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Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis



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**3rd European Congress
A DAY OF PILGRIMAGE**

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1st Pan African Congress

Some 120 participants from 22 countries converged on Pretoria, South Africa for the first OFS-YouFra Pan African Congress. PAGE 10.

Photo by Gregory W. Josephs.



3rd European OFS/YouFra Congress

Franciscan youth, Secular Franciscans and spiritual assistants converged on Lithuania in August for the 3rd European Congress. Here General Spiritual Assistant Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv, addresses the crowd after blessing the Cross of the European Franciscan Family at the Hill of the Crosses. PAGE 6.

Photo by Ingrida Biveinyte.

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COVER

Delegates to the
3rd European OFS
& YouFra Congress
make a pilgrimage to
the Hill of the Crosses
in Lithuania. Photo by
Ingrida Biveinyte
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The CIOFS Presidency, meeting at the Seraphicum in Rome, Italy, tackles the life and business of the Order, often with grace and humor.



ABOVE:
Jenny Harrington, OFS
Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM
Silvia Diana, OFS

LEFT:
Augustine Yoon, OFS

RIGHT:
Tibor Kauser, OFS
MINISTER GENERAL



Presidency meeting at a glance

The members of the CIOFS Presidency, meeting in Rome in November, discussed the progress of work on implementing the decisions of the 2017 General Chapter, particularly

establishing permanent offices; namely, a Formation Office, a Communications Office, and a Secretariat for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC).

A number of consider-

ations arose, such as physical vs. virtual offices, and the challenge of people from different parts of the globe working together on the various teams.

They worked on guide-

lines and job descriptions, and they noted that some countries have submitted names of qualified and interested Secular Franciscans for the various

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CIOFS Presidency at a glance

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areas. They gave approvals to moving ahead with strategic planning and organizing of each of the permanent offices.

In addition to continuing to develop and refine formation materials, the Formation Commission was encouraged to flesh

out and develop a program on Franciscans and their finances, including a PowerPoint presentation.

The Presidency members, in addition to tackling a host of business items and topical issues, scheduled a robust series of visits to national fratern-

nities around the globe for 2019.

They also prayed in fraternity, beginning each session with song and prayer, starting each day with morning prayer and mass, and concluding the business of the day with evening prayer.

The general spiritual assistants took part in the daily deliberations, but also continuously prodded and inspired everyone on their commitment to follow Christ in the way of St. Francis and St. Clare.



Ana Fruk, OFS



Andrea Karlović, OFS, and Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap.



Silvia Diana, OFS, on the guitar.

CIOFS Presidency at a glance

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Fr. Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv.



RIGHT: Michel Janian, OFS



Ana Maria Raffo Laos, OFS



Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM



Attilio Galimberti, OFS



Silvia Diana, OFS, and Fr. Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR

3rd European Congress

Prayer, service highlight week-long event



Many Congress delegates, replete with Franciscan youth, gather for group photo. Photo by Giedre Povilaityte.

by MONIKA MIDVERYTE, OFS

It was a time for prayer, for social service, for evangelizing and for raising funds to drill water wells in Africa.

It was the 3rd European OFS and YouFra Congress, which took place in Lithuania from 20 to 26 August, 2018. A total of 126 participants from 23 national fraternities gathered at Kaunas, along with 30 organizers and volunteers from Lithuania. The main aim of the Congress was to deepen the relationship with the Holy Spirit and to experience a spiritual conversion through prayer,

social services and evangelization. The opening Eucharist at Archcathedral Basilica on Monday was later followed by an evening of nations, where all countries were represented by a short video and delegates enjoyed samples of traditional food.

The second day of the Congress was dedicated to formation. Participants listened to a lecture on the main theme of the Congress, “Whoever believes in me, rivers of living water will flow from within him” (Jn 7:38), given by the general spiritual assistant,

Fr. Alfred Parambathu, OFMConv, and a lecture, “Veni Sancte Spiritus”, presented by Dr. Benas Ulevicius. Delegates broke into discussion groups to share testimonies about their relationship with the Holy Spirit. After the Eucharist, participants gathered for an evening of Prayer and Worship, where a special part of Kyrie and contrition was included. Participants asked forgiveness for all the situations in which they have not lived according to the Franciscan vocation.

The third day of the Congress was dedicated to

pilgrimage. In the morning participants travelled to Siluva–Marian sanctuary where the first apparition of the Virgin Mary in Europe took place and was officially recognized by the Church. The group listened to talks by the national spiritual assistant, Fr. Antanas Bluzas, OFM, and his brother priest, Gintaras Bluzas, OFS, who also celebrated the Holy Eucharist. Siluva is the hometown of the two brothers. In the afternoon all delegates traveled to another pilgrim site – The Hill of Crosses.

Continued on next page.

3rd European Congress *continued from previous page*

The special Cross of the European Franciscan Family was solemnly blessed here. The long day ended in Kretinga, where local parishioners were happy to host Congress delegates in their homes.

Thursday was the day of social service. The programme started in the convent of St. Clare where participants joined the Poor Clares for morning prayer. Afterwards they split into seven smaller groups and went to social ministries of their choice: to visit elderly and disabled people, oncology patients, children's orphanage, autistic children, etc. In the afternoon the Congress went to a Lithuanian resort, Pal, and had some time for recreation by the Baltic sea. A Franciscan Fiesta at the churchyard was the festive end of the day after the evening Holy Mass. Different countries presented their national clothes, songs or dances.

This evening program was open to all parishioners and host families.

Friday was dedicated to the contemplation of the Passion of Christ and to sharing our faith during evangelization. The Congress left Kretinga and travelled to Samogitian Calvary, where the Holy Mass was celebrated together with Telsiai Bishop Kęstutis Kėvalas. He made an introduction to the Calvary Hills – traditional way of piety of the Passion of Christ. Participants walked through 20 stations remembering the painful way of the Cross. In the afternoon the Congress came back to Kaunas and all participants prepared themselves for evangelization – a massive evangelization dance in the Town Hall square. After this performance all citizens of Kaunas were invited to the Cathedral where the *Continued on next page.*



FACES OF THE CONGRESS

Photos (above and below) by Giedre Povilaityte



3rd European Congress *continued from previous page*

program continued by worship and testimonies of participants.

On Saturday participants travelled to Vilnius – city of Divine Mercy and the Capital of Lithuania. The day started with the Holy Mass in the shrine of Divine Mercy where the famous painting of Merciful Jesus is venerated. Then participants split into smaller groups and visited other religious sites of Vilnius. In the afternoon delegates could choose to visit one of several tourist places among which was the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights and the convent house where St. Faustina lived during her visions of Jesus. The long day continued with a trip to the old capital of Lithuania – Trakai. Participants prayed a Franciscan Crown by the miraculous painting of the Mother of God of Trakai – patroness of Lithuania. And last but not least, they enjoyed a barbeque party in the baroque monastery of Pazaislis.

Sunday was the last day of the 3rd European OFS and YouFra Congress. After morning prayer and breakfast, participants gathered for the last plenary session to discuss some important issues and to decide on the country where the next congress will take place.



Members of the CIOFS Presidency participated in the European Congress, including (from left): Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS; General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Alfred Parambathu, OFM Conv.; Presidency Councilor Ana Fruk, OFS; YouFra Councilor Andrea Odak Karlović, OFS; and Presidency Councilor Attilio Galimberti, OFS. Photo by Giedre Povilaityte.

Some more Congress pilgrims. Photo by Ingrida Biveinyte.



The results of the social initiative, “Well4Africa,” showed that the European fraternities raised 51,000 Euros. The fundraising will continue and the implementation of the projects – to drill wells for water in drought areas of Africa – was to start after the Congress.

Meanwhile, the Icon of Mary, Queen of the Franciscan Family, which was created in 2018 in Lithu-

ania leading up to the 3rd European Congress, started its pilgrimage in Europe, the first country to visit being Ukraine. The mission of the Icon’s pilgrimage is to visit all local OFS and YouFra fraternities and to propagate the devotion of the Franciscan Crown in Europe. The Icon may also be venerated in Franciscan religious fraternities and Franciscan parishes. It is very suitable for bringing

into families with small children as well as sick and elderly members of our fraternities. The first-class relics of three main saints of the Franciscan Family – St. Francis, St. Clare and St. Elisabeth – constitute part of this Icon.

The congress was officially closed with the Holy Mass, celebrated by the Franciscan bishop of Panevezys, Linas Vodopjanovas, OFM.

Secular Franciscan is beatified

Veronica Antal of Romania martyred in 1958

NISIPORESTI, ROMANIA -- A 22-year-old Romanian Secular Franciscan – Veronica Antal – was beatified Sept. 23, 2018 as a “martyr to chastity,” six decades after she was murdered while fighting off a would-be rapist during the Communist-era repression of the Catholic Church.

Catholic News Service reported that Cardinal Angelo Becciu, prefect of the Vatican Congregation for Saints’ Causes, said Veronica Antal’s fate was similar to that of persecuted Christians in ancient Rome, who had asked the same question: “Who will separate us from the love of God?”

Antal was the first Romanian woman to be beatified



and first Romanian layperson formally honored as a martyr from the time of Communist rule.

Born Dec. 7, 1935, Antal was taught the faith by her grandmother. Each day Antal walked five miles

to Mass in the nearest church at Halaucesti. At age 17, she took a private vow of chastity as a Franciscan tertiary. Unable to become a nun because all religious orders had been suppressed, she created a

prayer cell near her parents’ house, from where she visited the sick and needy and helped prepare children for confirmation.

On the evening of Aug. 24, 1958, Antal stayed to sweep the church after a Mass. As she was walking home alone, praying the rosary, she was attacked by a neighbor, who stabbed her 42 times when she refused sex and left her in a cornfield.

Her grave at Halaucesti’s cemetery immediately became a place of pilgrimage. Conventual Franciscans launched a beatification process after the 1989 collapse of Communist rule, using material secretly stored by Franciscan Father Anton Demeter.

Assisi hopes to be plastic-free

JPIC Commission Chair Attilio Galimberti, OFS, reports that Assisi is looking at ways to become plastic-free.

In fact, as of Oct. 4, the feast of our Seraphic father and patron saint of ecology, you won’t find a single plastic cup in the mayor’s office. This initiative, started by Sergio Costa, minister of the environment for Italy, is meant to reduce the use of plastic in administrative offices and other institutional facilities. The effort is spreading to many institutions and companies.

However, Costa emphasizes that, if this small effort were made by all of us individually, it would have the strength of a global revolution.

Assisi Mayor Stefania Proietti notes: “We are looking for an alliance between institutions that focuses on the environment and the people, especially the poorest. Let’s start together with local actions to achieve global actions... because the commitment to our common home is above all a commitment to those who suffer most from the consequences -- the poorest in the world...”

Pan African Congress

Participants from 22 countries converge on Pretoria



Congress Coordinator Nina Richards, OFS, speaks on protection of life and respect for creation. Photos by Gregory W. Josephs.

A Pan African Congress was a vision since Project Africa was initiated in 2014.

It finally came to fruition July 20 to 25, 2018, following formation workshops conducted in English and French in 2016 and 2017.

Taking place in Pretoria, South Africa, the theme of the congress was taken from the post synodal apostolic exhortation "Africae Munus" of Pope Benedict XVI, "OFS/Youfra at the service of Reconciliation, Peace and Social Justice."

"With the first communication about the Congress in November 2017, there was a unanimous response from all the countries in

favour and eager to attend," noted Presidency Councilor Jenny Harrington, OFS.

Despite financial and travel challenges, a total of 120 participants from 22 countries converged on Padre Pio Retreat Centre, Rietvalleirand, Pretoria. There were 75 Secular Franciscans, eight Franciscan youth (YouFra) and 37 spiritual assistants. The language groups and countries included:

- **French** – Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Mauritius, Togo.
- **English** – Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

• **Portuguese** – Angola, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique.

Joining the group were members of the CIOFS Presidency: Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS; Presidency Councillors Michel Janian, OFS, Silvia Diane, OFS, and Jenny Harrington, OFS; General Assistants Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap, Fr. Amando Trujillo-Cano, TOR, Fr. Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv., and Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM. Also in attendance were Project Africa team members Adolph Assagba, OFS, and Patrick Macharia, OFS.

The Congress opened with the celebration of Holy Mass by Archbishop

William Slattery, OFM, who also gave the first presentation, "The Church in Africa at the service of reconciliation, justice and peace: current issues." Following this Minister General Tibor addressed the assembly on OFS vocation and mission.

Other topics and presenters included:

- *The present socio-political situation in Africa* -- Fr. Ben Ayodi, OFM Cap.
 - *Protection of life, respect for creation and good governance* -- Nina Richards, OFS.
 - *Youth: What future for our children?* -- Nicholas Kugonza, OFS.
- Continued on next page.*



- *Embracing the lepers around us: care for the weakest of the weak* – Fr. Alfred Parambakathu, OFM Conv.
 - *The family as a school of reconciliation, peace and social justice in Africa* – Mr. & Mrs. Chilifuya, OFS.
 - *Damietta Peace Initiative* – Fr. Dominic Griego, OFM Cap.
 - *Feedback of General Chapter* -- Jenny Harrington OFS,
 - *Journey of Formation* -- Fr Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap,
 - *Role and Responsibility of Councils* -- Michel Janian, OFS.
 - *Role and Responsibility of Spiritual Assistants* – Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR.
- Delegates helped organise daily liturgies according to the language of the day, and took turns hosting “culture evenings”



to explain and share their culture, food and talents.

From the discussions and plenary sessions, delegates approved the following messages and actions:

1. Embracing a spirituality of evangelisation: The way we evangelise is by living in the world, always connecting the Word of

God with our everyday life.

2. Promoting justice, peace and reconciliation: We commit ourselves to act with mercy as we encounter the lepers of our time and to see Jesus in them.

3. Praying for and assisting those considering abortion, or who have undergone this devastating

experience: We commit ourselves to not be afraid of speaking up or even fearing to be unpopular when we are called to bear witness in matters that affirm human life as a gift from God.

4. Facing the ravages of drugs and alcohol, and the threatening spread of

Continued on next page.

disease and epidemics: The OFS and YouFra are called to discover the joy of serving those who suffer from these conditions and their social consequences, never doing it for material or personal benefit.

5. Living the grace of the sacrament of matrimony: As secular and young Franciscans in Africa, we commit ourselves to promote Christian values in our families, in the Church and in the world.

6. The vices of deforestation, pollution, and unsustainable production and consumption challenge us to respond in line with St. Francis and the invitation

of Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*.

7. Life in Fraternity -- We are called to be free of selfishness and open ourselves to the gift of fraternity. We are called to make of our fraternity a place of trust and openness, where we can share our joys and sorrows so that we journey together.

8. Formation -- As secular and young Franciscans, we are all called to holiness, which is the perfection of charity, and for us, the OFS Rule is the way of sanctification. We attest to the need for strengthening formation at all levels for OFS and YouFra members,

as well as for Spiritual Assistants.

9. With young people making up the majority of Africa's population, we commit ourselves to promote the creation of Franciscan youth groups in the various fraternities.

"The organising team had tried to be authentic witnesses of preserving the environment," Jenny said, by avoiding plastic in favour of using cotton bags and metal mugs.

Before returning to their countries of origin and, fraternities, during the closing Mass, celebrated by Fr. Fortune Mbatha, TOR (provincial of South Afri-

ca), the secular Franciscans renewed their profession and consecrated themselves to the Blessed Mother to become the "light to the world" and "salt of the earth".

The National Council of South Africa and Congress organisers conveyed their gratitude to benefactors which made the event financially feasible. Among them were: the South African Conference of Bishops, which donated R 50,000, and the CIOFS Presidency, which donated 3000 euros. They also thanked OFM Cap. and OFM friars for their support and especially for providing the venue.

PARAGUAY NATIONAL CHAPTER HONORS JUAN FELIX, 91

The National Fraternity of Paraguay honored former national leaders during its national chapter last May, and had a special tribute to 91-year-old Juan Felix, OFS, a former national vice minister known for his peace-and-justice work in defense of the rights of peasants, Presidency Councilor Silvia Diana, OFS, reports.

Married in 1951, Juan and his wife, Ursulina García, "were blessed with 13 children." Known for his singing voice, he has authored many pieces of music.

In 1965, as a representa-



tive of his parish and as a Secular Franciscan, Juan Felix was involved in the founding of the Christian Agrarian League in Paraguay, fighting to better the plight of farmers and peasants.

His justice-and-peace

work resulted in his arrest on several occasions and being imprisoned for lengthy periods, including being tortured.

Juan Felix participated in the National OFS Council right from its beginning in 1979. He served three

terms as national vice minister and then served as a special national councilor.

"It is worth noting his deep sense of belonging to the Order... He maintains a great interest in the journey of the OFS in Paraguay and of YouFra."

OFS action around the globe



USA National Minister Jan Parker, right, with national JPIC animator Carolyn Townes, left, and JPIC Award recipient Kathleen Carsten, center. Photo by Robert Stronach, OFS.

USA ELECTS, GIVES JPIC AWARD

The National Fraternity of United States of America celebrated its Elective Chapter from 9 to 14 October 2018, re-electing Jan Parker, OFS, as national minister and electing

Awilda Guadalupe, OFS, as international counselor. The chapter was “well run,” but the “elections were as difficult as the birth of a saint,” quipped General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap., noting that a

number of positions had to go to a third ballot. Chantel Healey, OFS, of New Zealand presided as the minister general’s delegate.

The chapter also featured the presentation of the National Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

(JPIC) Award to Kathleen Carsten, OFS, a parish nurse who works with the poor, homeless, and elderly in downtown Detroit, Michigan. In particular, she successfully fought to protect and provide decent housing for the elderly.



Delegates to the Angola National Chapter.

ANGOLA ELECTS, REPORTS GROWTH

The National Fraternity of Angola celebrated its National Elective Chapter

from 15 to 17 September 2018. Kiala Kanu, OFS, was elected as national minister and international counselor. Presidency Councilor Jenni-

fer Harrington, OFS, presided, with Fr. Firmino Kaculo, OFM Cap., of Angola as a delegate for the Conference of General Spiritual Assis-

stants. The National Council reported Angola now has 19 established fraternities, plus 12 emerging fraternities and another two being formed.

NEW NATIONAL COUNCIL OF LATVIA

On April 21, 2018, at the Convent of the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Virgin Mary of Riga, the 2nd National Chapter of the Emerging National Fraternity of Latvia was held. It was chaired by Presidency Councilor Attilio Galimberti, OFS, along with General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM.

Elected were Minister Gundega Zaķe-Cimža, Vice Minister Marika Šķēle, Formator Andris Taranda, Secretary Māra Jansone, and Treasurer Ilze Birzniece.

Attilio and Fr. Pedro got to visit a Catholic school where they talked about St. Francis in an Italian language class. Then they got to do an interview on Radio Station Marija about the OFS and Franciscan spirituality before exploring “a gorgeous village” hidden in the woods on the Baltic shores, and spending time at another village with Capuchin priests.

SWEDEN ELECTS

The National Fraternity of Sweden celebrated its Elective Chapter from 21 to 23 September 2018.

Tomislav Azdajic, OFS, was elected as national minister, and Georg Stenborg, OFS, as international councilor.



During their trip to Latvia's National Elective Council, CIOFS Presidency members got to visit Zanis Lipke Memorial Museum, which pays tribute to the Lipke family for saving the lives of Jews in World War II by hiding them in a pit under their shed. Here General Spiritual Assistant Pedro Zitha, OFM, poses with Agnese Irbe, who is in formation to become a Secular Franciscan, and whose architect mother, Zaiga Gaile, designed the museum.

Photo by Attilio Galimberti, OFS.

“Last but not least,” noted Attilio, “we had the opportunity to visit a small Memorial Museum dedicated to Zanis Lipke who, during the World War II, rescued approximately 60 Jews from the Nazis, hiding them on his property and on that of some of

his friends. In 1977 he and his wife, Johanna, who had always been at his side, received the medal of ‘Righteous among the Nations’ from Israel and a tree remembering his name was planted in the Garden of Righteous close to the Vad Yashem in Jerusalem. This

opportunity was given us by the museum architect’s daughter, Agnese Irbe, who is in initial formation to the OFS. She invited us to her home where together with her husband Janis and their children, we enjoyed a wonderful time and supper.”



General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM, poses with Sweden's National Executive Council.

OFS PROFESSION IN SYRIA

In Latakia, Syria, on the Feast of Saint Francis, in the local emerging OFS fraternity, seven brothers and sisters made their perpetual profession and 18 renewed their temporary profession.

Delegate of the OFS Minister General, Fr. Shadi



Seven make their permanent profession in Latakia, Syria.

Bader, OFM, accepted their professions. The next

steps for this emergent OFS fraternity will be its

canonical establishment and elective chapter.



United Kingdom holds elective chapter.

BRITAIN HOLDS ELECTIVE CHAPTER

The National Fraternity of the United Kingdom celebrated its National Elective Chapter from 14

to 16 September 2018.

Betsy Hart, OFS, was elected as national minister and international councilor. Vice Minister Kathy Maskens, OFS, is

the substitute international councilor. Presidency Councilor Attilio Galimberti, OFS, presided over the elections, accompanied by General Spiritual

Assistant Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR. The chapter took place at at High Leigh Conference Centre in Hertfordshire (London).

IRELAND HOLDS ELECTIVE CHAPTER

The National Fraternity of Ireland celebrated its National Elective Chapter from 10 to 12 August 2018. Philomena Rooney, OFS, was elected national minister and Maire Hopkins, OFS, was elected International councilor.



Ireland's national leaders with friars and visitors.

BRAZIL HOLDS ELECTIVE CHAPTER

The National Fraternity of Brazil celebrated its National Elective Chapter from 24 to 26 August 2018. Maria José Coelho, OFS, was elected as national minister and international councilor.

PHOTO BY
**Edmilson
Santo Brito**



RWANDA ELECTS

The National Fraternity of Rwanda held its National Elective Chapter from 26 to 29 July 2018.

Edouard Kayunga was elected national minister and Valens Hafashimana as international councilor.

Presidency Councilor Michel Janian, OFS, presided at the elections.



GERMANY ELECTS

The National Fraternity of Germany celebrated its National Elective Chapter from 15 to 17 June 2018. Ursula Clemm, OFS, was elected national minister, and Matthias Petzold, OFS, as international councilor. Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, presided, accompanied by General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM.





Lebanon's YouFra: 'JESUS SPEAKS OUR LANGUAGE'

Franciscan youth of Lebanon made a pilgrimage on Nov. 4, 2018, experiencing a day tinged with Franciscan virtues.

Inspired by the words of St. Francis about raising the hearts of men and moving them to spiritual joy, they chose a theme to live by for the next year:

"Jesus speaks our language."

In a statement, they declared:

"Together, we begin a year full of challenges, always ready to overcome the difficulties of life, to sow the joy of Christ among our friends and to be true Franciscans, missionaries of peace."

PUERTO RICO ELECTS COUNCIL

The National Fraternity of Puerto Rico elected a new national council during its Elective Chapter held from 30 June to 1 July 2018. Isabel Lima Pérez was elected national minister and international councilor. Also elected: National Vice Minister José Luis Serrano, OFS; National Secretary Olga Alvarado Pérez, OFS; National Treasurer Pedro Matos, OFS; Formation Director Sandra Dávila, OFS; and National Councilors Efrain Velázquez, OFS, and Rafaela Montero, OFS.



DENMARK HOLDS ELECTIVE CHAPTER

The National Fraternity of Denmark held its National Elective Chapter from 15 to 17 June 2018.

Gilda Suarez, OFS, was elected national minister and international councilor.



HAITI HOLDS ELECTIVE CHAPTER

The emerging National Fraternity of Haiti held an elective chapter at Saint Alexander Parish in the capital city of Port-au-Prince on 9 June 2018. Ruth Dorilas Saint Laurent, OFS, was elected as national minister, and Wesly Eugène, OFS, as vice minister.

Presidency Councilor Attilio Galimberti OFS, presided, assisted by Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap., general spiritual assistant.



CZECH REPUBLIC HOLDS ELECTIONS

The National Fraternity of Czech Republic celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 9 June 2018.

František Reichl, OFS, was elected national minister.

Markéta Kubešová, OFS, was elected international councilor.



CANADA HOLDS ELECTIVE CHAPTER

The National Fraternity of Canada celebrated its National Elective Chapter from 17 to 20 May 2018 in Loretteville (Québec City). Doug Clorey was elected national minister and Michel David as international councilor.



COSTA RICA ELECTS

The National Fraternity of Costa Rica has celebrated its National Elective Chapter from 19 to 20 May 2018. Luis Alfonso Chacón Madrigal was elected national minister and international councilor.



HUNGARY HOLDS CHAPTER



Hungary celebrated its national chapter from 19 to 21 July 2018 in Esztergom. The theme was on the 40th Anniversary of the OFS Rule, and provided an opportunity to invite Hungarian brothers and sisters from fraternities abroad. Thus, delegates from Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine and even the USA joined them. For the second time, a Prize called "For Christ's Merciful Love", founded by the National Council, has been given to one of the members for her exemplary life in serving God and her neighbours.

Warrior-turned-friar relates to

Francis the knight



by ROBERT STRONACH, OFS

Flying over the jungles of Vietnam in a U.S. Air Force rescue helicopter in 1969, Sgt. Ed McKenzie was struck by an inspiring vista.

“It was a beautiful country if you could look beyond the misery of the war. It could have been a garden of Eden.”

Today, McKenzie remembers the Vietnam War in another way – as a Franciscan priest offering daily Masses for busy downtown workers in Chicago, Illinois, USA. When he consecrates the wine on the altar, his mind flashes back to his helicopter, messy with blood from the wounded. He is suddenly in the chopper, back from its rescue mission, and he is once again washing away the blood. But no cleansing removes the haunting memory.

Perhaps it's not surprising that, like many war veterans, he suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD).

As a wartime veteran, Father Ed believes he has some insight into Francis of Assisi. Before his conversion, Francis was

Fr. Ed McKenzie, OFM, was received as a Secular Franciscan (then called the Third Order) in the minor seminary, and was later professed. Even though he left the seminary, went to war, got married, raised a family, had a career as a printer, and finally joined the Order of Friars Minor later in life, “a big part of me is still secular.” He says he never “unprofessed” the OFS Rule. Perhaps that’s why he enjoys serving as a provincial spiritual assistant for 11 regions encompassing 85 fraternities in nine U.S. states.



a brash, partying young man, the son of an affluent merchant. He dreamed of being a great knight, and a glorious warrior.

Father Ed has been researching original source documents, including eyewitness accounts of the Battle of Collestrada in 1202 where about 3,000 Assisians and their allies were slaughtered by the

army from Perugia.

Francis was outfitted like a knight. “He was armored, he had a horse,” Father Ed says. “That was a big deal that he had a horse. He probably had a broad sword and a mace. He was a state-of-the-art killing machine expected to go into battle to kill.”

After being captured, Francis was imprisoned in

a dungeon for a year. His health was failing. He had seen the horrific slaughter of his fellow Assisians.

Francis returned home a changed man. Father Ed thinks Francis was affected by post-traumatic stress.

“I believe the order’s founding came out of the idea that he was a sick man looking for redemption ...

Continued on next page.



Tau symbol shows

our presence in the world as *secular* Franciscans

Secular Franciscans are part of a world order -- seculars, living in the world, walking humbly and joyfully in the footsteps of St. Francis. Our symbol and our habit is the Tau and, sometimes, another Franciscan symbol like the San Damiano cross. They represent the simplicity of our Order, yet they shout loudly of who we are and who we are not. We are seculars. We are not friars. We are not nuns.

There has been much discussion of what our external symbol should be and look like, considering our position in the world as lay people. In 2011 at the General Chapter in Brazil, the international fraternity gave clear directions. As Secular Franciscans, we should not be wearing outfits that could easily be confused as the habit of a religious order whose members take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

We are an Order that demands a humble and simple presence in the world.

It is in this sense that the Rule and Constitutions speak of a “distinctive sign of membership in the Order (the ‘Tau’ or other Franciscan symbol)” (article 43, GC).

Based on the decision of the 2011 General Chapter, a “National Fraternity can determine in its national statutes that the use of a uniform can also be an acceptable sign to distinguish Secular Franciscans in their own countries.” However, the uniform is not a substitute for the Tau and it should be in a style that “respects the secularity of the members.” Furthermore, “the style of the uniform cannot be seen as a habit used by the members of a religious order,” thus avoiding any “confusion between religious and seculars.”

Let us wear our Tau openly and humbly, and let the world know our charism and our mission by our behavior.

by the Formation Commission

Warrior-turned-friar

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He wasn’t the same happy-go-lucky guy. There was a seriousness about him.”

The early biographies, Father Ed thinks, gloss over the war experience because the authors wanted to show why Francis should be canonized, and “this warrior side of him

might not support that case. A lot of this is supposition. But, I think it’s a good supposition. They ignored a lot of this stuff in the early biographies.”

After major wars, such as the First World War and World War II, “there’s always an uptick in men

who join religious orders,” he says. “Why? It happens because men need to redeem themselves for the sacrifices they made on the battlefield.”

Friar Ed continues: “I think Francis himself was looking for something like that, and I think many

of the men who gathered around him were his war buddies and they had a common goal – to redeem themselves.

“Francis was asked to do some awful things. I think he had PTSD and we have an order because of it.”

Orphans in Paradise beckon CIOFS friar



Waves come rolling into the bay, lapping the sandy shore and caressing rocky outcroppings along its outer edge. A dense tropical forest borders the beach, with white billowing clouds touching the vast blue above.

It is a paradise in some ways. A place vacationers and other travelers would like to visit. It is a former Portuguese colony -- the Democratic Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, a two-island nation in the Gulf of Guinea, off the western equatorial coast of Central Africa.

It is also where Capuchin

priest Fernando Ventura -- a long-time interpreter for the CIOFS Presidency and the Vatican -- has been immersed in an effort to ameliorate the poverty that persists in the shadow of paradise and to care for orphans and the elderly. Families have been devastated by the AIDS epidemic. Most of the 70 children in the orphanage are without parents; some are just abandoned.

Capuchin friars arrived on the island two years ago to take over two parishes in the more impoverished areas. "They're doing won-

derful work," Friar Fernando noted, and their hope is to eventually help establish a Secular Franciscan fraternity there.

In the meantime, Father Fernando and a group of friends are trying to make a difference, establishing an NGO (non-governmental organization), partnering with other agencies and raising funds.

He puts it this way: "You can't change the world, but you can change someone's world."

It all began with the Milk Bank of San Tome and Principe (Banco de Leite

de S. Tomé e Príncipe), an NGO project that Friar Fernando started eight years ago (www.powdered-milkbank.com).

"Together with a group of friends, we have been providing for the needs of the local orphanage (with milk and baby food), covering practically 100% of the needs of these 70 kids."

He has another saying: "With small drops, you can make a river. That's how we got a new orphanage (built with the help of the Portuguese government and several international agencies)."



Fr. Fernando (left) at November's CIOFS Presidency meeting in Rome. RIGHT: A few of the Fr. Fernando's 70 orphans.