



SFO International Council - *Quarterly edition*
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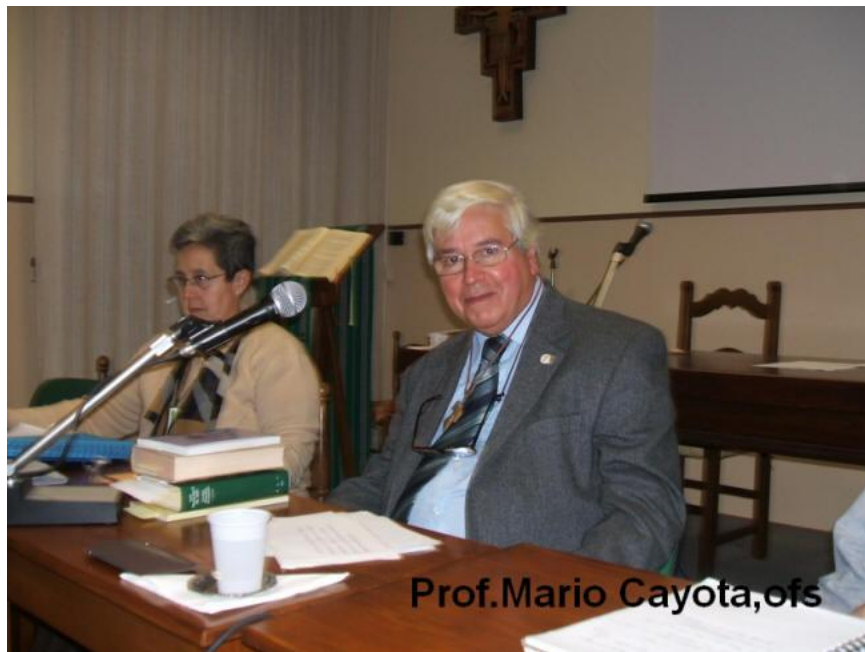
The Franciscan, Creator of Alternatives

Adapted from the intervention of Prof. Mario Cayota, SFO to the CIOFS Presidency

November X, 2007

When Francis speaks of “the world”, he is not referring to the temporal realities in which people live but, rather, to the mentality and organization of these realities that are based on values that are not in conformity with the Gospel. In the same way, living in the world implies a renunciation of a style of life that is contrary to the Gospel and not allowing oneself to be contaminated by this life style.

The world that Francis and Clare exhorted their followers to renounce was the one that exalted power and violence, a world that had established unjust and inequitable social structures including a medieval society divided into classes, and a world that sought individual honor, riches and personal fulfillment. It is this world, one which is contrary to the will of God and the values preached by Jesus, that Franciscans are called to renounce. The first Franciscan evangelizers who arrived to America provide a poignant witness - when they arrived in the West Indies, they renounced the world of the conquerors, characterized by plundering and cruelty, and followed an alternative way that utilized the early Christian community as its main point of reference.



The Franciscan, whether religious or secular, is called to be a creator of alternatives. The Franciscan always searches for ways that are different from the ones proposed by “the world”. Today, Secular Franciscans are called to renounce, among other things, consumerism, hedonism and relativism, all of which his Holiness Benedict XVI speaks about with good reason, as well as the materialistic ideologies that seek to seduce people. As a creator of alternatives, the

Franciscan should not conform to today's world, and should refuse to accept competition and the market place as absolute values, even though these are recognized as needed. The Franciscan should give testimony of a family that is different from the one that the present society desires to sell and impose upon us. The Franciscan's life must reflect the values of the Gospel, so different from the ones that are presented today on the television, in the media, and even in the laws that are being passed in numerous countries. The Franciscan must refuse to conform to the ways of the world.

That said, Franciscans must live in the world and enter fully into the hopes and worries of the world in which they live, as Francis also did. The Franciscan must assume the challenges that present themselves and accept all that is good in the world of these present times. The Franciscan must be a person of his/her era. Francis and Clare were people of their time, influenced by their culture, but always transcending worldly ideals in favor of the Gospel life. In the end, like Francis and Clare, Franciscans are called to renounce all aspects of the world that are not in conformity the Gospel and flee this world when it presents a way of life that is contrary to the Franciscan charism. To do this, the Franciscan must continually turn around and embrace a change in one's life through penance and conversion (METANOIA).

In a true spirit of conversion, Franciscans must continually reflect on some key questions: What is "the world" for the Franciscan? What does it mean for the Franciscan to avoid becoming engaged in worldly matters? To what extent can a Franciscan compromise in living within the contemporary world? These fundamental concepts and questions must continually be kept in the forefront of our awareness. Often, one can be lured in adopting attitudes that are egotistical and that alienate us from each other. It is here that the pontifical and conciliar documents can teach us and encourage us as lay people to order our lives in accordance with justice and charity.

Let us always remember the clear commandment of Jesus when he exhorted us to be the salt and light of the world!

“FORMATION PROJECT”

THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL ROME COURSE - MARCH 2007 A BALANCE OF THE PROJECT TO DATE

Though with some delay, I offer a brief report on the **2ND INTERNATIONAL FORMATION COURSE FOR NATIONAL FORMATORS FOR THE INITIAL FORMATION** held in Rome this past March 2007, for the Spanish and French languages.

The course followed the same format as that of its preceding 2006 course, for the English and Italian languages and took advantage from experiences gathered from the earlier course to improve the quality of the contents and their presentation.

In attendance representing the Presidency and the Formation Commission were: Marie-Odile Blanty, OFS (France); Fr. Martin Bitzer, OFM Conv. (Argentina) and Benedetto Lino, OFS, who along with Anna Pia Viola, OFS (theology - Italy) and Fr. Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap. (Italy), formed the teaching “faculty” of the course.



24 brothers and sisters from 18 countries participated in the course.

The **joy** of being together for 8 days in a shared experience of intense work, prayer and fraternity was the main characteristic of the course. This joy was increased by the fact that numerous brothers from Africa and Vietnam were able to participate, in spite of the adverse conditions of their respective countries. Thanks to the economic contribution of several benefactors (individuals and institutions), to whom goes our gratitude, the CIOFS Presidency made it possible also for the representatives from poor countries who had applied, to take part in the course.

As in our preceding course, in addition to the lectures, to the working groups, to the plentiful moments of prayer and of fraternity sharing, we celebrated a pilgrimage to Assisi where we all had the privilege and the intense emotion of renewing our Profession at the foot of the tomb of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis.

All the participants bade farewell to one another with a renewed fervor after having shared a unique genuine experience of international Fraternity, and determined to reproduce in their own countries the same experiences lived in the course.

We have much to be thankful to our good God and to those who have contributed to make this course a special moment of grace for the growth of our Order in the world.

In concluding this second course, we can try to draw a preliminary balance of this **“FORMATION PROJECT”**, which we may consider as the beginning of the necessary “re-foundation” of Initial Formation in the Order, according to the priorities established in the General Chapter of 2002:

“(Formation) was by far the theme that received the most attention. The importance of formation has emerged as the essential element to guarantee an authentic and deep sense of belonging, rooted in a clear notion of identity and knowledge of the true nature of the SFO and of its place in the Franciscan Family and in the Church. The Chapter has manifested the urgency of finding new, original and efficacious ways to give to formation the completeness and uniformity which an Order, spread around the whole world, deserves to accomplish the fundamental role of mature and authoritative apostolate it is called to offer, in collaboration with the rest of the Franciscan Family”.

(Conclusions, General Chapter of 2002)

The International Formation Course of Initial Formation for National Formators, has involved 45 representatives from 33 countries to date:

1. Angola*	12. Czech Republic	23. Pakistan*
2. Australia-2	13. Denmark-2	24. Philippines 2
3. Bolivia	14. Dominican Republic	25. Rep. of South Africa-2
4. Brasil-2	15. France-2	26. Slovakia
5. Burundi*	16. Guatemala-2	27. Spain-2
6. Cameroon*	17. Guinea Bissau*	28. Sweden
7. Canada	18. Hungary	29. Togo*
8. Chile	19. India	30. UK
9. Cyprus*	20. Malta	31. USA
10. Congo	21. México-4	32. Venezuela
11. Croatia-2	22. Nicaragua	33. Vietnam

-the number next to the country, indicates the number of participants in the course.

-the asterisk indicates that a National Fraternity is “emerging”.

The same course (or parts of it), has been brought to the following countries that have specifically requested it: Canada (Toronto), Sweden, Great Britain, Slovakia, (courses held in 2006 and 2007), Hungary, Mauritius Island, Spain, and Italy (Regional Fraternity of Toscana, triennial project).

The results have always been outstanding.

In Slovakia, the National Council has already translated and published the first lessons in a dedicated book.

The same is being done in Hungary.

The translations in the 4 official languages are being carried out.

The balance, therefore, has been extremely positive, and I dare say, even beyond our most optimistic expectations. We have much to thank Our Lord and our brothers and sisters.

Nevertheless, the process of re-founding, re-qualifying and unifying the initial formation has barely begun; we need to dedicate every effort to consolidate what has already been done and to accomplish what still needs to be done with patience, effectiveness and competence.

However, one of the greatest problems we have to underline, much to our regret, has been the absence of many national fraternities, which in some cases have not even responded to the Presidency circular letters. In some instances, we believe that perhaps **it has not been understood** that the Course was not, (and is not), a simple, generic, formation session as the ones that are currently organized in every national Fraternity. The main objective was, instead, **to provide a fully shared common basis of identity and initial formation which is necessary to give us the sense of belonging and awareness to be the same“ true and unique Order”, throughout the world.**

This “project”, which has just begun, aims at making our Fraternities concretely feel and be “one body”, to finally fulfill the role and the mission that belongs to OFS as an “Order”, in every part of the world.

The experiences of study, of prayer and of fraternity developed in the two Courses celebrated in Rome have been confirmed as exceptional experiences of communion in diversity.

It would be wonderful, in this regard, if those who read this article and have not participated, would ask information on the Course to the brothers and sisters who have participated, and if those who did live this experience, would send their testimonial to be published in the *Bulletin CIOFS*.

This exchange of experience could be providential in giving a deeper breath to this essential initiative and towards including in the course also those who have not yet participated.

Representatives of 34 (33+1) countries (the course has been reproduced almost entirely in the Mauritius Island) have participated in the International program. When the project was inaugurated, the Order existed in **104** countries (we now count 106). In **60** of these countries there are **constituted national Fraternities**. In the remaining **44**, there are **emerging national Fraternities**. It is evident therefore, that 70 national Fraternities failed to respond to the call.



Many emerging fraternities, however, are just starting and still do not have any type of national organization. Therefore it is understandable that they have problems in participating. Nevertheless, **7 emerging national Fraternities** did participate in the Course. Thus, out of the 34 fraternities that have participated only 27 were constituted national Fraternities. Therefore, 33 constituted National Fraternities failed to respond to the call! More than half of them!

We understand that some Fraternities experience conflicts in their countries, or are lacking in freedom, or have traveling difficulties. These Fraternities are, obviously, more than justified and we will have to find ways to help them. All the absences have been equally felt, but some of them were absolutely incomprehensible to us, as they had to do with “ancient” Fraternities, with a long and glorious history, not necessarily having economic problems to participate.

In this connection, it is important to re-emphasize how the Presidency did take on itself the responsibility to assist those who did not have sufficient resources to participate in the Course. Our brothers and sisters who have come from Africa and Latin America can bear witness of this!

We sincerely hope that these absences were not a consequence of a lack of sense of belonging and of an unfounded sense of self-sufficiency.

Some national Fraternities (some are as old as the Franciscan movement), have not even responded to any of the circular letters concerning the Course ! Indifference can at times hurts more than criticism !

We strongly hope to be able to welcome all these absentees in a forthcoming Course and, in this sense, we invite those who have not participate and/or have not responded, to get in touch with the undersigned.

I conclude by giving thanks to the Lord once again for having accompanied us with the abundance of His Grace in the realization of this project, to the brothers and sisters who have participated and have “believed” in this essential project, and *dulcis in fundo*, to our benefactors (Mission Zentrale der Franziskaner at the top of the list), who have contributed in a decisive way to make it possible for those who were in greater need to participate.

Benedetto Lino
CIOFS Presidency Councilor
Formation Commission Coordinator

Franciscans International

A Non-Governmental Organization at the United Nations Franciscans International Appoints New Executive Director

Feb. 11, 2008

Franciscans International's Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Sr. Denise Boyle, FMDM as the organisation's new Executive Director. Sr. Denise will assume her role on 1st March, 2008.



Sr. Denise is an Irish Franciscan religious sister and human rights advocate, who brings with her 30 years of experience in education, social justice, and development.

In Zimbabwe, Sr. Denise spent eight years as the National Coordinator of the Women and Children's Programme of the Catholic Commission of Justice and Peace. When the nation was ravaged by drought, she organised an emergency feeding programme that brought relief to 11,000 children. In Australia, where she spent 15 years as an educator, Sr. Denise was passionate about the role of education in promoting social justice. As the Overseas Project Officer at the Volunteer Missionary Movement (VMM); Sr. Denise developed and implemented the training

program for 53 volunteers in Africa and Guatemala. She visited the volunteers in their projects regularly.

Since 2003, Sr. Denise has served as the Justice Coordinator for the St. Patrick Missionary Priests in Ireland. She has been collaborating with faith-based groups and NGOs; raising awareness on HIV/AIDS, human trafficking and development issues in 19 countries across Europe, Africa and South America. She is Chair of the national Irish committee, ACT - Act to Prevent Trafficking.

Sr. Denise holds an M.A. degree in International Peace and Development Studies from the University of Limerick; a B.D. in Theology and Pastoral Counselling from the University of Melbourne; and a B.Ed from the University of London.

Through her human rights advocacy, Sr. Denise has exemplified Franciscan values of peace building, justice, care for creation, and service to the poor. Her commitment to the vision and mission of Franciscans International is evidenced by her service on the organisation's International Board of Directors. She was the President of the Board from 2003 to 2006, and has most recently been fulfilling the role of Vice President.

As Franciscans International's Executive Director, Sr. Denise will serve the global Franciscan Family in its work for a more just and compassionate world. She will lead Franciscans International's advocacy, animation and fundraising efforts at the offices in Bangkok, Geneva and New York.

Franciscans International is proud to welcome Sr. Denise as its new Executive Director. We look forward to working with and supporting her in this new and challenging role.

SELF-SACRIFICE TO SAVE A LIFE

Sunday the 3rd of February 2008 was, it seemed, just another normal Sunday. The market was open and the churches were full of the faithful attending Sunday Mass. All of a sudden, at 9,00 local time, a dreadful noise was heard. Large buildings, markets and churches suddenly collapsed. Many seriously injured people lay on the ground amid the debris. People tried to flee in panic to save their lives. But where could they flee to? An earthquake measuring six on the Richter Scale had just taken place.

This scene took place in the town of Bukavu in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. The earthquake also extended to the neighbouring countries of Rwanda and Burundi. The epicenter was located, according to the National Seismic Observatory, roughly 20 km north of the town of Bukavu. The local authorities called on the people to leave their homes and keep at least 200 m away from any buildings. People had to sleep outside, exposed to the elements.

Suddenly, rich and poor found themselves rubbing shoulders with each other, not through any feeling of compassion, but because they were forced to do so by Nature, for everybody had to spend the night sleeping out in the open because of the continuing aftershocks. There were no longer any barriers between the two groups, rich and poor. God had shown his almighty power. The luxury villas had collapsed and been instantly abandoned. The high security walls of the rich peoples' houses had fallen down. At that moment I personally recalled the final document "Aparecida 2007" drawn up after the fifth general conference of Latin American Bishops, which had been held from the 13th to the 31st of May 2007 at the shrine of Our Lady in Aparecida, Brazil. The full document is divided into 554 sections and covers various themes, but number 65 discusses the theme of Poverty and the Poor: "We must look in the faces of those who are suffering: the poor, the excluded, the immigrants and the marginalized,"

Now the so-called rich also had suffering faces. A member of the local Young Franciscans found an original way to express this change of circumstances by adding a verse to the Canticle of Brother Sun by Saint Francis of Assisi: "Praised be you, Brother Earthquake, for bringing together the rich and the poor!"

What could these members of the Young Franciscans offer at this time of suffering, anguish and despair? They too were destitute but, acting on the initiative of three Franciscan girls - Sifa Kalenga, Francisca Nanci and Isia Fabiola- they decided to go down to Bukavu General Hospital to give words of comfort to the seriously injured and to give blood. In short, "AN ACT OF SELF-SACRIFICE TO SAVE A LIFE!"

Bukavu, February 9th, 2008

Jean Francis Isia Amundala.



JOINT DECLARATION

The Union of Superiors General (USG/UISG) and Caritas declare their commitment to work together and call on their members around the world to consolidate their collaboration in countering trafficking in human beings.

Introduction

Trafficking in human beings is seen as one of the worst affronts to human dignity and violations of human rights. The Unions of Superiors General (USG/UISG, representing more than a million religious men and women worldwide) and Caritas Internationalis (CI, with 162 Member Organizations active in over 200 countries and territories) have each, in their strategic plans, demonstrated their determination to oppose this 21st century form of global slavery. Both organisations see this as an opportune moment to declare their **commitment to work together** in this endeavour. It is also appropriate and timely to make a formal call on religious institutes of men and of women worldwide and on Caritas Internationalis and its member organizations to consolidate their collaboration in countering the trafficking of human beings.

An alliance between religious congregations and church based organisations will strengthen advocacy work in favour of trafficked persons and will broaden the range of resources for people engaged at the practical level in ministry to them. The alliance would work for the benefit of the victims of trafficking by enhancing the transnational channels of prevention and assistance accessible to them.

Complementary roles in a common commitment

Caritas Internationalis and the USG/UISG bring specific competences and resources to this alliance.

Caritas

Caritas Internationalis has identified four major areas for action against trafficking which are suited to its modes of action; prevention, assistance, advocacy and networking. It declares its commitment to work in these areas in its publication, “**The Caritas Internationalis Commitment on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**”, and initiated the ecumenical **COATNET** network (Christian Organisations Against Trafficking) which has taken a global dimension.

USG/UISG

In the spirit of the Congress on Consecrated Life (2004), the JPIC Commission, working group against trafficking in women and children, acts on *“the care we have for one another that leads us to engage with the pain and suffering of our world with all its peoples and all of creation”*. The USG/UISG is committed to bring to this partnership its special skills in education of the public through publications and public meetings, sharing its experience through the formation of field workers, and through pastoral care and rehabilitation of the victims.

We trust that this agreement between Caritas Internationalis and the USG/UISG will result in effective, mutually supportive action against the trafficking in human persons.

Rome, November 2007,

Fr. Pascual Chávez, SDB,
President, USG

Sr. Amelia Kawaji, MMB
President, UISG

Cardinal Oscar Andres Rodriguez-Maradiaga
President, Caritas Internationalis

Sydney – International Meeting of the YouFra on the occasion of WYD 2008

The franciscan youth of the entire world is preparing for the XXIII World Youth Day, which will be celebrated in Sydney on the 15th to 20th July 2008. On that occasion, as is already traditional, there will be an International Meeting of YouFra before the WYD, scheduled for the 12th to 15th July, in the St. Francis of Assisi Primary School in Paddington, Sydney. All information regarding the programme, inscription and the many different materials about the YouFra, specially prepared for this meeting, can be found on the web page: www.ciofs.org/wyd2008. For further information, contact the following address: gifra@ciofs.org. Cardinal Óscar Andrés Rodríguez Madariaga, Archbishop of Tegucigalpa (Honduras), will be the main speaker at the International Meeting of YouFra.

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