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THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE POOR

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“Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me!” (*Lk 7, 22-23*).

Introduction

In this, the third issue of Koinonia 2014, we want to reflect on another relevant theme for Franciscans, that is found in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii gaudium* by Pope Francis, “The Social Inclusion of the Poor” (cfr. No. 186-216). This theme is the first of two questions which Pope Francis develops extensively in Chapter Four, entitled “The Social Dimension of Evangelization,” because he considers them fundamental for the present and future history of humanity. The second is peace and social dialogue which will be addressed in the next issue of Koinonia.

The following data, provided by the UN, can help us to better contextualize the issue at hand:

“The world has made remarkable progress in reducing extreme poverty. In 1990, close to half of the people in developing regions lived on less than \$1.25 a day. This rate dropped to 22 per cent by 2010. This means that the world reached the MDG target—of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty—five years ahead of the 2015 deadline. Meantime, the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 1.9 billion in 1990 to 1.2 billion in 2010. Despite this overall achievement, progress on poverty reduction has been uneven. Some regions, such as Eastern Asia and SouthEastern Asia, have met the target of halving the extreme poverty rate, whereas other regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia, still lag behind.”¹

To make the importance that the Pontiff gives to the poor in *Evangelii Gaudium* more evident, we want to note that, in the Spanish version, the word “(the) poor” appears 61 times, the term “poor” 13 times, while “poverty” is found 8 times and “impoverished” once. This simple analysis of the vocabulario also helps us understand that the topic is not limited to the section on which we are going to comment, but rather it crosses the whole document like an important hub that is proposed from different angles, yet always from the evangelical and pastoral perspective.

¹ *The Millenium Development Goals Report 2014*, United Nations, New York, 2014, p. 9.

Pope Francis points out that the starting point for his concern for the full development of the most abandoned in society is our “9imfaith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast.” (n. 186). Therefore, it is not about a populist ideological stance or a fashionable discourse or political convenience.

Evangelii Gaudium includes five subthemes in this section in which the pontiff develops his diagnosis and his bold and evangelical proposals, as much in the social, economic and political scope, as in the more specifically ecclesial.

- ***In union with God, we hear a plea***

For the present successor of Peter, the full integration of the poor in society goes through its “liberation and promotion,” of which “each Christian and each community” is responsible, as “instruments of God.” In order to complete this task, we need to “be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid.” And we find the inspiration for these attitudes in the Holy Scriptures, that show us God’s position in the face of “the cry of the poor” (*Ex*:3:7-8.10; cf. *Jgs* 3:15). In the Word of God we also find the serious warning not to become deaf to that cry (*Dt* 15:9; *Sir* 4:6; *I Jn* 3:17) and not to commit injustices toward workers (*Ja* 5:4).

The demand to listen to and to respond to the cry of the poor is not “a mission reserved only to a few,” but it concerns the whole Church, “guided by the Gospel of mercy and by love for mankind” (n. 188). In this sense, the Apostolic Exhortation translates the words of Jesus to his disciples, “You yourselves give them something to eat!” (*Mk* 6:37), like a multiple program of action that includes the elimination of “the structural causes of poverty,” the promotion of the “full development of the poor” and “the simplest and daily gestures of solidarity in the face of the very concrete miseries that we find.”

At the same time, the pope invites (us) to go past a reduced vision and practice of solidarity. To achieve this, it is necessary to create “a new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few” (n. 188). It is about recognizing “that the social function of property and the universal destination of goods are realities which come before private property.” A renewed solidarity makes structural transformation possible and does not allow new structures “to become corrupt, heavy and ineffective” (n. 189). It is also necessary to listen to the cry of “the poorest people of the earth” and to remember that “the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.” This type of solidarity is necessary to “allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny”, since “every person is called to self-fulfilment”. (n. 190)

Pastors should encourage the People of God to listen to the cry of the poor in “all places and circumstances.” For example, world hunger is a serous scandal provoked by the poor distribution of goods and aggravated by the great waste of food. (n. 191)

- ***Fidelity to the Gospel, lest we run in vain***

Only when we allow the pain of others to move us internally can we say that we have heard the cry of the poor. This is the mercy that the Word of God speaks of in many passages that must “resound in the life of the Church”. (Cf. *Mt.* 5:7; *Ja* 2:12-13) Mercy for the poor, almsgiving, and love produce an extraordinary effect of forgiveness and purification from sin on those who practice them (cf. *Da* 4, 24; *Tb* 12, 9; *Eccl* 3, 30; *I Pet* 4, 8). “This truth greatly influenced the thinking of the Fathers of the Church and helped create a prophetic, counter-cultural resistance to the self-centred hedonism of paganism”. (n. 193)

As the Pastor of the Universal Church, Pope Francis cautions with prophetic clarity: “Jesus taught us this way of looking at others by his words and his actions. So why cloud something so clear? We should not be concerned simply about falling into doctrinal error, but about remaining faithful to this light-filled path of life and wisdom. For “defenders of orthodoxy are sometimes accused of passivity, indulgence, or culpable complicity regarding the intolerable situations of injustice and the political regimes which prolong them”. (n. 194)

Evangelii Gaudium points out that the criteria of apostolic authenticity presented to St. Paul in Jerusalem, of not forgetting the poor (*Gal 2:10*), “remains timely today, when a new self-centred paganism is growing.” The pope warns that “the option for those who are least, those whom society discards” is a “sign which we should never lack” (n. 195). Moreover, he cautions that we live in an alienated society “by the limitless possibilities for consumption and distraction” that are a great challenge for selfgiving and solidarity between people (n. 196).

- ***The special place of the poor in God’s People***

Pope Francis cites various passages in the New Testament to show that “the entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor,” from Mary’s “yes” to the various stages of the life of Jesus. This selection of quotes supports his initial statement: “God’s heart has a special place for the poor, so much so that he himself “became poor” (n. 197). This divine preference inspired the Church’s preferential option for the poor. This is “understood as a “special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness”. Then he says bluntly: “This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them”. (n. 198)

At the same time, the Pontif warns us of a wrong conception of this option: “Our commitment does not consist exclusively in activities or programmes of promotion and assistance; what the Holy Spirit mobilizes is not an unruly activism, but above all an attentiveness which considers the other “in a certain sense as one with ourselves” [...] This entails appreciating the poor in their goodness, in their experience of life, in their culture, and in their ways of living the faith. [...] Only on the basis of this real and sincere closeness can we properly accompany the poor on their path of liberation”. (n. 199)

Pope Francis painfully affirms that “the worst discrimination which the poor suffer is the lack of spiritual care.” For this reason, he proposes that: “Our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care (n. 200).” Reminding us that “none of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice,” the Pope invites Christians “to seek, as a community, creative ways of accepting this renewed call”. (n. 201)

- ***The economy and the distribution of income***

For the successor of Peter, it is urgent to “resolve the structural causes of poverty,” “rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality.” Until this happens, he warns that “no solution will be found for the world’s problems or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills” (n. 202). According to the Pope, all economic policies should be structured based on the “dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good.” However, in political discourse these questions and other concepts (ethics, world solidarity, distribution of goods, preserving jobs, the dignity of the weak, a God who demands justice, etc.) prove irksome to the present system or “are exploited by a rhetoric which cheapens them”. (n. 203)

Consequently, “[g]rowth in justice requires more than economic growth, while presupposing such growth (n. 204).” “It is vital that government leaders and financial leaders take heed and broaden their horizons, working to ensure that all citizens have dignified work, education and healthcare”. (n. 205) For the Pope, “a healthy world economy” is one that “ensures the economic well-being of all countries, not just of a few (n. 206).” In addition, he warns Church communities not to fall into an attitude of indifferent self-subsistence toward the poor, lest they “risk breaking down” and drift into “spiritual worldliness”. (n. 207)

- *Care for the vulnerable*

The Pope reminds us that all Christians are called to care for the vulnerable of the earth” (n.209), and urges us “to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ, even if this appears to bring us no tangible and immediate benefits. I think of the homeless, the addicted, refugees, indigenous peoples, the elderly who are increasingly isolated and abandoned, and many others.” Other sectors of the population that demand special attention are: migrants (n. 210); those that are enslaved “in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labour” (n. 211); “women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence” (n. 212), and “unborn children, the most defenseless and innocent among us” (n. 213).

After enumerating this list, the Pope affirms that “every violation of personal dignity of the human being cries out in vengeance to God and is an offense against the creator of the individual” (n. 213). To this list, the Pope adds “creation as a whole. We human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures” (n. 215). And he concludes: “Small yet strong in the love of God, like Saint Francis of Assisi, all of us, as Christians, are called to watch over and protect the fragile world in which we live, and all its peoples”. (n. 216)

Conclusion

It seems appropriate to conclude the present article remembering the central place that poverty and humility of Christ (the incarnation, the family of Nazareth, ministry, passion and death, the Eucharist) had for the Saint of Assisi in his very experience of faith, and the importance that practicing mercy toward the lepers had on his road to conversion and following Christ (*Test 1-3*), as a concrete example of the incorporation of the poor and excluded of society. A present example that also challenges us directly is the speech that Pope Francis gave on his visit to the headquarters of the FAO on the occasion of the *II International Conference on Nutrition* last November 20, 2014. We propose at least the following sentences:

“It is also painful to see that the fight against hunger and malnutrition is hindered by “market priorities”, the “primacy of profit”, which have reduced foodstuffs to a commodity like any other, subject to speculation, also of a financial nature. And while we speak of new rights, the hungry are waiting, at the street corner, asking for the right to citizenship, asking for due consideration of their status, to receive a healthy, basic diet. They ask for dignity, not for alms”.²

² *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, Visit to FAO on the occasion of the 2nd International Conference on Nutrition, Thursday, November 20, 2014*, n. 1, Internet (11.20.2014):
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2014/november/documents/papa-francesco_20141120_visita-fao.html

NEW – CHAPTERS – VISITS -- MEETINGS

Burkina Faso - Fraternal and Pastoral Visits

The fraternal and pastoral visits to the OFS and YouFra in Burkina Faso were conducted by the International Councilor for the French language area, Michèle Altmeyer (delegate for the General Minister) and Fr. Amanuel Mesgun, OFM^{Cap}, delegate for the Conference of General Assistants, from July 2 to 7. They visited all the local fraternities and on the 5th they met with Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese, Msgr. Médard Léopold Ouédraogo. The last day of the visit was dedicated to visiting fraternities in the capital, Uagadugú. In the afternoon, they met with two youth groups and the OFS of the Parish of St. Francis of Assisi. The General Assistant met with the following Major Superiors: Fr. Maurice Sawadogo, OFM, Fr. Tomás Kret, OFM^{Conv} and Fr. Mathias Anthony Rozario, OFM^{Cap}. The National Assistants are: Fr. Roland Tiem, OFM, Fr. Christian Seogo, OFM^{Conv} and Fr. Harry Joseph, OFM^{Cap}. As a conclusion of the fraternal and pastoral visits, the visitors, after consulting with the brothers and sisters of the National Fraternity, reunited in assembly, appointed the new provisional National Council. Caroline Kone (Uagadugú) was appointed National Minister and Denis Poda (Diebouougou), Vice Minister.

Bolivia – National Elective Chapter of the OFS

On July 5 and 6, the National Elective Chapter was celebrated in a fraternal atmosphere. It was presided over by Ana María Raffo, National Minister of Peru and Delegate for the General Minister of the OFS, and Fr. Gerónimo Martina, OFM, delegate for the Conference of General Assistants. Bernardo Rada was elected Minister General and International Councilor.

Kenya – Pastoral Visit

The pastoral visit to the OFS Fraternity of Kenya was conducted by Fr. Amanuel Mesgun OFM^{Cap} from July 9 to 16. The visitor met with the following Major Superiors: Fr. George Mutake, OFM^{Cap}, and Fr. Kosmir Szulc, OFM^{Conv}, and with the Provincial Councilor, Fr. Miro Babic, OFM. In Kenya there are three National Assistants: Fr. Godfrey Odunga, OFM^{Cap}, Fr. Denis Ntabo Gwaro, OFM^{Conv}, and Fr. Pedro Mwanghi, OFM, but because they are so busy, the local and regional fraternities also receive attention from the pastoral coordinators from the associations of the faithful. In its service to the national fraternity, the National Council receives valuable support from the local Ordinaries. The visitor also met with Msgr. David Nganga, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Nairobi and with the pastoral coordinator of the associations of the faithful, Father Wallace Nganga. In the diocese of Nakuru, there was a meeting with Msgr. Maurice Muhatia Makuba and Roland Sunros Sunguti, coordinator of the Apostolate of the Laity in the diocese. Fr. Amanuel, with the National Minister and the Vice Minister, also paid a courtesy visit to the Archbishop Emeritus from Nairobi, Msgr. Rafael Simón Ndinghi, OFS.

Guatemala – OFS National Elective Chapter and 400 Years of Secular Franciscan Presence

The OFS National Fraternity in Guatemala celebrated its 11th National Elective Chapter in the city of Antigua Guatemala, from August 8 to 10, 2014. The Chapter was celebrated as part of the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the profession of the first Third Order Franciscan in Guatemala, Bartolomé Martínez del Anillo. The activities began in the monastery of Bethlehem, the place where Brother St. Pedro de Betancur died, distinguished Franciscan tertiary of the 17th century, and they continued at the Chapel of Santo Calvario (Holy Calvary), built by Brother Pedro and his fraternity in 1655. The program included a series of commemorative events on the history of Secular Franciscans in Guatemala. OFS General Minister, Encarnación del Pozo, presided over the Chapter. She was accompanied by Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, OFS-YouFra General Assistant and Chelito Núñez, Presidency International Councilor. Sixty capitulars and various

observers were present, including the National Ministers of the OFS from El Salvador, Costa Rica and Honduras. José Candelario Hernández was elected National Minister and Dilian Portillo was elected International Councilor.

Lithuania (Kaunas) – Formation Course for Fraternal Animators

The first formation course for fraternal Animators from Lithuania was celebrated from August 13 to 14 in Kaunas, in the OFM Guest House “Domus Pacis.” The course was directed by CIOFS Presidency Councilor, Lucy Almirañez, OFS, from the Philippines. She presented the following topics: “The Mission of the Fraternal Animator – What do youth expect from him and why does each fraternity need one?”; “What do OFS fraternities and YouFra have in common? How can YouFra and OFS communicate with each other?”; “How can the OFS fraternity begin to build the YouFra fraternity?”, and “The incorporation of YouFra into the OFS: How to create conditions so that Franciscan youth will enter the OFS fraternity?” The meeting included the National President of YouFra, Monika Midveryte, OFS; the National Fraternal Animator, Aidas Adomaitis, OFS, and Secular Franciscans who are interested in working with YouFra groups. The Lithuanian Secular Franciscan Order consists of 6 regiones and 34 local fraternities. There are 6 local Franciscan Youth fraternities in Lithuania.

Lithuania (Kretinga) – Formation Course for OFS-YouFra Spiritual Assistants

The second formation course for OFS-YouFra Spiritual Assistants took place on August 14 in the OFM convent of Kretinga. The course was directed by the General Assistant, Fr. Martín Bitzer, OFMConv, who presented the following topics: “What is an OFS-YouFra spiritual assistant? – The international documents for Spiritual Assistants;” “The appointment of spiritual assistants for OFS-YouFra fraternities – who is responsible?”, “Collegial spiritual assistance – is it necessary?” The meeting was organized by the YouFra National Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Antanas Bluzas OFM, with the presence of OFS National Spiritual Assistant, Fr. Paulius Saulius Bytautas OFM, the OFS Regional Spiritual Assistants and local YouFra Assistants. Lithuanian OFS fraternities and YouFra are assisted by the Friars Minor, but the presence of Capuchin and Conventual Friars Minor in the first OFS and YouFra National Congress and their willingness to start working with YouFra and the OFS, indicate that the Lithuanian Franciscan Family is on its way to collegial assistance.

Lithuania (Kretinga) – I National Congress of the OFS and YouFra

The I OFS-YouFra National Congress of Lithuania was celebrated in Kretinga from August 15 to 17. For the first time, representatives from the whole Franciscan Family of Lithuania were united to celebrate the faith and fraternity together: Secular Franciscans, Franciscan Youth, as well as Friars Minor, Conventuals, Capuchins, sisters of St. Clare and other congregations of Franciscan sisters. The theme of the Congress, “The Lord gave me brothers,” was a return to the Franciscan call to fraternal life. These words of St. Francis describe his vocation and the form of life that God gave him, and it reminds us that it is impossible to be a Franciscan alone. The Franciscan vocation is a fraternal vocation. Two members of the CIOFS presidency were invited, Lucy Almirañez, OFS and Fr. Martín Bitzer, OFM Conv, who presented the theme of the Congress at different moments and in different forms. The Congress started with the celebration of the Mass on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary. Fr. Astijus Kungys, OFM, Provincial Minister of the OFM Province of St. Casimiro, presided over the Mass. The program included a procession through the streets of Kretinga to the Convent of St. Clare. Once in the convent, the members of the distinct Franciscan branches gathered around the cross of San Damiano to pray and assemble a puzzle with the said image. This prayer showed that we witness to Jesus Christ and fulfill our Franciscan vocation by being together – male and female Franciscan religious, Secular Franciscans and YouFra. Besides the formative moments, there were various activities for fraternal recreation. As part of the program, all the professed members of the OFS and YouFra renewed their professions and promises. The Congress concluded with a solemn celebration of the Mass, presided over by the bishop of Telsiai,

Linas Vodopjanovas, OFM. The OFS National Councils and YouFra decided to organize this type of Congress together every two or three years.

Croatia (Samobor) – II International Assembly of Franciscan Youth

Franciscan Youth from 24 countries gathered from August 17 to 23 in the house of *Tabor* in Samobor, Croatia to celebrate the II International Assembly of Franciscan Youth. The CIOFS presidency was represented by Encarnación del Pozo, OFS General Minister, Lucy Almirañez, Ana Fruk, Fr. Amanuel Mesgun, OFM Cap, Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, and Fr. José Antonio Cruz Duarte, OFM. During these days, the participants lived a deep fraternal life, fed by the Eucharist and the Word of God, and listening to each other. The youth reflected on the Assembly's principle theme, "Proclaiming Christ by life and words" and they shared among themselves the joy and challenge of living the Gospel. They also presented the experiences of YouFra in their countries and listened to the experiences of the International Coordinating Commission. After reviewing the Conclusions from the I International Assembly of YouFra, celebrated in Barcelona, Spain, in 2007, they explained how those conclusions had been applied in their respective National Fraternities. They listened attentively to the talk on "The Theology of the Body," presented by P. Damir Stojic, that helped them rediscover the beauty of sexuality, matrimony and family according to God's design. The program also included an outing to Plitvicka National Park. The assembly approved the text for Celebrations in the Franciscan Youth Fraternity and defined YouFra priorities for the next three years, as follows: 1. Communication; 2. Formation; 3. Collaboration with National Fraternities; 4. Relationship with the OFS and the Franciscan Family; 5. Financial Contributions; and 6. Special Projects. Before concluding the assembly, the youth thanked the CIOFS Presidency for their attentive and encouraging support, the Croatian OFS National Fraternity and the Franciscan Family for their warm and fraternal hospitality.

Angola – National Elective Chapter of the OFS

The National Fraternity of Angola celebrated its Elective Chapter on August 23 in Luanda. Tibor Kauser, delegate for the General Minister, presided over the Elective Chapter. The representative for the Conference of General Assistants was Fr. André Afonso Nteka, OFM Cap. Nkanu Kiala was elected National Minister and Paulo Cossengue, Vice Minister. They were also elected as International Councilor and substitute, respectively.

Chile – Fraternal and Pastoral Visits

The fraternal and pastoral visits to the OFS National Council of Chile began on September 2 with OFS General Minister, Encarnación del Pozo, and OFM General Assistant, Fr. José Antonio Cruz Duarte. The visitors were guests at the Convent of St. Anthony of Padua, Provincial headquarters for the Capuchins in Santiago. The National Fraternity of Chile is composed of five regions with a total of 487 brothers and sisters. The visitors spoke with various ministers and some regional councilors, as well as the local Fraternity Council of St. Francis Alameda. They also met with the Provincial Ministers, Fr. Héctor Méndez Campos, OFM Cap, and Fr. Jorge Enrique Concha Cayuqueo, OFM. They also visited the Franciscan hermitage of El Totoral in Quisco, where they prayed in preparation for the Chapter and they spoke with some of the members of the outgoing National Council. Due to some situations that they found, the fraternal and pastoral visits remained open until the said situations are resolved.

Chile – National Elective Chapter of the OFS

On September 5 to 7 in Punta de Tralca Retreat House, in the region of Valparaíso, 59 Secular Franciscan capitulars, and Provincial Ministers, Fr. Héctor Campos Méndez, OFM Cap and Fr. Jorge Enrique Concha Cayuqueo, OFM, and other invited guests met to celebrate the OFS National Elective Chapter. It was presided over by General Minister, Encarnación del Pozo. The CSA

(Conference of Spiritual Assistants) was represented by Fr. José Antonio Cruz Duarte, OFM, OFS General Assistant. Catalina Valenzuela was elected National Minister and International Councilor and Luis Aburto, Vice Minister.

Venezuela – National Elective Chapter of the OFS

The OFS National Fraternity of Venezuela celebrated its National Elective Chapter on September 13 at “Comunidad Madre Emilia” Retreat House, Municipio Libertador, in the Capital District. María Consuelo Núñez, delegate for the OFS General Minister, presided over the Chapter. The elections were celebrated in a fraternal spirit in the presence of Fr. Hermes Torres, OFMConv, as delegate of the OFS Conference of Spiritual Assistants and YouFra. Alejandro Albornoz was elected National Minister and Marielide de Lima was elected International Councilor. Fr. Hermes presided over the closing Mass that was celebrated by Fr. Jorge González, OFM, and Fr. Pedro Briceño, OFMConv.

Belgium – Meetings of Three OFS Components

On September 12, the Dutch speaking OFS Council, the French speaking OFS Coordinators, and the *Greccio* personal Fraternity met separately. After these meetings, on the 13th, they all met to define a way toward the creation of the National Fraternity of Belgium in accordance with Article 65 of the General Constitutions. The Minister General, Encarnación del Pozo and the Presidency Councilor, Michéle Altmeyer were present in all the meetings.

New OFS-YouFra General Assistant

Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor of the OFMCap is the new OFS-YouFra General Assistant. Brother Francis was born in 1972 in Shisong-Kumbo in Northwest Cameroon within a Catholic family. After a university experience of two years, he entered the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin in 1995. He made his first religious profession in Sop, Custody of Cameroon on September 8, 1998. He completed his philosophical and theological studies in Bouar, Republic of Central Africa (1998-2005). He made his solemn profession in Shisong on June 14, 2003. At the end of his theological studies, he was ordained in Kumbo on April 21, 2006, by Cornelius Fontem Essua from Bamenda, who was then Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Kumbo. Immediately after ordination, Francis provided pastoral service for two years as chaplain at a hospital, along with another friar in the diocese of Bafoussam, Cameroon. There, along with his religious brothers, he founded an OFS fraternity. Francis completed his graduate studies in spiritual theology at the *Antonianum* University of Rome (2008-2010). Having finished his studies, he returned to Cameroon where he worked in the service of his Order, first as guardian of the fraternity of the novitiate (2010 – 2011); then as teacher of the postulants in Shisong (2011-2014). During the last three years, he served as OFS National Assistant of Cameroon, until the General Minister, Fr. Mauro Jöhri, OFMCap, appointed him as General Assistant on September 14, 2014.

Gratitude to Fr. Amanuel Mesgun Temelso

Fr. Amanuel Mesgun Temelso, OFMCap, was elected Provincial Minister of the Province of St. Francis in his native Eritrea on July 24, 2014. On May 20, 2009, he had been appointed as OFS General Spiritual Assistant by Mauro Jöhri, OFMCap General Minister, a position that he held until his election as Provincial Minister. The Conference of General Assistants is grateful to him and wishes him all the best in his new position. Dear Amanuel, we truly thank you!