



K O I N Ō N I A

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Walking with the young people: a vital challenge for OFS

St. Francis and the youth of today

Fr. Alfred Parambakathu OFMConv.

General Introduction

The year of 2018 saw the Universal Church living a Synod of Bishops dedicated to the theme “Young People, Faith, and vocational Discernment”, held in Rome from 3 to 28 October¹. The main purpose of the Synod was, as seen in the *Instrumentum laboris* (Art.1), to reemphasize the fact that,

Taking care of young people is not an optional task for the Church, but an integral part of her mission in history. In just a few words, this is the specific scope of the upcoming Synod: just as our Lord Jesus Christ walked alongside the disciples of Emmaus (cf. Lk 24: 13-35), the Church is also urged to accompany all young people, without exception, towards the joy of love.

In the *Final Document* of the Synod it is clearly stated that the synodal process is not yet completed, and the implementation phase is yet to come (Art. 3). This is an open invitation for everyone to participate in creating new atmospheres for the young people:

Community experience highlights the qualities and the limits of every person and helps us to recognize humbly that unless we share the gifts we have received for the common good, it is not possible to follow the Lord. This practice continues in the Church today, as the young join groups, movements and associations of various kinds where they experience a warm and welcoming environment and the intensity of relationships that they desire. Joining organizations of this kind is particularly important once the journey of Christian initiation has been completed, because it offers the young an opportunity to bring their Christian vocation to maturity².

Almost an year before the Synod, the XV General Chapter of OFS that took place in the Collegium Seraphicum in Rome on November 4-11, 2017, in its conclusive document, had stated that, “Secular Franciscan fraternities, at all levels, are to seek the most suitable means to foster the vitality and growth of Franciscan Youth within their particular realities, accompanying and animating YouFra

¹ All the documents of the Synod on the Youth that we have used in this article are taken from the website www.synod2018.va. This is an invitation for all the readers to go through these documents and make their own assessments and studies.

² *Final Document of the Synod 2018*, 96.

with all that is necessary to ensure young people are supported along their human and spiritual journey”³.

In the light of all these events the Conference of the Spiritual Assistants (CAS) decided that the *Koinonia* of the year 2019 be dedicated to the theme “Walking with the young people: a vital challenge for OFS”. The specific themes of each issues of this year shall be:

- **Koinonia 2019 - 1: “St. Francis and the youth of today”** - Fr. Alfred Parambakathu OFMConv.
- **Koinonia 2019 - 2: “The Identity and the Mission of YouFra”** - Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM.
- **Koinonia 2019 - 3: “The Assistant and the YouFra: the art of vocational discernment”** - Fr. Francis Dor, OFM Cap.
- **Koinonia 2019 - 4: “The relationship between OFS and YouFra: challenges and hopes** - Fr. TOR.

1. The Youth of today

There are hundreds of studies done on “the youth of today” from the sociological, psychological, religious and anthropological perspectives and from many other points of view. It is hard to concentrate on a homogeneous study to discuss our theme. So in this study we will concentrate on some of the important articles published by the Synod 2018⁴ to formulate our ideas on “the youth of today”.

1.1 Positive vision of the world

From the studies it becomes clear that making a positive experience in the world is what young people feel they need most. “More than two out of three youths (69.8%) declare having confident and positive vision of the world and of life...This positive perception also tends to be higher in Latin America and lower in Asia”⁵. It is a clear sign that our young people are willing to act, to produce values and to commit themselves. However, they need the help of adults to fulfill their plans, as well as their support in making important decisions⁶. It is also found out that at their crucial period of assuming greater commitments and responsibilities (in the 25-29 age range), the number of those who are unsure remains high. It is also a symptom of a more prolonged condition of immaturity, which greatly affects the path of young European people.

Notwithstanding their positive outlook of the world, uncertainty toward the future is an across-the-board trait and the lack of trustworthy allies in society exacerbates insecurity⁷.

1.2 Importance of Family Life

The importance that the youth of today gives to family life is really an eye-opening. Regarding personal growth the family counts above all. Almost 90% of young people consider family very

³ For all the references to this General Chapter, whose acts are yet to be published, the readers are recommended to refer to the official Webpage, www.ciofs.org.

⁴ Other than the *Final Document* and the *Instrumentum laboris* which we have previously mentioned, we will refer also a book: SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations According to the Online Questionnaire*, Vatican 2018. (This book is available in Italian and in English in the website www.synod2018.va). This book is the outcome of a study done with the help of a questionnaire, in which youths from 208 different countries have responded.

⁵ SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 90.

⁶ “An estimated 60% of respondent feel good about making decisions,... The fact that four out of ten young people feel poorly equipped to decide is an aspect that should make us reflect”. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 90.

⁷ Only three out of ten young people (30.9%) see their future in a positive way, while four out of ten (40.4%) see it with concern and fear. Cf. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 90-91.

important⁸, and almost 80% of young people want to have children⁹. According to most of the young people (about 60%), the age considered adequate for having children falls in the 25-29 age group. It is also amazing to notice that among those wishing to have children, 3.1% want to have only one child, while 35.9% would like to have at least two and 30.6% to have three children. So the climate of nuclear family is changing.

When making important decisions, young people believe they can count on their family members. On a scale done on 1-10, the mother is the figure to which all participants turn more to for advice on decisions to be taken (with a score of 8.5) and the father counts slightly less (7.8). This remains almost invariable in all the continents¹⁰.

1.3 Distrust toward institutions and past generations

There is a widespread distrust among young people toward institutions and the feeling of inadequacy of political, governmental and administrative systems is significantly pronounced in all continents¹¹. On the other hand, there is a high level of trust in scientific research, which also brings with it opportunities for innovation and building a better future. It is seen that this climate of distrust stems from the feeling of having little chance to make an impact and influence lasting change in their respective country¹².

This general distrust is spread also to the previous generations. The youth lives the present, looking toward the future, aware and ready for the fact that life can leave you anywhere. “The experience transmitted by previous generations quickly becomes obsolete”¹³. The experiential and relational aspect is of great significance for new generations, not abstract, doctrinal principles.

1.4 Religion with social commitments

Religion plays either an important or a very important role in the life of two out of three young people, with a percentage that is nearly 80% in Asia and Latin America. In Europe, the percentage reaches 56.1%¹⁴. It is to be noted that there is a strong link with age. Among different age groups, those who consider Religion as very much important in their lives (60.9%) belong to 25-29 age group. So the youth is still interested in Religion. But what do they expect from Religions. When we analyze this fact with some other elements of this study it is really interesting.

For the youth, among the Catholic Church’s most appreciated actions, social and charitable activities are at the top (73.8%). These are followed by the presence of missionaries in developing countries (65.7%)¹⁵. They also expect to see a Church that is more active at an environmental and social level, attentive to society and to the surrounding world, that knows how to dialogue¹⁶. The study shows that the young people, from their part, are interested in social engagement experiences. Regarding voluntary activities, one in three respondents are participating in an ongoing basis,

⁸ Cf. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 98-99.

⁹ The percentage is highest in Europe while it is lower in Oceania and Latin America. Cf. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 108-110.

¹⁰ Cf. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 100-101.

¹¹ Cf. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 95-96. No participants in any of the continents gave a sufficient score to the governments of their respective countries (average score of 4.7), nor parties (3.6) nor to the banks (4.9).

¹² An estimated 47.9% think that young people have no chance to make a difference on public choices. While Europeans are the most disillusioned, Africans are more convinced of their ability to make an impact.

¹³ SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 102.

¹⁴ Cf. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 113-114.

¹⁵ Cf. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 120-121.

¹⁶ Young people hope that there will be greater dialogue with other religions (34%), greater attention to social problems (34.3% in Europe), attention to problems related to peace and to a new and contemporary language (37.6% in Asia). Cf. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 121.

25.4% in an irregular manner and 28.1% have volunteered in the past but not anymore¹⁷. So the young people like a Religion and a Church that is close to the very life of the society. This is further shown by the fact that among the episodes and/or experiences indicated as significant by young people, “Role in local church” (21.7%) and “Work of the local church” (19.4%) emerge as preferences¹⁸.

2. St. Francis and the youth of Today

Last year, while I was travelling to Assisi from Rome, as usually by train, there was a group of young people in my compartment. They were speaking in a language that was quite strange for me. So out of curiosity I asked them in which language they were speaking. They were all from South Africa, speaking *Afrikaans*. As we began conversing, they told me that they were coming to Europe for the first time, belonging to a new reformed church and going to Assisi for a spiritual retreat. Out of the two weeks that they have they are going to spend ten days in Assisi. “But why to St. Francis, why to Assisi?”, I asked them. “St. Francis is someone special to us and he has something to tell us”, was their reply.

After having a short study about the religious orientations of the young people of today we turn to Brother Francis to see what he has to tell them.

2.1 Francis: a man of positive vision

Many events can be quoted in this regard. But we will limit just to one episode in the life of Brother Francis: his visit to the Sultan of Egypt. Various celebrations are being organized to commemorate the eighth centenary of the meeting, most notable being the visit of Pope Francis to Abu Dhabi during which he signed, together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, a historic document called “A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together”¹⁹. During the Holy Mass on the last day of his visit the Supreme Pontiff, after quoting the famous words of Brother Francis in the *Regula non Bullata* XVI, about approaching the Saracens and non-Christians, said:

Neither arguments nor disagreements: at that time, as many people were setting out, heavily armed, Saint Francis pointed out that Christians set out armed only with their humble faith and concrete love. Meekness is important: if we live in the world according to the ways of God, we will become channels of his presence; otherwise, we will not bear fruit²⁰.

During the time of the Crusades Brother Francis had a positive vision of the World, of Christianity and of course of Islam. The positive vision of Francis can be summarized in these words: “St. Francis... could be overwhelmed with gratitude before a piece of hard bread, or joyfully praise God simply for the breeze that caressed his face” (*Gaudete et Exsultate*, 127).

2.2 Francis and the institutions

A lot has been written on Francis’ relation with the greatest institution of his time, the Church. We just limit to quote yet again the words of Pope Francis: “Saint Francis of Assisi, while very young and full of great dreams, heard Jesus’ call to become poor like him and to rebuild the Church by his witness. He joyfully renounced everything he had and is now the saint of universal fraternity, the brother of all” (*Christus vivit*, 52). So the life of Brother Francis shows the youth of today that

¹⁷ Cf. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 111-112.

¹⁸ Cf. SINODO DEI VESCOVI, *The World of new Generations*, 136-137.

¹⁹ This document, signed on February 4, 2019, is available on (<https://zenit.org/articles/abu-dhabi-historic-document-signed-by-pope-francis-and-grand-imam-of-al-azhar/>).

²⁰ The text can be found in (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2019-02/pope-francis-uae-mass-homily-full-text.html>)

the best way to express their critical visions on the Institutions and on the previous generations is to change their own lives and thus effect life-witness.

2.3 Francis and social commitments

In modern times there is all the more the tendency to limit Religions to the private sphere of individuals, having nothing to do with the society. By the very choice of “*minores*” to name his brothers, Francis showed his commitment to the society. The careful reading of the Gospel that moves us from gospel to life and from life to gospel (*Rule of OFS*, 4) is what Brother Francis expects from the youth of today. Pope Francis underlines this fact when he wrote:

...no one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life, without influence on societal and national life, without concern for the soundness of civil institutions, without a right to offer an opinion on events affecting society. Who would claim to lock up in a church and silence the message of Saint Francis of Assisi or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta?... An authentic faith – which is never comfortable or completely personal – always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it (*Evangelii gaudium*, 183).

3. What can the Secular Franciscans do?

As “lack of vocations” and “ageing” becomes a problem also for the OFS, its future depends mostly on how the Seculars are able to work among the young generation and get involved with them. In the light of our study some practical solutions are proposed:

- a. First thing must be that members of each Local Fraternity ask themselves whether their lifestyles and use of structures offer the young a recognizable testimony of the Gospel.
- b. Focus more on the age group of 25-29 as our study shows that they are mostly unsure about their future on one hand and they envision religion as an important matter in their life.
- c. Organizing pilgrimages and walking through Franciscan places can be of good help²¹. “Nature holds a special attraction for many adolescents and young people who recognize our need to care for the environment. Such is the case with the scouting movement and other groups that encourage closeness to nature, camping trips, hiking, expeditions and campaigns to improve environment. In the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi, these experiences can be real initiation into the school of universal fraternity and contemplative prayer”²².
- d. Concentrate more on working in the Local Fraternities as the youth gives more importance to the role and work of local churches than any other religious events.
- e. Particular attention can be taken by each Local Fraternities to attract young couples, even to the extent of forming “particular Fraternities” for them.
- f. Propose social and mission oriented programs to the youth (look at the success of the “Well4Africa Project” now sustained by the National Fraternity of Lithuania).

The image of St. Francis is very much attractive for the youth of today, a saint who speaks to the heart of the young. Undoubtedly the Pontificate of Pope Francis has attracted ever more attention to the figure and spirituality of St. Francis. The forthcoming celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the “**Chapter of Mats**” and the “**Rule of 1223**” will be occasions when the whole Franciscan Family will turn to be the center of attraction for the Christian world. The future of the Franciscan

²¹ Two articles can be proposed in this regard: ELENA ZAPPONI, *Pellegrini sulle orme di san Francesco in Credere Oggi*, n.219 (3/2017)159-171; FRANCESCO CELESTINO, *I giovani alla ricerca del senso della vita. Una proposta di cammino francescano in Miscellanea Francescana* (118), 506-531. The European project known as “I cammini di Francesco” (see: www.camminidifrancesco.it) in collaboration with the Regional Fraternity of Lazio is an example.

²² POPE FRANCIS, *Christus Vivit: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to the Young People and to the Entire People of God*, Vatican 2019, Art. 228.

Family and especially of the Secular Franciscan Order depends also on how the Seculars are able to make use of these occasions to make themselves more visible and more appealing for the youth of today.

NEWS - CHAPTERS – VISITS - MEETINGS

Benin - National Elective Chapter

The Emerging National Fraternity of OFS in Benin celebrated its National elective Chapter on Sunday 16 December 2018 at the Capuchin Friary in Donatin - Cotonou with the presence of 24 out of the 35 expected Capitulars. The Chapter was presided over by Adolph Assagba, OFS Togo, delegated by Tibor Kauser, Minister General of OFS. Adolph was assisted by Fr. Roger Bessan, OFM Cap, delegate of the CAS. Théodule C.M. Bagan was re-elected National Minister and international councilor. Monique Badou was elected vice minister and substitute international councilor. Everything was done in a very fraternal atmosphere.

CIOFS General Secretariat - Christmas Greetings

On Friday, December 14th, the general spiritual Assistants gathered at the headquarters of the CIOFS General Secretariat in Via Putti 4, for the traditional exchange of Christmas greetings. Tibor Kauser, the Minister General of OFS, Encarnita del Pozo, the Ex-General Minister, Isabella di Paola, the General Secretary, Isabella and Laura the two girls in charge of the Secretariat, Lucio Monti the General Treasurer and three other brothers and sisters were present for the event. Everyone recited the Mid-day Prayers which was followed by a festive lunch prepared by Lucio and a helper. Everything was concluded with great joy and exchanges of greetings and gifts from some for all, and with a poem recited by Fr. Francis.

Panama City, Panama - International Meeting of YouFra (IMY)

The IMY took place from 17 to 21 January 2019 at the *Colegio Internacional María Inmaculada*, in the city of Panama, Panama. The main theme was “*We are brothers and sisters following the Master, following the example of Mary*” (see Mt 23: 8). There were around 125 participants from 17 countries, including Franciscan youth, members of OFS and spiritual Assistants. Five members of the CIOFS Presidency were also present: Tibor Kauser, Minister General of the SFO; Andrea Karlović, International Coordinator; Ana Fruk, fraternal animator; and two general Assistants: Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM, and Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano TOR. The opening Eucharist was presided over by Mons. José Domingo Ulloa Mendieta, OSA, archbishop of Panama. The friars of the inter-Franciscan itinerant community also participated. In addition to the three presentations, there was a round table, a pilgrimage to the church of St. Antony of Padua and a trip through the city that included the Eucharistic celebration in the church of St. Francis. The general Assistants had the responsibility of organizing the liturgical celebrations in collaboration with the young people. The concluding Eucharist was presided over by Fr. Ignacio Ceja OFM, General Definitor. Our profound gratitude goes to the local OFS-YouFra commission which has actively collaborated in organizing and carrying out the event, with the support of the Franciscans of Mary Immaculate.

Panama City, Panama - World Youth Day 2019

The World Youth Day (WYD) 2019 was celebrated in Panama City from 22 to 27 January. Together with a significant group of young Franciscans, five members of the CIOFS presidency were present: Tibor Kauser, Minister General of the SFO; Andrea Karlović, International Coordinator; Ana Fruk, fraternal animator; and two general Assistants: Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM, and Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano TOR. On this occasion, the “Franciscan Village” had an ecological

profile and was organized by an inter-Franciscan itinerant community with the help of the local OFS-YouFra commission. The College that hosted the young people was also the venue for catechesis in Spanish and musical concerts. In the afternoon of 23 Wednesday there was a dialogue between the young people and some representatives of the Franciscan Family: Tibor Kauser OFS, Minister General; Fr. Ignacio Ceja OFM, General Definitor; Fr. Carlos Trovarelli OFM Conv., General Definitor; and Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano TOR, Vicar General. In these days the members of the Presidency accompanied the young people in the activities of WYD, sharing the joy and the prophecy of the celebrations and meetings with Pope Francis. The Assistants also offered their service in the sacrament of reconciliation.

Guatemala – 10th Latin American Congress of OFS- YouFra

The 10th Latin American Congress of OFS- YouFra was held in the "Casa de Retiro-Monte San Francisco" of the Friars Minor in the city of Guatemala from January 28th to February 1st 2019. The theme of the Congress was "Be Witnesses and instruments of his mission". There were 50 participants, both from the OFS and the Franciscan Youth coming from 12 Latin American countries. 7 spiritual assistants and 5 members of the Presidency of the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order (CIOFS), namely, Tibor Kauser OFS, Silvia Diana OFS, Ana Maria Ralfo OFS and two general spiritual Assistants of OFS-YouFra, Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano TOR and Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM, also participated. The inaugural Holy Mass was celebrated by Fr. Edwin Alvarado Segura OFM, provincial minister of Centro America and Panama/Haiti. The national Minister of Guatemala, Mariano Rodríguez OFS and the national Minister of YouFra, Felix Chocojay welcomed all the members to the Congress. The members of the CIOFS Presidency and the members of OFS and YouFra were involved in the presentation of the various themes during the Congress and each theme was followed by the work in groups. Among the topics discussed: "Presentation of some of the topics and conclusions of the IX congress"; "How to commit oneself and dedicate oneself to living our vocation according to the form of the Holy Gospel and the Article 4 of the OFS Rule"; "Sharing the experience of World Youth Day in Panama"; "Looking at the reality of youth in Latin America and the Caribbean"; "The topic of JPIC immigration in Latin America". Several choral groups participated in the celebration of daily Mass and during the meals there was a poet who told the story of the "Brother Peter", who was one of the members of the Secular Franciscans in the city of "Antigua of Guatemala" where all the members participating in the congress went on a pilgrimage on Wednesday morning, January 30th. The Congress was well organized and the evening before the final day there was a folkloric festival with works of art and music by Marimba. The concluding Holy Mass was presided over by the apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Guatemala, Mons. Raúl Antonio Martínez Paredes. It was decided that the next Latin American congress will be in Paraguay.

Argentina - National Elective Chapter

The 13th national elective Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order of Argentina took place at the retreat center of the Friars Minor in the city of Santo Antonio de Arredondo in Córdoba on 2-4 February. The inaugural Holy Mass was presided over by Fr. Emilio Andrada OFM. The Chapter was presided over by Tibor Kauser, general Minister of OFS and he was assisted by Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM, general spiritual Assistant of OFS-YouFra. There were 68 brothers and sisters with voting rights from different parts of Argentina together with the national Assistants, Fr. Emilio Andrada OFM, Fr. Martin Bitzer OFM Conv and other local and regional Assistants. In the afternoon of the third day there was the election of the new national Council in which Miriam Beccar was elected as National Minister. It was exactly during this elective process that we received the sad news of the lack of Mr. Richard Nuñez, Chelito's husband (General Vice-Minister of OFS) and immediately there was a moment of silence and prayer for his eternal rest followed by a short break. Once the

Chapter started again, the other members of the national council were elected and it is important to say that the elections and their results were very satisfactory. The Chapter culminated with the Holy Mass and the confirmation of the new council, celebrated by Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM, followed by a fraternal agape that was ended with Argentine folk dances.

Belarus - Fraternal Visit

The Fraternal visit to the emerging National Fraternity of Belarus was conducted from 9 to 10 February by Attilio Galimberti OFS, delegate of the Minister General of OFS, Tibor Kauser. Because of the bureaucratic difficulties Fr. Francis OFM^{Cap}, who was supposed to make the Pastoral visit together with Attilio, could not go. Therefore the Pastoral visit was postponed for another date. The Fraternal visit was made in the city of Hrodna with the participation of all the members of the National Council including the Assistant. The National Fraternity has about 400 members with a very high average age. The Friars Minor Capuchins assist some groups of young people who would like to found GiFra. Spiritual and pastoral assistance is provided by the Capuchin and Conventual friars. The Capuchins in Belarus have chosen the promotion of OFS and YouFra as one of the priorities for the three-year period. Not all the local fraternities still have their own Assistant. In general, a very intense devotional life can be seen in the fraternities. Attilio also gave some recommendations for improving the fraternal life. He is very satisfied with what he experienced in Belarus both with the friars and with the members of OFS.

South Africa - Fraternal and Pastoral Visit

The FPV to the National Fraternity of OFS in South Africa was made by Attilio Galimberti OFS, Councilor of the Presidency delegated by Tibor Kauser, Minister General of OFS, and by Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor OFM^{Cap}., general Assistant, from 2-10 March, 2019. From 2 to 8 they visited different regions: Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban where they met regional councils, ecclesiastical authorities, major superiors of the Franciscan First Order and TOR and Regional and local Assistants. In Cape Town, in addition to meetings with OFS members and Assistants, they met Fr. Odilo Mroso, Custos of the Capuchin Friars in South Africa. In Durban, besides meeting the regional minister and some members of OFS and YouFra, they met the archbishop coadjutor Abel, and the bishop of Marianhill, Pius Mlungisi. They also had meetings with Fr. Calixtus Zulu TOR, Minister Provincial and several Assistants. In Pretoria they met Archbishop William Slattery. The national Council gathered in La Verna Spiritual Center in the Vaal region from 8 to 10 March for the last and main moment of the FPV. In addition to regular works of the visit, the visitors met Fr. Sipehele Gwanisheni OFM, Minister Provincial and some national and regional Assistants. At the end of the two days of work and sharing and after a consultative vote, Attilio Galimberti appointed the new national Council with a two-year mandate and with some specific commitments to be fulfilled. Caleb Molefe has been appointed national Minister and international Councilor and Thembi Mafu is the vice-Minister and substitute international Councilor.

It should be noted that the National Fraternity of South Africa has been animated by a provisional Council from 2012 due to the difficulty of holding a national Chapter with quorum. The desire to collaborate for a better future was expressed by everyone, from the bishops to the major superiors, from the assistants to the Franciscan brothers and sisters. Attilio held a brief conference on the identity of OFS and Fr. Francis held another on spiritual and pastoral assistance. On Friday, 8th March Fr. Francis presided the opening Mass. On Sunday 10, Fr. Sipehele Gwanisheni OFM, Minister Provincial, presided over the closing Mass at the end of which the newly appointed Council was installed. The FPV has been well prepared and coordinated, thanks to the assiduous commitment of Jenny Harrington and some regional leaders of Cape Town. We are very grateful to the Friars in different regions for their welcome and commitment to serve the OFS.