



K O I N Ō N I A

...together on the journey

THE CONFERENCE OF GENERAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS OFS-YOUFRA

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AS YOU SENT ME INTO THE WORLD, SO I SENT THEM INTO THE WORLD (Jn 17, 18)

40 years after the *Seraphicus Patriarcha*

WORK AS VOCATION AND MISSION

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Introduction

In early 2008, a Symposium was held in Assisi on the theme “*Economy: from instrument to idol*”. One of the facilitators who presented the deep change in the European society after the second world war, was particularly touching. He showed how, after the devastating effects of the war, the society had hoped to find salvation in work since it seemed the only way to rebuild a devastated economy. It functioned for a while. Barely fifty years after the economic dream, the frustration of millions of jobless persons and cry of millions of persons under new forms of slavery is rising to heaven. As brothers and sisters who “*Strive for perfect charity in their own secular state*” (Rule 2), it is important today that Secular Franciscans take time to reflect, pray and share on their relationship to work in the light of Divine Revelation, the Social teachings of the Church and their proper Rule.

The following article will develop four points: Our attitude towards work, the gift of rest, unemployment and evangelizing by our work. Our aim is to provoke reflection, sharing in OFS and YouFra Fraternities and, by God’s grace, conversion where necessary. Among Church documents on the matter, the Encyclical *Laborem exercens* of Pope Saint John-Paul II, stands out by its specificity, depth and currency.

1. Our attitude towards work

“Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community”¹.

During my years of formation, it once struck me that when it was time for labour, we would all rush into our rooms and put on the worst dresses. On the other hand, if one had to go for a walk, we spontaneously put on our best. I subsequently observed this same attitude in most people, not only those involved in some manual or technical work like motor mechanics, building or farming but also in many uniformed men including students, police men, guards and apprentices. Such an attitude betrays a mindset in which work is identified with dirt and servitude, it is a burden and fundamentally non-dignifying. In my

¹OFS Rule 16.

cultural context where children learn from their basic age to do some household chores and to work alongside their parents, this is unconsciously transmitted to younger generations: old and dirty clothes are for work. The culture of relating work to dirt is not only a matter of hygiene, it is also spiritual such that work is related to sin and the world proclaims blessed those who enjoy life with no sweat. “White-collar jobs” attract most people and many who have the jobs lack the love for work. This is at the source of much corruption.

Work has an intrinsic value in itself. The OFS General Constitutions remind that: *“for Francis, work is a gift and to work is a grace. Daily work is not only the means of livelihood, but the opportunity to serve God and neighbour as well as a way to develop one’s own personality”*². It does not reduce human dignity, but rather enhances it and leads to its accomplishment as the image and likeness of God. Pope Francis writes: *“Awareness that man’s work is a participation in God’s activity ought to permeate, as the Council teaches, even the most ordinary everyday activities”*³. Saint Benedict resumed his monastic Rule in two principles: “Ora et labora”, pray and work. Saint Francis of Assisi deemed it important to insert in his Testament: *“And I worked with my hands, and I still desire to work; and I earnestly desire all brothers to give themselves to honest work. Let those who do not know how to work learn, not from desire to receive wages, but for example and to avoid idleness”*.⁴ The struggle with work is always there. Awareness is the first step of conversion.

2. The gift of rest

“You cannot serve God and money” (Mt. 6:24). In a world where many have been rendered slaves of money through work, it is necessary to appreciate the grace of rest.

*“Leisure and recreation have their own value and are necessary for personal development. Secular Franciscans should maintain a balance between work and rest and should strive to create meaningful forms of using leisure time”*⁵

Man who is created in the image and likeness of God, received not only the grace of work, but also the grace of rest. Divine legislation is, to the greatest of my knowledge, the only existing legislation in the world till date that imposes rest as an obligation which if not observed, is considered a transgression: *“Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you”* (Dt 5,13-14). In exercising his fundamental right to rest, man is affirmed in his fundamental freedom and from the danger of slavery to work and to money. *“Man ought to imitate God both in working and also in resting, since God himself wished to present his own creative activity under the form of work and rest”*⁶.

“The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27) The supreme good of Man is the purpose of all God’s commandments. *“Just as God ‘rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done’, human life has a rhythm of work and rest. the institution of the Lord’s Day helps everyone enjoy adequate rest and leisure to cultivate their familial, cultural, social, and religious lives”*⁷ Rest is not an optional for humanity and indeed for all of creation, it is an obligation; a rest that is conscious and aims at the integral good of man. The law of weekly rest forbade work on the seventh day, *“so that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your maidservant, and the stranger, may be*

²General Constitutions, Art. 21.1a.

³ John Paul II, Encyclical *Laborem exercens*, n° 25, 1981.

⁴ Testament 20-21

⁵General Constitutions, Art. 21.2.

⁶ John Paul II, Encyclical *Laborem exercens*, n° 25

⁷CCC 2184.

refreshed” (Ex 23:12). Pope Francis Says “Rest opens our eyes to the larger picture and gives us renewed sensitivity to the rights of others”⁸.

3. The challenge of unemployment

“In the conviction that work is a right and a duty and that every form of occupation deserves respect, the brothers and sisters should commit themselves to collaborate so that all persons may have the possibility to work and so that working conditions may always be more humane”⁹.

Unemployment is an injustice. The Social doctrine of the Church places work at the centre of questions regarding society. *“Work, in fact, is at the heart of the very vocation given by God to Man, to prolong his creative action and accomplish, through his free initiative and judgement, dominion over other creatures which is translated not as despotic subjection but as harmony and respect”¹⁰.* It is the fundamental right of every human person to work and to receive a just salary. *“We were created with a vocation to work, teaches Pope Francis, “work is a necessity, part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment”¹¹.* It is rather unfortunate that in the present situation of financial economy, work has become the privilege of a few and not the basic right of all. It is unacceptable that some persons remain unemployed while others are burdened with multiple tasks. Pope Saint John Paul II pointed out that in matters of work, the disabled and emigrants should not be left out: *“Since disabled people are subjects with all their rights, they should be helped to participate in the life of society in all its aspects and at all the levels accessible to their capacities”¹².*

Pope Francis extends this teaching to include migrants and all unemployed persons. *“One cannot be happy without the chance of offering one’s own contribution, small or big as it may be, to the construction of the common good. Each person can give his share – or rather has to! – so as not to become passive and to feel a stranger to the social life”¹³.* Creating jobs for the jobless is to promote the good of mankind. It is commonly said: *“the idle man is the devil’s workshop”.* *“Helping the poor financially, teaches Pope Saint John Paul II, must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs”¹⁴.* Pope Francis expressed his concern for the youth with regard to responsibilities also within the Church: *“I want important responsibilities to be given to you within the Church; that there may be the courage to make space for you; and that you may be prepared to take on these responsibilities”¹⁵.*

Evangelizing by our work

“They (Secular Franciscans) should bear witness to this faith before all, in their family life; in their work; in their joys and sufferings; in their associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same Father; in their presence and participation in the life of society; in their fraternal relationships with all creatures”¹⁶.

⁸ PP. Francis, Encyclical Laudato sì, 237.

⁹General Constitutions, Art. 21.1b.

¹⁰ PP. Francis, Discourse to the participants of the National convention of Federazione Maestri del lavoro d’Italia”, Rome, June 15th 2018, in http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2018/june/documents/papa-francesco_20180615_federazione-maestri-dellavoro.html

¹¹ PP. Francis, Encyclical Laudato sì, 128.

¹² PP. John Paul II, Encyclical Laborem exercens, 22

¹³ PP. Francis, Discourse to the participants of the National convention of Federazione Maestri del lavoro d’Italia”, Rome.

¹⁴Idem, 128.

¹⁵ PP. Francis, message to the Youth on XXXIII World Youth Day in http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/youth/documents/papa-francesco_20180211_messaggio-giovani_2018.html

¹⁶Cf. Gen Constitutions, Art. 12.

Evangelizing by our work first means recognizing our job as a gift from God and doing it as service to Him, and then receiving the fruit of our labour or our salary as a token from Him to whom belongs everything in heaven and on earth and who has greater things in store for us. The Apostle admonishes: *“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ” (Col 3:23-24).*

Evangelizing by our work also means doing our work with joy, no matter how humble and burdensome. In fact, Pope Francis invites all Christians to a new era of evangelization marked by evangelical Joy¹⁷. Our work may not be pleasing in itself, but the joy of the Gospel is deeper than every pleasure or sorrow we may encounter in this life, it is a joy that springs from the Salvation won for us by Christ Jesus on the Cross: *“The Christian finds in human work a small part of the Cross of Christ and accepts it in the same spirit of redemption in which Christ accepted his Cross for us. In work, thanks to the light that penetrates us from the Resurrection of Christ, we always find a glimmer of new life, of the new good, as if it were an announcement of “the new heavens and the new earth” in which man and the world participate precisely through the toil that goes with work”*¹⁸.

Evangelizing by our work would also mean doing the very ordinary things with extra-ordinary love and charity. This was the secret of Saint Therese of the Lisieux. It would mean preparing well for our work and doing it assiduously. Here, we are certainly surrounded by a cloud of witnesses and pope Francis invites us to contemplate such virtue in *“the saint next door”*; *“I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God’s people: he writes, in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile”*¹⁹ Here, my mind goes to my wonderful mother who for decades, after assuring food for everyone in the family in the morning, would leave the house very early in the morning with her basket on her head, to labour till evening. I do not remember ever hearing her complain.

Evangelizing by our work would also mean paying loving attention to those who labour with us, promoting a fraternal and friendly atmosphere in our areas of work without betraying our belonging to Christ. This is what Pope Francis terms informal preaching²⁰. Finally, evangelizing by our work would also mean preparing the young to take over from us and accepting our retirement with serenity when the time comes.

Conclusion

Work is both vocation and grace to all human beings. Work brings to the light and accomplishes the image and likeness of God inherent in every person. It is therefore a fundamental human right. Given the state of affairs whereby many go jobless while a few are overburdened as a privilege, it is important to rediscover the grace of rest and promote employment for all. It is also important to evaluate our relationship to work. The occasion of the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Present Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order provides a particular opportunity to reflect, pray and share on these points. At their jobsite, Secular Franciscans certainly share very important moments of their lives with people of different beliefs. This is a unique opportunity to bear witness to Christ and the Gospel according to their Rule and General Constitutions. The Gospel must be witnessed to also in these places, not necessarily by words, but mostly by the spirit with which one faces the challenges and stress that comes with the fatigue of labour.

¹⁷ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 1.

¹⁸ PP. John Paul II, *Encyclical Laborem exercens*, 27.

¹⁹ PP. Francis, *Apostolic exhortation, Gaudete et Exsultate*, 7.

²⁰ Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 127-128.

CIOFS Presidency

The first CIOFS Presidency meeting of the year 2018 took place at the International College of Seraphicum, Rome, of the Friars Minor Conventual from 7 to 14 April. All the members of the Presidency were present, except Andrea Odak, Councilor of the Presidency for YouFra, absent for reasons of work. The key elements on the agenda were the Evaluation of the General Chapter of last November, Report of fraternal and pastoral chapters and visits, the report of commissions and projects, the approval of national statutes, congresses and national fraternities with problems. The guests were Francesco Mattiocco, OFS, for the Commission for the cause of the saints, Noemi Ricardi for the Juridical Commission and Riccardo Inero, GiFra Toscana, who presented a report on the pre-synodal meeting of young people in which he had participated in name of the YouFra. At mid-week, the Councilors went for a guided tour of Castello Sant'Angelo. Various committees of the Presidency have been able to meet during these days to review their commitments. Ordinarily, every day of work began with the Eucharist and the Lauds, and closed with the Vespers. All lived days of fraternity, collaboration and Franciscan joy.

Madagascar – Beatification of Lucien Botovasoa

The Secular Franciscan Order, OFS, has a new blessed. That is Lucien Botovasoa, Franciscan Tertiary killed in *odium fidei* in Vohipeno - Madagascar in 1947. The beatification was done on April 15, 2018 in Vohipeno during a solemn Mass presided by Cardinal Maurice Piat, concelebrated by all the bishops of Madagascar, hundreds of Priests and more than 80,000 pilgrims. Vohipeno is 42 km from Manakara in the Diocese of Farafangana in the south of the island. The SFO-YouFra National Fraternity of Madagascar, with the coordination of the national minister, Gérard Cécilien, has had a considerable involvement in the preparation and celebration of the beatification. Lucien Botovasoa is the third blessed of the great island of Madagascar, and adds a new light to the choir of saints and blessed members of OFS.

Mauritius – National elective Chapter

The national Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) of Mauritius was held from 7 to 8 April 2018 at the National Seat of OFS, Society of St. Bernardine of Siena, OFMFriars, 27b, Farquhar Street, 71360 Rose-Hill-Mauritius. Gérard Cécilien Raboanary, National Minister of OFS of Madagascar was delegated to preside over the Chapter and Fr. Jean Charles Rakotondranaivo OFM, Custos of the Custody of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate Madagascar and Mauritius was the delegate of the Conference of Spiritual Assistants (CAS). The Chapter had the theme “the Gospel at the center of the restructuring of OFS”. During his speech the president of the Chapter insisted on the meaning of fraternity and encouraged the Chapter members to observe the Holy Gospel by fixing their gaze on Christ in order to better live the Secular Franciscan Rule. 49 capitulars and 2 observers participated. His Eminence Cardinal Maurice Piat, bishop of Mauritius, was invited. Fr. Jean Charles Rakotondranaivo, OFM, presided both the inaugural Mass and the concluding Mass. On 8 April Yanis Husson was elected as National Minister and International Councilor. The Chapter took place in an atmosphere of conviviality.

Havana, Cuba – National elective Chapter

The National OFS Fraternity of Cuba celebrated its National elective Chapter, from 11 to 14 April 2018, in the Casa Santa Maria Dominga Mazarello, of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians,

in Guanabacoa. The Chapter, attended by 29 capitulars, representing the 16 local fraternities, was presided by Angela Rosa Ramos, International Councilor of Nicaragua, delegate of Tibor Kauser, Minister General of OFS, accompanied by Fr. Silvano Castelli, OFMConv, delegate of the CAS. During the Chapter, they received the news of a donation from the National Fraternity of OFS in Mexico to cover some expenses of the Chapter. Marisela Quintana Suárez was confirmed as National Minister for the years 2018-2021, while José Angel Miranda Reyes was elected Secretary and International Councilor. The concluding Eucharist was presided by Mgr. Juan de la Caridad García Rodríguez, Archbishop of Havana; and concelebrated by Fr. Silvano Castelli OFMConv, Fr. Odinei and Fr. Basilio, OFM, Spiritual Assistants of the local fraternities; In Cuba there is no YouFra or NiFra, but they are starting a group of children in an OFS Fraternity with their children to make them appreciate the Franciscan charism.

Latvia – Fraternal and Pastoral visit (VFP)

The VFP of the OFS of Latvia took place from 17 to 20 April 2018 at Riga and was led by Attilio Galimberti and Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM. They met the members of the three canonically erected fraternities: Ave Maria in Riga, San Pio in Cesvaine Cesis and Santa Chiara in Daugavpils.

On 18 April the visitors were welcomed by the Archbishop of Riga, Mgr. Zbignevs Stankevics, who was very welcoming and appreciated the visit during which he carefully followed our presentation of the OFS and was very pleased with the commitment and the work of the seculars in his diocese. On 19 April they were accompanied to visit the Catholic school “Rigas Katolu Gimnazija”, whose chaplain, Don Modris Lacisci, illustrated the modern teaching methods implemented by them. This was followed by a visit to the Radio Marija office in Latvia where Attilio and Fr. Pedro were invited to speak about OFS and Franciscan spirituality in an interview that will be broadcast in the coming days. 20th April was dedicated for a meeting with the outgoing National minister for an analysis and evaluation of the work carried out during his mandate, to ask questions and to give some advices regarding spiritual assistance, and on how to perform well the work of the National council, inviting them to take responsibility for the vocational promotion of Gifra and Araldini in Latvia.

Latvia - National elective Chapter

On Saturday 21 April 2018, the National elective Chapter of OFS in Latvia was celebrated at the Convent of the Masas Kalpones no Bezvainigas Jaunavas Marijas (*Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Virgin Mary*) in Riga. The chapter was presided by Attilio Galimberti, delegate of the OFS Minister General, assisted by Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, general Assistant. Also present at the Chapter was Friar Janis Savickis, OFMCap-lay brother, who showed the readiness to be appointed as the National spiritual Assistant. There were 26 capitulars who elected, reconfirming for the second term, Gundega Zake-Cimza, National minister, and Dace Biltaure, counselor with the task of promoting the creation of a GiFra fraternity in Latvia. The elective Chapter was conclude with the celebration of the Holy Mass presided by Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM, during which Attilio Galimberti led the related rite for the installation of the new National council as foreseen by the OFS Ritual. The Chapter was a moment of joy and sharing and the day ended with the first meeting of the newly elected council.

Taiwan – National elective Chapter

For the next three years, the National Fraternity of OFS in Taiwan has a new National Minister and a new International Councilor, brothers John Chuang Shyh-Fang and Joseph Hsu Kuo-Chiang respectively. The new National Council was elected on 28 April during the third National Elective Chapter which was held in the OFM Convent at the Church of St. Francis in Taishan - Taipei from 26 to 29 April 2018. Present for the elective session were 38 delegates representing 152 OFS professed

members of the 14 canonically erected local fraternities. The Minister Provincial OFM of Taiwan, Fr. Claudio Pegoraro who is also the National Spiritual Assistant and 8 observers were also present.

The Chapter was presided over by Augustine Young Hak Yoon, delegate of the OFS Minister General and Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap, representing the CAS. On the afternoon of April 28 during the concluding Holy Mass presided over by Fr. Claudio, Augustine, according to the Ritual of OFS, proceeded with the installation of the newly elected National Council. During this celebration, Fr. Francis gave the homily and 9 members from three different local fraternities made their perpetual profession. Finally, on Sunday 29 April, Augustine and Fr. Francis had a meeting with the new Council, during which the priorities for the next three years were established. The Chapter was very well prepared and, under the guidance of Augustine, the Chapter members lived in fraternal joy and simplicity.

India - Special Visit and Meetings with Assistants

From 3 to 17 May 2018, the general spiritual Assistants Fr. Alfred Parambakathu OFM Conv., and Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap, made a special visit to India in search of a solution for the national Chapter scheduled for October 2018. The general Assistants held a series of meetings in Goa, Kannur, Aluva, Kollam, Nagercoil and Kottayam. Some Provincial Ministers, many Provincial and Regional Assistants, and many Regional Ministers attended the meetings. Towards the end, they held a meeting in Aluva with the provisional National Council appointed in October 2016.

It should be remembered that the National Fraternity of India which has 17,722 members (last report to the CIOFS), has not participated in the last two General Chapters for problems within the National Council that obliged the CIOFS Presidency Council to appoint a Provisional National Council with a specific task to finish the revision of the National Statutes and then organize an elective Chapter within a year. At the end of the visit, the General Assistants addressed a letter of thanks to the Friars and to the National Council with some practical indications for the future.

Canada – National elective Chapter

The National Elective Chapter of OFS in Canada was celebrated at the “Centre de Spiritualité des Ursulines-Loretteville” from 17 to 20 May, presided by Michel Janian, delegate of the Minister General of OFS, assisted by Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, general Assistant. The Chapter was attended by 48 OFS members from the 11 regions into which Canada is divided. Of these 31 were Capitulars with voting rights. The National Spiritual Assistants Fr. André Chicoine OFM Cap, Fr. Peter Knaapen, OFM Conv, together with local and regional assistants Fr. Henri Ethier OFM, Fr. Jean Chrysostome OFM Cap., were also present for the Chapter. The inaugural Mass was celebrated by Fr. Peter Knaapen, OFM Conv. On the following day he presented the theme of the Chapter “*Gospel to life and life to Gospel*”. On the afternoon of Saturday 19th the election of the new Council was held and Doug Clorey was elected National Minister and Deputy International Councilor and Michel David as International Councilor

Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM presided over the concluding Holy Mass of the Chapter during which the new council was installed. The Chapter was concluded with a fraternal evening with the theme “wine and cheese”. The following day was dedicated to the meeting the new National council with the delegates and with the outgoing council for the handover and to plan the future work of the new national council. Despite the linguistic differences due to the presence of English-speaking and French-speaking members, the celebration of the Chapter took place in a fraternal spirit and great sharing.

Panama – Visit in preparation for the International Meeting of YouFra (IIG) and the World Youth Day (WYD) 2019

On May 14, Fr. Amado Trujillo Cano, TOR, general Assistant of OFS-YouFra arrived in Panama City and was welcomed by Ramón Aurelio Llorach, National Minister of OFS and Fr. José

Enrique Olmos Cortés, OFM, who then accompanied him to the church of San Antonio, where the OFM friars offered hospitality during his entire visit.

On the next day morning, Ramón, Fr. José and Fr. Amando met with Sr. Annia Marcela Hidalgo, FMI, at the *Colegio Internacional María Inmaculada*, in Panama City, where the members of YouFra will be staying during the IIG and the WYD. The meeting dealt with several issues, such as the IIG calendar, the number of participants, the logistics, etc. Sister Annia offered them a tour of the school facilities and we talked about the different options we have of their use during our stay.

Costa Rica – National elective Chapter

The National Fraternity of the OFS of Costa Rica celebrated its National elective Chapter on May 19-20, 2018 in the *Casa de Espiritualidad Alvernia*, of the Friars Minor Capuchin, in Cartago, Costa Rica. The Chapter was presided by Ana Maria Raffo Laos, delegated by the Minister General of OFS and Councilor of the CIOFS Presidency for the Spanish-speaking area, who was accompanied by Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, general Assistant of OFS-YouFra. There were 29 capitulars who participated the Chapter besides some observers and collaborators, including some young Franciscans. The opening Eucharist was presided by Msgr. Gabriel Enrique Montero Umaña, OFM Conv., Bishop of San Isidro de El General. On the first day of the Chapter two Spiritual Assistants were also present, Fr. Antonio Fuentes OFM and Fr. Mauricio Monge Rivera OFM Cap. Ana Maria presented the theme “The sense of belonging to the OFS”. On Sunday morning, feast of Pentecost, the capitulars voted the resolutions and then the elective section began in which Luis Alfonso Chacón Madrigal was elected as National Minister and automatically International Councilor. After the election, the visitors had a meeting with the new Council and the outgoing one. The concluding Mass was presided by Fr. Amando and concelebrated by Fr. Benigno Varela Castro, OFM Cap, Custos of Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama, who was present on the second day. During this celebration, Ana Maria installed the new Minister and the National Council.

Haiti – National elective Chapter

The emerging National Fraternity of OFS in Haiti held an elective Chapter at Saint Alexander Parish in the capital city of Port-au-Prince on 9 June 2018. The Chapter was presided by Attilio Galimberti OFS, Councilor of the Presidency, assisted by Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap., general Spiritual Assistant of OFS. There were present 16 capitulars who came from the three canonically erected local fraternities that exist in the country, Fr. Celso Rabi-Toc Baten, OFM, the National Assistant, some observers and guests including Fr. Wilfrid Cavalier, OFM, President of the Franciscan Foundation in Haiti, Fr. Aldir Crocoli, OFM Cap, Delegate of the Provincial Minister. The new National Council is composed of Ruth Dorilas Jean-Laurent (Minister), Wesly Eugène (Vice Minister) and others.

On the previous days the outgoing council had held a meeting in the presence of the visitors to evaluate the situation of the national fraternity and to set priorities for the future. Visitors also visited the new Archbishop of Port-Au-Prince, SE. Mgr Max Leroy Mésidor. Attilio installed the new national council on the afternoon of Saturday 9 and the concluding Mass was presided by Fr. Wilfrid Cavalier OFM., concelebrated by Fr. Francis Dor and 3 other priests. The Chapter was celebrated with joyful simplicity and in a fraternal spirit.

Dominican Republic - Special visit

On the evening of 11th June, Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap, general Assistant of OFS, met the provisional National Council of OFS of the Dominican Republic at the request of the Custos, Fr. José David Antonio Vásquez Gusman, OFM Cap. The Council was appointed in October 2017 by Chelito Nuñez, OFS, Vice Minister General, during a special visit in search of solutions to a crisis in

the then national council. It is noteworthy that the OFS National Fraternity of the Dominican Republic has about 220 local fraternities divided into 15 regions. No local fraternity has its own spiritual assistant and the National assistant must also take care of 12 regions. The passing of the general Assistant through the country to return from Haiti gave him the opportunity to listen to the National Council, to evaluate with them the progress made, and to take note of the critical situation of spiritual assistance to OFS in the country. The result of the meeting, he believes, was to clarify the priorities for the provisional Council and the role of the Spiritual Assistant at all levels. However, the challenge of providing spiritual assistants for OFS and YouFra at all levels remains. Both the Friars and the lay members of the Council are grateful for this opportunity.

Czech Republic - National Elective Chapter

The National Elective Chapter of OFS of the Czech Republic took place from 8 to 10 June 2018 in the Pilgrim's House of Stojanov, in Velehrad, and was presided by Márton Beke, OFS, International Councilor of Hungary, who was accompanied by Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, general spiritual Assistant of OFS-YouFra. There were 76 Capitulars of 125 summoned. The opening Eucharist was presided by Mgr. Jan Graubner, Archbishop of Olomouc and concelebrated by Minister Provincial, Fr. Jakub František Sadílek, OFM, and two National Assistants: Fr. František Kroczek, OFM Cap and Fr. Antonín Klaret Dabrowski, OFM. On the second day, after the presentation and approval of the reports, the elective session was held. František Reichel was elected as National Minister and Markéta Kubešová as International Councilor. The concluding Mass was presided by Fr. Stanislaw Gryn, OFM Conv, Minister Provincial, and concelebrated by Fr. Amando and Fr. František Kroczek. During this celebration, Marton Beke installed the new national council. After lunch Fr. Amando spoke with Fr. Stanislaw Gryn and Fr. František Kroczek on the need to promote the Franciscan Youth. The National Fraternity of the Czech Republic is made up of 47 local fraternities and has 760 professed and 43 candidates in formation. The spiritual assistance is provided by 32 OFM friars, 14 OFM Cap, 3 OFM Conv and 1 diocesan priest.

Germany - national elective Chapter

The national elective Chapter of the Order of Franciscan Seculars of Germany took place from 15 to 17 June at Kloster Oberzell Haus Klara. During the official opening, the outgoing Minister read the messages she had received with the wishes for the success of the Chapter, thus welcoming all the capitulars, 25 capitulars present, of the 34 entitled to vote.

The Chapter was presided by Tibor Kauser, Minister General of OFS, assisted by Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, general Assistant. The Chapter was officially opened on Saturday with the Holy Mass celebrated by Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, and concelebrated by Fr. Georg Scholles, OFM, National Assistant, Fr. Hermann-Josef Schlepütz, OFM, Regional Assistant. After the Holy Mass and breakfast, the work of the Chapter started by Fr. Johannes Matthias Tumpach, OFM. Then Tibor Kauser spoke about the importance of the Rule of OFS especially at this time when we are celebrating the fortieth anniversary of its promulgation. The outgoing Minister then presented the report on the three-year period, which was interrupted by the visit of the Minister Provincial Fr. Bernadin M. Seither OFM Conv. The new national council was elected on Saturday afternoon. The new national minister is Ursula Clemm and the international councilor is Matthias Petzold.

Denmark - National Elective Chapter

The National Chapter of OFS in Denmark took place in the Dalum Kloster of the Elizabethan Sisters in Odense on June 15-17, 2018. The situation of OFS in this country is very particular in the sense that since 2008 there has been no presence of the Franciscan First Order or feminine congregations until last year when two Conventual friars arrived in Copenhagen. In the last ten years

the fraternity has been helped by an English Capuchin friar, Fr. Stephen Innes. In Denmark there are only two local fraternities.

Mariette Fleur, delegated by Tibor Kauser, Minister General of OFS presided over the Chapter, assisted by Fr. Alfred Parambathu OFMConv, general Spiritual Assistant of OFS-YouFra. The Chapter began on Friday afternoon with the Holy Mass, presided over by Fr. Stephen. There were 9 capitulars of the 11 convoked and 5 other candidates. Also present was Fr. Niels Engelbrecht, the assistant to the fraternity of Copenhagen. Gilda Suarez was elected National Minister and International Councilor. During the concluding mass the new council was installed. The celebration was presided by Fr. Alfred. The Chapter took place in a very fraternal and collaborative atmosphere.

El Salvador - National Elective Chapter

The XI^o national elective Chapter of OFS in El Salvador was celebrated from 15 to 17 June 2018 at the casa de retiro el Buen Pastor Hermanas franciscanas. Col. Providencia, Calle, Sevilla 600, San Salvador. The Chapter was presided by Angela Rosa Ramos, OFS, delegated by the Minister General of OFS, Tibor Kauser and assisted by Fr. José Adolfo Pérez Pascual, OFMCap, delegated by CAS. Both of them held a conference, each on a theme. There were 57 capitulars, 1 observer and 3 religious among assistants and major superiors. Fr. Arturo OFMConv., presided over a mass. The elections took place on 16th from 4 O'clock to 8 O'clock. Miguel Ernesto Marquina was elected national minister and international councilor. The new council was installed immediately after the election. The CAS delegate notes that the atmosphere was good, of joy and expectations for the election of the new council. He notes that in the new council there are also some young people, a dimension that has not been seen for some years. He adds that the place was good, large and with lots of vegetation.

Austria - National Elective Chapter

The national elective Chapter of OFS in Austria was celebrated from June 22 to 24, at the "Seminarhaus St. Klara" in Vöcklabruck. Present for the Chapter were 32 capitulars, spiritual assistants and the provincial minister Fr. Oliver Ruggenthaler OFM. The elective Chapter was presided over by Mariette Fleur, delegated by the Minister General of OFS, accompanied by Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, general Assistant. The inaugural Mass was presided over by Fr. Leszek Nocun, OFMCap. Fr. Fritz Wenigwieser OFM presented the theme of the chapter "The tension between administrative work and spiritual life" and in the afternoon we proceeded with the election of the new national council composed of: Franz Spanner, National Minister, Alfred Obermair, International Councilor and the others. During the Holy Mass on Sunday presided over by Fr. Guido Maria Demetz, OFM celebrated the installation of the new council and Mariette Fleur confirmed it. Thanks to God, everything went well and the Chapter ended with a fraternal meal.