a concrete level, it implies a mutual recognition of a spiritual relationship as family among our congregations.

At the end of this Year of Consecrated Life, we want to strengthen the bond that unites our Capuchin Order with many religious institutes, religious and consecrated lay people, cultivating a sense of family. We also seek to facilitate the knowledge of the situations and plans of our institutes, to meet and to possibly share our formation and missionary initiatives, as well as what we do in the area of justice, peace, and the care of creation.

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Kpassa - Ghana
Promoter
of Solidarity
br. Aklilu Petros

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At Kpassa, a small town that is the capital of the Nkwanta North district in the Volta Region, there has been a mission of the Friars Minor Capuchin since 2008. They work in St. Michael's parish, 135 km from the city of Jasikan. The friars, apart from evangelization, work for the integral development of the population, women in particular, helping with education and the realization of structures and basic services.

Regarding the education of children, the low motivation of parents to send their children to school instead of to work in the fields is also motivated by the fact that the public schools in the nearby villages are few and insufficient for the need; in some villages every-



Construction of four classrooms in an elementary school

thing is lacking. There are private schools, but without adequate structures; the students sit in huts or under the trees; because of the high cost of wages the teachers are few and the classes overcrowded. At Kpassa there is no school and the children attend lessons in the parish church; under the one hexagonal roof six classes work one next to the other. It's a difficult coexistence for the teachers and the two hundred children who frequent the lessons.

The Office of International Economic Solidarity came know of this situation from the General Minister, br. Mauro Jöhri, follow-

ing his return from a pastoral visit to the House of Presence in Ghana. We went to work with various collaborators: OPAM (Opera di Promozione dell'Alfabetizzazione del Mondo – Work for the Promotion of Literacy in the World) and the Foreign Missions of the Capuchin Provinces of the Marches. With a real school it will be easier to motivate parents and many more children will be able to have a quality education. I am sure that together we can give still more to these our brothers and sisters, that the whole world can be a place of evangelization and human promotion.



Making real the gospel of Jesus Christ

br. Benedict Ayodi

Capuchin friars in Lebanon share their friary with Refugees from Syria and Iraq

The friars have moved from the friary in order to make space for the families of refugees. We were able to speak with Mr. Suhaija. He and his family were about to depart to Canada; he was among the lucky refugees from Syria to be selected for relocation.

“I escaped from Syria after war broke out, our town was attacked by the rebel forces, they were shooting and destroying everything in their way,” Mr. Suhaija said. He paid a lot of money to smugglers to get to Beirut. “When we arrived in Lebanon we knew no one, so we went to the Capuchin friary at ‘Our lady of the Angels’ parish in Beirut”. He said while looking at br. Abdallah seated across the room. Br. Abdallah is the coordinator of the refugee program. The friars gladly received Suhaija and his family and gave them room and board. At first he thought he would stay for only few days before he relocates to Europe or another place, but it was now over two years that he has been staying with the friars.

Since the beginning of the war in Syria, the Capuchin friars, through the help of the Capuchin General Curia in Rome, have begun a 3-point plan to help the refugees: a) a friary to welcome and offer basic needs, b) a school for education and integration, c) legal help including relocation to third countries.

Over 50 families from Syria and Iraq have benefited from this program so far. The friars give accommodation to the refugees and twice in a month they provide food

vouchers to them. Some of the refugee children study in the Capuchin schools in Beirut where they get free education. Several refugee families have been relocated to Canada, Netherlands and Germany through the help of the friars.

Another day we visited the apartments where friars have rented apartments for refugees. Over thirteen families live together in this particular apartment in downtown Beirut. “I am from Nineveh,” Lubnar said while his brother smiled at me. “One evening we had a big bang near our house. It was a bomb and there were many casualties and children were among the dead. We had to escape to Lebanon because ISIL had just attacked our town.” The town had a population of about seven thousand, mostly Christians. Lubna, speaking in Italian (because she had previously lived in Italy) has a brother who is physically handicapped, the friars take care of his health and support him in running a small business selling religious items in front of the St. Mary of the Angels church.

“I wish to thank God and the Capuchin Friars for their support during my two years in Lebanon” Mr. Suhaija said as he was about to fly off to Canada. “They made the gospel of Jesus real to me and my family. he appealed for prayers for peace in Syria and more help for Refugees. Inshallah! we will meet again God willing.”



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The Capuchin refugee program in Malta

br. Benedict Ayodi



grants and the difficulties they face, the Capuchin friars in Malta have begun a Refugee Support Program. Br. Philip OFM^{Cap}, the mission secretary and head of the program, explained to me the objectives of the program including providing spiritual nourishment to the Catholic refugees, providing health care—especially psychological counseling and basic education like English lessons.

Br. Philip works with Vanja Vajagic, the program manager, originally from Serbia. “I consider myself as an immigrant, so I feel with the refugees and my mission is to support them on their journey,” said Vanja, a drug addiction counselor. “The refugees face a lot of challenges including lack of jobs, race discrimination, cultural-conflict, language barriers and loneliness. This drives them into substance abuse including drugs and alcohol abuse.” In the recent past, several refugees have taken their own lives due to frustrations. Tegle narrated to me how one of the refugees from Eritrea had jumped over a bridge and died due to stress and a lot of suffering. In this situation, the Capuchin refugee program provides trans-cultural counseling and drug addiction prevention services with the aim of integrating the refugees into Maltese society. The friars and Vanja are always at the service of the refugees, they pray with them, visit in their houses, and at times eat with them. “Here we feel like family, appreciated and cared for by the Capuchin friars” Tegle said while we eat

injera during a dinner meal prepared by one of the refugee family.

Following the refugee program by friars in Malta, the Capuchin shrine in Floriana was elevated to a migrant parish dedicated for the pastoral care of migrants. Every Sunday holy Mass is celebrated; the refugees prepare and lead the liturgy. “This is a great honor for us as Capuchins to be recognized as friars at the service of migrants by the diocese”, said br. Martin, the Provincial Minister. “When times were hard and thousands of Maltese and other Europeans were migrating to North America and Australia, the friars followed them to provide the much needed spiritual and pastoral care. Now the refugees are coming to us, we must respond like friars of these times, to love and care for them like our own brothers and sisters, for this are our charism as Capuchin Franciscans.” br. Martin and br. Philip thanked the General Curia for supporting the program both financially and fraternally by the visit of br. Benedict of the JPIC office.



Every year tens of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers cross the Mediterranean Sea in hope of reaching Europe. Many of them end up on the small island nation of Malta. With a population of 420,000 Malta is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. Moreover, the tiny island, with over 20,000 refugees, has one of the highest per capital refugee acceptance rates.

For the last three years, the Capuchin friars in Malta have received and accompanied Eritrean refugees. Many of them have escaped from poverty, a totalitarian regime and lack of opportunities. In 2011 Tegle, one of the Eritrean refugees, decided to leave Eritrea to seek a better and secure life in Europe just like many others in his village had done. He first went to Sudan then took the risky, tough and treacherous journey through the Sahara desert to Libya. “In Libya we got a lot of problems, we were put in prison—to be released we had to bribe the policemen, each had to pay 1600 USD to smugglers to get us to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea, some died at sea,” Tegle said.

In response to the arrival of many mi-