



# K O I N Ō N I A

*...together on the journey*

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«Walking with the young people: a vital challenge for OFS»

## The Relationship between OFS and YouFra: Challenges and hopes

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### Introduction

Dear sisters and brothers: my greetings!

With this small writing I would like to share with you my joy of being part of this great project of our Franciscan family. I reached in Rome two months ago and I am in the process of accommodating myself and getting used to my new house and to this pastoral work that the Order has entrusted to me and I assume it with a great desire to continue learning and sharing the rich experience of our Franciscan spirituality.

The first topic I would like to deal with is about the challenging relationship between the OFS and YouFra. When we talk about relationship in the human sense, it implies an encounter, a bond and an exchange. But, even more, in the Franciscan world, it is marked by the experience that Francis of Assisi had with Christ who was poor and crucified for love. Through this experience, Francis showed us the wonderful gift of the fatherhood God and the brotherhood among us, his children.

#### 1. Franciscan Youth

An interesting aspect of this relationship that I would like to highlight as a starting point is that the Franciscan Youth, as an organized structure of the Franciscan Family and inserted in the reality of OFS, exists only since the middle of the last century and not before. Indeed, before the young people were entering directly into a commitment to evangelical life within one of the three Franciscan Orders. Obviously, it was another time and there was no need to create a movement only for the youth<sup>1</sup>. YouFra was officially born in Italy in 1948 and was initially called JUFRAC: Franciscan Youth of Catholic Action. In 1958, after only ten years, there were 453 YouFra groups throughout the country and this experience of the Italian YouFra had been extended to other nations<sup>2</sup>. Today the Franciscan Youth has about 40,000 members and is present in 78 national fraternities, 37 of them are officially constituted (some of them are in difficulty) and 25 are emerging fraternities. In some other countries (16) there are groups of young people who are interested in the formation of Franciscan Youth, but are still at an early stage<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Incorporation of the Members of YouFra in to OFS*, <http://www.ciofs.org/>, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> CAS, *Manual for the Assistance of OFS and YouFra*, Rome, 2012, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> ANA FRUK, *Promoting YouFra, Formation course for National Spiritual Assistants to the OFS-YouFra*, Roma, 2019, p. 2.

## 2. Stages of Youth

From the conclusions of the recent Synod of Bishops dedicated to young people I would like to highlight some aspects that indicate the characteristics of the period of life in which the Franciscan Youth live. On the one hand, this stage of life is a phase of personality development, which is marked by dreams that are being realized, by relationships that acquire more and more consistency and balance, by attempts and experiments, by choices that gradually build a project of life. Therefore, in this period of life, young people are called to go forward without cutting away their roots, to build autonomy, but not alone<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, this stage of life of the young people is also marked by wounds. They are the wounds of the failures in their own life, of frustrated desires, of discriminations and injustices suffered, of not having felt loved or recognized<sup>5</sup>.

These two characteristics of the youth stage in all times and places look for spaces of accompaniment and listening so that their dreams take shape in projects that lead to a dignified life where one can build a fertile autonomy; that they are not manipulated and carried out by deceptive proposals that, by time, spoil all the good that youth has. In addition, they need spaces where they can reconcile with their own wounds. Today, more than ever, it is a necessary condition for a healthy life so that the wounds are brought in to a healing process as to make them occasion for maturity and learning.

## 3. Challenges and hopes of this relationship

The document on the Incorporation of the members of YouFra into OFS asks: Why has the need to establish a Franciscan Youth organized and incorporated to the OFS been felt? The answer is that, in recent decades, the demands and dynamics of the youth world have changed and the Franciscan Family, encouraged from its base and with the support of the Church, has prepared to respond appropriately to these changes to offer answers and places of discernment and action to young people. The YouFra, therefore, is the privileged place of the Franciscans to do all this. In addition, it must be added that OFS, within the Franciscan Family, is the Order that, living in the secular world, better lends itself to welcome this path, support it, assist it, and for this reason the Church has formally entrusted to it<sup>6</sup>.

In order to maintain this fruitful relationship and develop it, here are some aspects that can help us think together and continue working in fraternal communion.

### 3.1 Maintain in life the gift that is received

Our charism is a gift for the Church and for the whole humanity. It is always good to emphasize, to once again become aware that our fraternities, both those of OFS and YouFra, have a spiritual origin - before the sociological, affective and traditional - that has made them reach up to us. Indeed, Franciscan spirituality is a spirituality characterized by a strong *experience*, which begins with the experience of Francis of Assisi. Young Francis sought God, found Him and lived Him in fraternity. Seeing that many come after him, to follow his path, Francis wrote in his *Testament*: “And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do; but the Most High revealed me to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel” (14-15). The words of Jesus “All of you are brothers” (Mt 23, 8) found a special place in Francis’ heart<sup>7</sup>.

This is the first great challenge: that our fraternities be an evangelical, welcoming and fraternal space. In this sense, in the mind of Francis, fraternity is the place where God’s presence is manifested. Christ is the true centre of fraternal life. He is the one who speaks to us through the brothers. It is he who unites us in the power of his Spirit. It is he who makes all of us one thing. Spending time to cultivate

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<sup>4</sup> Final document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment, [www.2018synod.va](http://www.2018synod.va) 65.

<sup>5</sup> Final document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment, 67.

<sup>6</sup> *Incorporation of the Members of YouFra in to OFS*, <http://www.ciofs.org/>, p. 1

<sup>7</sup> CAS, *Manual for the Assistance of OFS and YouFra*, Rome, 2012, p. 41.

the spirituality in a quiet and respectful way, where prayer has a privileged place, allows us to keep the passion, the mysticism and, above all, the contact with the Lord, which will allow us, by his Spirit, with his criteria, to cultivate and carry on the life of our fraternities.

### 3.2 Face tensions with openness to dialogue

If on the one hand our fraternity is theological, has its origin in God who calls us to live as brothers and we experience this as a grace, it is also true that in every fraternal journey there are tensions, conflicts, our personal and community sins. As an example of this reality, let's look at an international survey recently conducted by the YouFra Coordination Team on the accompaniment of OFS and the Assistants. The Franciscan Youths highlight the work already done in this path of accompaniment, but they also sometimes feel that *there is a big difficulty in mutual understanding due to different dynamics of life. There is the impression that the OFS does not consider YouFra as a serious interlocutor due to age difference. Furthermore, they don't feel to have enough space to show their creativity. Instead, they feel that the OFS sometimes suffocates the spirit, impose their vision, and in that way miss the opportunity to develop a sense of responsibility among young people*<sup>8</sup>. We have to assume the tension and sometimes even the conflict as part of the process of the dynamics of any organization because if we deny it or if we do not know how to accompany it, that can generate processes of stagnation and decomposition. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* tells us that the conflict cannot be ignored or concealed. It has to be faced. *The best way to deal with conflict - the Pope points out - is the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process*<sup>9</sup>.

We must not remain in the conflict, but move beyond it. One of the ways of working tensions and conflicts is dialogue, so in fraternal life, charity, as opposed to pride, invites us to always dialogue. Pope Francis invites us, in this sense, to never get tired of seeking dialogue: *“the true encounter with others implies the clarity of one's identity, but at the same time the availability to put oneself in the place of the other to understand what lays beneath the surface, what shakes his heart, what he is really looking for. In this way you can initiate a dialogue that advances the path towards new syntheses that enriches one and the other”*<sup>10</sup>.

### 3.3 Take advantage of the way already traced

In this mystique of hope, what we have achieved so far in this OFS-YouFra relationship invites us to take advantage of what has already been done together. Thus, since the creation of YouFra until today, different paths have been sought to respond to the challenges and needs. A lot of work has been done and as a result ways of how to carry out this relationship have been traced. An example of the result of this walk together can be seen in the Letter that the CIOFS Presidency issued when presenting the *Document for Fraternal Animation*, stating that *“these Guidelines that we entrust to you are based on the experience of many fraternities at all levels and from all over the world, and are made to help build a good and effective relationship between OFS and YouFra. Young people who have participated in preparing this document have the experience of double belonging, or have begun their experience in Franciscan life first in YouFra and then in the fraternity of the OFS”*<sup>11</sup>. In this same spirit the Franciscan Youth, in the conclusions of their First International Assembly held in Barcelona, emphasizes that *“the relationship of OFS with YouFra is called to live in a climate of brotherhood and reciprocal complementation. This complementarity has been tested and legislated in*

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<sup>8</sup> ANA FRUK, *Promoting YouFra, Formation course for National Spiritual Assistants to the OFS-YouFra*, Roma, 2019, p. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_201311\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_201311_evangelii-gaudium.html), 226-227.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.aciprensa.com/noticias/papa-francisco-no-nos-cansemos-nunca-de-buscar-el-dialogo-87298>

<sup>11</sup> CIOFS Presidency, Circular Letter on the Guidelines for the Fraternal Animation, Circ. 36/08-14, Prot. N. 2380/12 Rome, 23 January 2012, <http://www.ciofs.org/>.

*the documents that guide us in our choice as a family*<sup>12</sup>. This complementarity is indicated first to all those responsible for animating, directing and accompanying both YouFra and OFS. In complementarity we will share ongoing formation, responsibilities before the Church and, above all, we will strengthen fraternal bonds. This articulation benefits and optimizes our efforts, and is a very valid tool so that our local and regional Councils can better accompany and animate the life of fraternities.

### **3.4 Encourage the fraternal animation and the formation**

The need for accompaniment at this time is essential. *Young people are continually called to make decisions that guide their existence; they express the desire to be heard, recognized and accompanied*<sup>13</sup>. The Constitutions of OFS invites the seculars to take care of the vitality and expansion of the Fraternities of YouFra, and accompany them in their human and spiritual growth with proposals for activity and thematic contents. (CC.GG. art. 97, n. 1).

Fraternal Animation is the name designated to concretize the needs of our young people and of the YouFra fraternities that we are accompanying. With his accompaniment, the Fraternal Animator is a close reference for the members of YouFra of what it means to be a Secular Franciscan. Hence the need for each fraternity of YouFra to have a Fraternal Animator, since he/she guarantees, at least, a better knowledge of the Secular Franciscan vocation and of the Fraternity to which, naturally, the journey of the members of YouFra is directed<sup>14</sup>.

This accompaniment is carried out in a social-cultural context that encloses its own problem, within which the members of our YouFra live. Hence the Synod of Bishops recognizes *the need to prepare consecrated persons and laypeople, male and female, to accompany young people. The charism of listening that the Holy Spirit calls forth within the communities might also receive institutional recognition as a form of ecclesial service*<sup>15</sup>. This formation foresees the investment of resources for the adequate preparation of the fraternal animators at all levels that will enable them to better accompany the young people of today.

### **3.5 Continue to promote the double belonging**

The Constitutions of OFS affirm: *“By virtue of its very vocation, the OFS should be prepared to share its experience of gospel living with those young people who are attracted by Saint Francis of Assisi, and seek adequate ways of presenting it to them.”* (CC.GG. OFS, art. 96)

In this spirit, one of the ways of sharing this evangelical experience is known as “double belonging.” The document *Incorporation of the members of YouFra in to OFS* points out that the journey of YouFra is a temporary journey: once the vocation itself is understood and stabilized, the members of YouFra embrace it, whatever it may be, to enter in what will truly be his/her permanent state of life. Among these possible vocations is obviously and essentially that of entering into a Franciscan way of life, remaining in the secular state: entering the OFS.

The entry into the OFS, in fact, corresponds fully to a true vocation, to a precise state and way of life (Vocation to OFS is a specific vocation, which forms the life and apostolic action of its members. CC.GG OFS, Art. 2). The discernment of the vocation can be developed during the period of their life in YouFra and if this vocation is to live as a Secular Franciscan, a member of YouFra can join the journey of admission, formation and profession in OFS while still remaining in YouFra<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Conclusions of the First International Assembly of YouFra – Spain 2007, <http://www.ciofs.org/>, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> Final document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment, 5.

<sup>14</sup> Guidelines for the Fraternal Animation, <http://www.ciofs.org/>. The sense and the ways to realize fraternal animation is clearly developed in this document of CIOFS.

<sup>15</sup> Final document of the Synod of Bishops on Young People, Faith and Vocational Discernment, 9.

<sup>16</sup> *Incorporation of the Members of YouFra in to OFS*, <http://www.ciofs.org/>. Basic guidelines for the double belonging and its procedure is outlined in this document of CIOFS.

## Conclusion

As we conclude this journey the intimate relationship of OFS and YouFra is obvious. Indeed, the YouFra is a gift from God for the Church and for the Franciscan family. The Franciscan family through OFS has responded to this call by welcoming the YouFra within it. Having young people with us is a source of blessing and hope. For this gift to continue to be fruitful, it is necessary, first of all, that the spiritual dimension motivates all our activities and projects. The reception of the Sacraments and time dedicated for Prayer are permanent sources of spirituality. Secondly, to recognize that, just as young people are a gift from God to the Church, they also represent a great challenge: the permanent challenge of accompaniment. The appointment of fraternal animators is essential for young people to learn the charism and later choose a secular or religious life within our spirituality; along with the designation comes the formation; the formation of the Fraternal Animators is necessary for the exigencies of the age of the youth which is always changing. Finally, take advantage of the wonderful gift of the paths already journeyed. Indeed, no tension or conflict can prevail if we dialogue and continue to work together in the Lord.

## NEWS - CHAPTERS – VISITS - MEETINGS

### Philippines – Fraternal and Pastoral Visit

The fraternal and pastoral visit (FPV) to the Philippines was conducted by Jenny Harrington, Counsellor of the Presidency delegated by Tibor Kauser, Minister General of OFS and Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor OFM Cap, General Assistant from October 11 to 14, 2019. The National Fraternity has 2100 members in 126 Local fraternities, including 33 emerging fraternities, all grouped in 24 Regions. There are also about one hundred diocesan priests and 12 bishops in the Order. The average age would be 55 years and 85% of the members are women. Eight isolated local fraternities depend directly on the National Council. YouFra, meanwhile, has 1701 young people in 89 local fraternities grouped in 12 Regions. In the last two years, 106 young women from YouFra have entered the OFS and 28 have entered the seminary or in religious life. There is generally a good relationship between the OFS and YouFra. Spiritual and pastoral assistance is provided by the three families of the Franciscan First Order. The friars of the TOR have accepted the assistance of a local fraternity of the OFM Friars, but no more, for the moment.

During the FPV the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants was created for the first time. The three members will have to develop a regulation in accordance with the Statutes, in order to submit to the approval of the Major superiors. The meeting with the National Council was held in the city of Lucena in Quezon, in a property of the family of Lucy Almeranez. In addition to this and among other activities carried out during the visit, we mention the meeting with the Major Superiors of the First Order and a group of assistants, the visit to the National Centre of OFS in Manila, the meeting with YouFra, etc. In addition, meetings were held with the seculars of two regions: Quezon/Marinduque and Manila. The commitment of the friars in assisting oFS and YouFra and the good maintenance of national registers and Archives should be noted. They took note of the elements that should be improved, which were proposed to the National Council in the form of recommendations in the FPV report. Visitors are very grateful to the National Council and to the Capuchin friars and OFM friars for their welcome and commitment to facilitate travel during this mission.

### Madagascar – National Elective Chapter

From 15 October to 20 October 2019, the national fraternity of Madagascar held the elective chapter

in Antananarivo at the “social centre of Luigi Orione Sabotsy Namehana” presided over by Yanis Husson OFS, delegate of the Minister General Tibor Kauser OFS and accompanied by Jean Charles Rakotondranaivo OFM, delegate of the Conference of the General Spiritual Assistants (CAS). The theme of the Chapter was: “Secular Franciscans being witnesses and instruments of his mission among men, proclaiming Christ with life and word” (Cfr. OFS Rule, 6).

During the Chapter there were 33 capitulars, 3 religious and 6 observers. The election of the new National Council was held on Saturday. Gérard Cécilien Raboanary was elected as National Minister and International Councillor and Joseph Zara as substitute International Councillor. The chapter took place in a fraternal atmosphere.

### **Croatia – National Elective Chapter**

The National elective chapter was conducted by Tibor Kauser, Minister General of OFS, accompanied by Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM, member of the Conference of Spiritual Assistants (CAS). The chapter was held from 11 to 13 October, at the “Kuća Susreta - Tabor” of the Friars Minor. The Chapter began with the celebration of Holy Mass presided over by the current President of the National Conference of Spiritual Assistants of Croatia Fr. Vladimir Vidović OFMConv.

All Saturday morning was dedicated to the presentation of the report of the past three years, group work and reflection on the theme: Secular Franciscans today, presented by Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM and in the afternoon the election of the new National Council in which Anda Slunjski was elected as National Minister and Goran Luketa, as International Councillor. The new National Council was installed during the celebration of the Holy Mass presided over by Fr. Filip Durdević OFM. On Sunday, the concluding Eucharistic celebration was presided over by Fr. Miljenko Vrabec OFM<sup>Cap</sup>, followed by a fraternal lunch. The Chapter took place in a very serene and joyful way and all the members were satisfied with the choice of the new council.

### **France - National Elective Chapter**

The National Chapter of France was celebrated from October 18 to 20, at Never, in the convent of Santa Bernardette. The Chapter was presided over by Ana Fruk SFO, member of the CIOFS Presidency and by Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM, General Assistant. The chapter was attended by regional and national assistants. The inaugural Mass was celebrated by Fr. José Kohler OFM. The Chapter proceeded with the presentation of a balance sheet a report of the three-year. During the Chapter Archbishop Thierry Brac de la Perrière, bishop of the diocese of Nevers, came to greet and encourage the Chapter members. The election of the new Council took place on Sunday during which the new members of the National Council of France were elected: Claire Hulot OFS was elected as National Minister and Claire Dechenaux as International Councillor. The installation Mass of the new Council was celebrated by the Provincial Minister of France, Fr. Eric Bidot OFM<sup>Cap</sup>. The Chapter ended in a spirit of prayer and fraternal communion.

### **Tanzania - National Elective Chapter**

The National Elective Chapter of OFS in Tanzania was held at the “San Damiano Friary” of the Capuchin Friars at Msimbazi in Dar es Salaam. The Chapter was presided over by Patrick Macharia SFO, from Kenya, delegated by Tibor Kauser OFS, Minister General. He was assisted by Fr. Isidor Peterhans OFM<sup>Cap</sup>., delegated by the Conference of General Assistants (CAS). The participants in the chapter were 31 capitulars, 4 assistants and an observer. During the election Lucy Nambuo was elected as National Minister for the second term. Felix Mosha was elected as International Councillor and Francis Mgota substitute International Councillor. According to the delegate of CAS the chapter was well prepared and well conducted with moments of prayer, lively discussions and encompassing relationships. The elections were conducted in an orderly manner. Finally, the new council was installed during the Mass presided over by Fra Isidor Peterhans. The CAS delegate notes with concern the absence of OFM and OFMConv friars during the chapter and invited all to consider the situation

of the assistance.

### **Rome – Meeting of the CIOFS Presidency**

The meeting of the Presidency of the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order was held from 26 October to 2 November 2019 at *Seraphicum*, the College of Conventual Friars. All the members of the Presidency were present, except Attilio Galimberti, who, for serious reasons of family, could not be present, but only via Skype, during fraternal sharing. Minister General Tibor Kauser OFS welcomed the new Assistant General Fr. Hernán Eguzquiza TOR, from Paraguay, accompanied by Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, Minister General TOR, former General Assistant of OFS. The work of the Presidency was concentrated in the preparation of the General Chapter, which will take place in November 2020. The report on the work done since the last presidency meeting last March, updating on the situation of the National Statutes and approval of the Statutes, invitation for the International Eucharistic Congress in Budapest, which will take place from 13 to 20 September 2020, Asia-Oceania Congress which will take place from 20 to 26 May 2020 in Vietnam, European Congress 2021 in Spain, SFO-YouFra Latin America Congress 2022 in Paraguay were also discussed. The pastoral visit by Fr. Roberto Genuin, Minister General of the OFMCap., took place during this meeting of the Presidency. The visit was carried out with a fraternal attitude.

Penultimate day took place the presentation of the program of the General Chapter 14-22 November 2020; scheduling of the calendar of National Chapters, Congresses and fraternal and pastoral visits. The meeting of the Presidency ended on Saturday 2 November 2019 with the celebration of the Holy Mass presided over by Fr. Roberto Genuin OFMCap. He made a reflection on work done during the Presidency and finished with the summary of the pastoral visit.

### **Rome – Pastoral Visit to the CIOFS Presidency Council**

After three days of intense work, on Wednesday 30 October 2019, the members of the CIOFS Presidency had the pleasure of welcoming the Visitor, Fr. Roberto Genuin OFMCap., Minister General of the Capuchin Friars. The session of the Pastoral Visit began with the presentation of all the members of the Presidency. Then Tibor Kauser commended on the functions performed in the specific work areas of each Councillor, the General Secretariat and the General Treasurer. The pastoral visit to the Secular Franciscan Order “is a privileged moment of communion with the First Order and TOR” (General Constitutions, Art. 95.1). This time, it was up to the Minister General, Fr. Roberto Genuin OFM Cap., to carry out the pastoral visit on behalf of the Conference of Ministers General of the Franciscan First Order and TOR. This visit takes place 6 years after the previous one, made by Michael Higgins TOR in 2012. It was requested by the Minister General of OFS, Tibor Kauser, according to the Rule and the General Constitutions of OFS, “to foster fidelity to the charism and observance of the Rule and for having greater help in the life of fraternity” (Rule of OFS). In the first part, Fr. Roberto listened individually to the members of the Presidency, and shared moments of work with the whole Council. Finally, he dedicated a day to the visit of the Secretariat of CIOFS, in Via Vittorio Putti, 4. According to the General Constitutions of OFS, the visit is also made in the name of the Church and “serves to guarantee and foster observance of the Rule, Constitutions and fidelity to the Franciscan charism” (General Constitutions, 95.1). Hence, it is a particularly significant moment for the Secular Franciscan Order.

### **Rome – First International Course of Formation for the Assistants of OFS-YouFra**

The need for formation for the assistants of OFS-YouFra has been felt since long time. Several initiatives have been promoted in some parts of the world. Finally, for the first time, a worldwide course was organized. This first international course was held in Rome from 10 to 15 November 2019 with the participation of 63 friars of the Franciscan First Order and TOR, coming from 37 different countries. The course was organized by the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants (CAS), with the approval of the Conference of Ministers General of the First Franciscan Order and TOR. The main objective was to stimulate the friars in the service entrusted to us by the Lord and the Church, to

update the OFS assistants on the new way of accompanying the brothers and sisters of OFS and YouFra.

The initiative received the blessing of the Ministers General who sponsored 90% of its expenses. It has been well received by the Ministers Provincial as well as by the assistants all over the world. The participants had conferences on topics such as: the history, identity and spirituality of OFS, the relevance of the Franciscan charism today, the official documents of OFS, spiritual assistance to OFS-YouFra, the active presence of OFS in the church and in the world, promoting YouFra, etc.

Fr. Carlos Trovarelli OFMConv., Minister General, was invited to preside over the Mass on a day. He said to the participants, among other things, in his homily to, “Love, live and spread the charism!”. Fr Amando Trujillo Cano TOR, Minister General, gave a conference, and presided over the concluding Mass on Friday 15. Tibor Kauser OFS, Minister General and Ana Fruk OFS made their contribution by sharing their experiences and knowledge in OFS and YouFra. The course, organized in English and Spanish, was a special moment of fraternal encounter and sharing between friars of the Franciscan First Order and TOR, united by service to OFS and YouFra. The formation of the Friars on assistance to the OFS and YouFra should be continued at all levels.

### **Uruguay – National Elective Chapter and FPV**

The fraternal and pastoral visit to the National Fraternity in Uruguay was conducted from 28 to 29 November, led by Silva Diana, member of the CIOFS Presidency, and by Fr. Pedro Zitha OFM, General Assistant. The National Fraternity of OFS in Uruguay has 8 canonically erected fraternities and only 3 fraternities have spiritual assistants. This situation derives from the fact that in Uruguay there are only two obediences, OFMCap and OFMConv, with very few friars, especially in Montevideo. During the pastoral visit we were able to speak with the Guardian Fr. Vincente Novello OFMConv., who represents the Provincial in Uruguay. He assured us that the next Guardian will do his best to meet the need for spiritual assistance to OFS. In Uruguay there are many challenges both in terms of assistance and of OFS in itself.

From 30 November to 1 December, Silvia Diana and Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM went to the “Nazareth” Spiritual Exercise Centre by the Passionist fathers where they met other members of OFS who came to participate in the IX National Elective Chapter of Uruguay . Some fraternities had not held their elective chapters at the end of their mandate and therefore they were automatically illegible to vote in the national chapter. So in the absence of the quorum the new national council had to be appointed for a three-year period. Sergio Rodríguez has been appointed as the new National Minister and International Councillor. Other National Councillors were also appointed, followed by a meeting of the new National Council to share the recommendations and challenges that will have to be faced for the survival of OFS in Uruguay. Visitors sincerely thank the outgoing Council for their generous accompaniment, hospitality and joy in the service of the Order, despite the problems faced over the past three years.