



K O I N O N I A

...together on the journey

CONFERENCE OF THE GENERAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS TO THE OFS-YOUFRA

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YEAR OF FAITH

FAITH ACCORDING TO THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Not wanting to disappoint my reader, obviously, I shall limit myself to offering a very brief approach, beginning to what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) affirms, seeking to answer the question: What does it mean to believe?

The texts of the CCC and from the *Compendium* here presented are taken from the web site of the Vatican, on which they can be found and read in many other languages:

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc/index_it.htm

1. One question and three responses

What is the faith? That is, what does it mean to believe?

a) Here is the first response of the Catechism at n. 150:

*Faith is first of all a **personal adherence** of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed. As personal adherence to God and assent to his truth, Christian faith differs from our faith in any human person. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature.*

Here are the two key words in this definition: *adherence and assent*.

*Faith is first of all a **personal adherence**, and that is, by a person to a Person, from the human creature to the Creator. This **personal adherence** implies *entrust[ing] oneself wholly to God*. This is *right and just*.*

Because it is **free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed**, the faith means *to believe absolutely what he says*. This is also *right and just*.

rs from our faith in any human person. No one entrusts absolutely in what he says. Therefore, it is affirmed that in such faith in a creature.

b) In n. 151, the Catechism affirms

For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his "beloved Son", in whom the Father is "well pleased"; God tells us to listen to him. The Lord himself said to his disciples: "Believe in God, believe also in me." (Jn 14:1) We can believe in Jesus Christ because he is himself God, the Word made flesh: "No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known." (Jn 1:18) Because he "has seen the Father"(Jn 6:46), Jesus Christ is the only one who knows him and can reveal him.

This passage answers the question, **which God?** The response: God the Father, and that is, **him that the only Son has made known**, because he is *in the bosom of the Father*. Only this Son has seen the Father.

As this Son of the Father was incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary and became man, only he can reveal him. And thus, the Son of God and the Son of Mary can say: *"Believe in God, believe also in me."* (Jn 14:1).

Now we can understand better these two affirmations:

- *For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his "beloved Son", in whom the Father is "well pleased"*
- ***We can believe in Jesus Christ*** because he is himself God, the Word made flesh.

c) In n. 152, we read:

One cannot believe in Jesus Christ without sharing in his Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to men who Jesus is. For "no one can say "Jesus is Lord", except by the Holy Spirit"(1 Cor 12:3), who "searches everything, even the depths of God. . No one comprehends the thoughts of God, except the Spirit of God." (1 Cor 2:10-11) Only God knows God completely: we believe in the Holy Spirit because he is God. The Church never ceases to proclaim her faith in one only God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is true that the human being is capable of receiving God, that is to say welcome Him and his truth, to receive the only Son of God, but we are not talking about a human effort, a human initiative, but rather the action of the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and is God.

And thus ***we believe in the Holy Spirit*** because he is God. *It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to men who Jesus is*, and Jesus reveals to us who the Father is.

*The Church never ceases to proclaim her **faith in one only God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.***

So that no one may think to be saved alone, or live the faith in an egotistical way, the Church reminds us that ***the faith is at once a personal and ecclesial act.*** We read, in fact, in n. 30, of the *Compendium of the CCC*:

Faith is a personal act insofar as it is the free response of the human person to God who reveals himself. But at the same time it is an ecclesial act which expresses itself in the proclamation, òWe believeö. It is in fact the Church that believes: and thus by the grace of the

Of course, this doesn't exhaust what the CCC says about the Catholic faith.

Beyond the **profession of faith** (the first part), it also offers an ðorganic, systematic, and syntheticö presentation of the **faith celebrated** (the second part: *The celebration of the Christian mystery*), the **faith lived** (the third part: *Life in Christ*) and a **faith** that becomes prayer (the fourth part: *Christian prayer*.)

A criterion that goes for every local Catechism and was applied to the CCC was formulated by Pope John Paul II in the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei depositum* where it said:

A catechism should faithfully and systematically present the teaching of Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition in the Church and the authentic Magisterium, as well as the spiritual heritage of the Fathers, Doctors and saints of the Church, to allow for a better knowledge of the Christian mystery and for enlivening the faith of the People of God. It should take into account the doctrinal statements which down the centuries the Holy Spirit has intimated to his Church. It should also help to illumine with the light of faith the new situations and problems which had not yet emerged in the past.

To know the content of each of the four parts that make up the CCC, there is no path but to read the text, avoiding as possible every mediation.

John Paul II goes on to say (in the cited Apostolic Constitution):

The four parts are related one to another: the Christian mystery is the object of faith (first part); it is celebrated and communicated in liturgical actions (second part); it is present to enlighten and sustain the children of God in their actions (third part); it is the basis for our prayer, the privileged expression of which is the Our Father, and it represents the object of our supplication, our praise and our intercession (fourth part). í

In reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church we can perceive the wonderful unity of the mystery of God, his saving will, as well as the central place of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, sent by the Father, made man in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, to be our Savior. Having died and risen, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in the sacraments; he is the source of our faith, the model of Christian conduct and the Teacher of our prayer.

May it be granted to us to live our faith as members of the holy people of God, in full communion with the Pope, the Bishops, and the whole Church that is Mother and Teacher, and to respond to the various challenges of the current moment of history with a renewed enthusiasm.

NEWS ó CHAPTERS ó VISITATIONS ó MEETINGS

Vietnam ó Pastoral and Fraternal Visitation

the individual meetings of the members of the National al ministers, and of the two ministers of regional emerging member of the Presidency of CIOFS, and Br. José Antonio ne OFS, with a group of brothers and sisters of the CEN were visited by the Cardinal of Ho Chi Minh City, who encouraged them to continue to be firm in the Franciscan vocation. On May 21, the Visitors gathered for the whole afternoon with 23 OFM assistants (national, regional, and local) in the presence of their Provincial Minister. Br. Pietro Tran Ngoc Phu, OFM, National Assistant, presented a detailed report on spiritual assistance. All the regional Fraternities have a friar-assistant, and the local Fraternities can count on the help of 65 diocesan priests, 3 FMM sisters, and 2 sisters of other non-Franciscan congregations. Not all the assistants were appointed by the Provincial Minister; certain diocesan priests were appointed by the bishop; something that shouldn't happen. All the assistants need formation, but above all the non-Franciscans. The national Fraternity of Vietnam was formally instituted by a decree of May 4, 1995. It has 4,386 perpetually professed members, 893 temporarily professed members, 805 candidates in formation, and 1,663 aspirants. It is composed of 198 local fraternities and 28 emerging local fraternities distributed in 14 regional Fraternities and 2 emerging regional Fraternities. Franciscan Youth in Vietnam is composed of 2700 members, and is developed on 85 local Fraternities, that are 9 regional fraternities and three emerging regions.

Vietnam ó National Elective Chapter

The national elective chapter began on May 23 with the prayer of Br. Pietro Tran Ngoc Phu, OFM, National Assistant, and the greeting of Br. Francis Xavier Vu Phan Long, OFM, Provincial Minister of the OFM. Br. Peter Nguyen n V n Khoan presented the formative theme: *To live the Franciscan charism in the world*. Benedetto Lino presented on the theme of formation in the OFS. The National Minister of the OFS in Vietnam presented the report of the last triennium. Then the chapter discussed and approved the Statutes of the National Fraternity in Vietnam that were translated and sent to the Presidency of the OFS for approval. Benedetto Lino, OFS, presided at the election, with the presence of Br. José Antonio Cruz Duarte, OFM. Phaolo Ngo Dang Quang was elected National Minister and Giuse Nguyen Anh international Councilor. The chapter concluded on May 25 with a Eucharistic celebration that was marked by the beginning of the service of the elected members of the National Directive Council.

Ukraine ó National Elective Chapter

The elective Chapter of the of the National Council of the OFS in Ukraine was held in the Pastoral Center of Grechany (Khmelnyskyi) from 7-9 June 2013. About 60 Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters were gathered to elect the new members of the National Council of the OFS in Ukraine. Dario Brigi OFS, of Croatia, was the delegate of the General Minister for the Chapter. The Vice Provincial Minister of the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin, Br. Gzhegozh Romanovich (delegate of CAS) was present in the same Chapter as a witness to the vital and reciprocal communion with the First Order and TOR. The celebration of the National Elective Chapter began on June 8 with the invocation of the Holy Spirit. Little by little the secret and personal election proceeded, according the General Constitutions of the OFS, and the secretary of the elective Chapter, Olga Borovik, announced the names of the newly elected National Council, who are: Iryna Rudychenko, National Minister; Oleksiy Sorokin, Vice Minister; Dina Shabalina as international Councilor and Olga Borovik as international Councilor in substitution. At the conclusion of the Chapter the newly-elected attested to their Franciscan vocation and their willingness to be at the service of the National Fraternity of OFS-YouFra according to the Ritual of the OFS.

Portugal ó Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation

The fraternal and pastoral visitation was made by two members of the International Council of the OFS (CIOFS): Benedetto Lino, international Councilor for the Italian language and Br. José Cruz

OFS-YouFra. The visitation began on the 13 with the National Council. On the 14, we had a meeting with the Conv, and of the OFM Cap, who made an effort to study OFS and YouFra in the Conference of Major Superiors of Portugal. The meeting with the assistants was very profitable because the emphasis was placed on the importance of the care and formation of assistants, remembering the recourse of assistance, the Manual for Assistance to OFS and to YouFra. The meeting with Franciscan Youth was a moment to encourage the youth to continue the project of formation with the work of dialogue with other groups of Franciscan youth. We finished the visitation on the 16 with a Holy Mass in the morning.

Haiti ó National Elective Chapter

From 19 to 21 of last June, of the national Chapter, representatives of the Presidency of the OFS (Attilio Galinberti, Michèle Altmeyer, Encarnación del Pozo and Br. José Antonio Cruz Duarte OFM) visited the fraternity of Haiti. The purpose of the visit was the project of helping Haiti and the brothers and sisters struck by the earthquake. The visit was a decision made during the last meeting of the Presidency in 2012. On June 22, the first National Elective Chapter was celebrated in Haiti, in the chapel of S. Alexander Strada Dehoux in Port-au-Prince, at which Encarnación del Pozo, General Minister, presided, assisted by Br. José Cruz Duarte OFM, General Assistant, and Father Patrick Aris, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince. 16 capitulars were present, representing 3 Fraternities. Jean Jacques Nicolas was elected National Minister and Yverose Bernadel Vice Minister.

Malta ó Fraternal and Pastoral Visit

As foreseen by the schedule, the Fraternal and Pastoral Visit (VFP) was carried out during the days of 25 to 28 June by members of the International Council of the OFS (CIOFS): Benedetto Lino, international Councilor for the Italian language and Br. Martin Bitzer, OFM Conv, General Assistant to the OFS-YouFra. The Visitors were guests at CIAK at Borkara. In the first place, they met the Conference of the National Assistants to the OFS. Then, they also met the Major Superiors of the OFM Conv and OFM Cap of Malta. After meeting individually with the National Minister, the Vice Minister, the director of Formation and the Secretary, the Visitors greeted the whole National Executive Council of the OFS. Other persons that wanted to meet the Visitors were received and heard fraternally. Although it was brief, the meeting with the Archbishop of Malta, at the seat of the Archdiocesan Curia in Floriana, was very significant. The examination of the National Statutes with the whole National Executive Council, in the headquarters of the OFS in Floriana, served to take stock of the situation. Finally, before moving to the place of the elective Chapter, the Visitors were informed about its organization and made certain particulars more precise. Daily celebration of the Eucharist accompanied the work of the Visitors.

Malta ó National Elective Chapter

The elective Chapter of the OFS in Malta was held from 28 to 30 June, in the ðPorziunculaö retreat house in Ba ar ic-Caq. Benedetto Lino, member of the CIOFS Presidency, presided, with Br. Martin Bitzer, OFM Conv, General Assistant to the OFS, present. Godwin Vella Clark was elected National Minister and international Councilor.

Dominican Republic ó National Elective Chapter

From June 28 to 30, the national Fraternity of the Dominican Republic, represented by 38 capitulars from the 15 regions, celebrated with enthusiasm their elective Chapter. The Chapter was held in the Fray Antonio de Alpanseire Cursillos house in Santo Domingo. María Consuelo Núñez (Chelito) OFS, Councilor of the Presidency for the Spanish region and Br. José Antonio Cruz Duarte, OFM (General Assistant), presided. Altigracia Rodríguez was reelected National Minister and Maria Mejías the new international Councilor.

aland was held at St. Joseph of Takapuna, Auckland from
delegate of the General Minister, presiding. The delegate of
The elective session took place on Sunday (30/6/2013).

The new National Minister is Shirley McGinley (reelected) and the new international Councilor is Chantal Heally.

Oceania (Sydney) ó National Elective Chapter

The elective Chapter of Oceania was celebrated from July 5-7 in Sydney (Australia). Tibor Kauser, delegate of the General Minister, presided, and Br. Peter Clifford, OFM was the delegate of CAS (Conference of the General Assistants). On July 6, during the elective session, Angela McGuire was appointed secretary of the Chapter and Pina Cousin and David Ward as scrutinizers. In a serene and tranquil atmosphere, all the brother and sister capitulars elected the national Council composed of: Sandra Tilley, National Minister; Lola Kelly, Vice Minister; Maria Iadanza, Secretary, Emil Perosh, Treasurer; Mark Power, Formator, Andrea Burvill, international Councilor.

Rwanda ó First OFS-YouFra Congress of Francophone East and Central Africa

45 participants gathered for the first OFS-YouFra Congress of francophone East and Central Africa: 24 seculars (Ministers and Formators), 13 spiritual assistants, and 8 representatives of YouFra from the national fraternities of Rwanda, Burundi, Central Africa, Chad, Congo Kinshasa (DRC), Madagascar, and Mauritius. In addition to the celebration of the opening and closing of the Congress there were two days dedicated to formation, a day for information and another day for the pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Kibeho, Mother of the Word of God. The representatives of CIOFS in this first event of its kind were: The General Minister, Encarnacion del Pozo, the Vice Minister, Doug Clorey, the international Councilor for the francophone area, Michele Altimeyer, the representative of international YouFra, Lovrò Sucic, and the two General Assistants: Br. José Antonio Cruz Duarte OFM and Br. Amanuel Mesgun OFM Cap. The first Congress of francophone Africa was enriched by the song and dance of the various participating countries, witnessing to heroic secular life on the African continent, experience shared with the brothers and sisters, the meeting with Natalie the seer in the Shrine of Kibeho, and the formation given by the members of CIOFS.

Hungary ó National Elective Chapter

The national Fraternity of Hungary celebrated the elective Chapter from July 18-20. Ewald Krauser presided as delegate of the General Minister. CAS delegated Br. Orosz András Lóránt OFM. The results of the election: National Minister (reelected) Szombathely Éva Horváth and international Councilor, Zsuzsanna Celler.

São João Del Rey, Brazil ó International Meeting of Franciscan Youth

The international meeting of Franciscan Youth (YouFra) was held from July 19-22, 2013, in São João Del Rey (336 km from Rio de Janeiro), in preparation for the celebration of World Youth Day. The principal theme of the meeting was *õGo and announceõ* (cf. 1 Cel 29). There were 164 participants, among which were young Franciscans, secular Franciscans, and spiritual assistants coming from 18 countries and different continents. Among the participants there were present members of the Presidency of CIOFS, among whom were the four General Assistants to the OFS. Among the activities there were liturgical celebrations, moments of formation, a roundtable, fraternal and cultural celebrations, a walk across the city and a meeting of the Assistants to YouFra.

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil ó World Youth Day 2013

During World Youth Day (WYD) 2013, held in Rio de Janeiro from July 23-28, 2013, various members of the Presidency of CIOFS, among them the four General Assistants of the OFS, accompanied a significant group of Franciscan Youth. They participated in the events of the general

nized by the Franciscan Family of Brazil. These activities up at the church of St. Francis of Penance, in Lardo da Franciscan celebrations of prayer and evangelization, in es. The General Ministers of the Franciscan Family had a

special meeting with the Franciscan youth and many religious on July 24 at the church of St. Sebastian in Tijuca, Rio de Janeiro. The theme of the meeting was "Francis, Clare of Assisi, and youth." After the presentation of each General Minister there was a dialogue with the youth and a distribution of a flame of peace to each participant. It all closed with the final blessing of the General Ministers.

Paraguay ó National Elective Chapter

During the days of 26-28 July, in the city of Caaguazú, there was held the national elective Chapter of the OFS in Paraguay. Encarnación del Pozo, General Minister and Br. Gerónimo Martina, OFM, Delegate of the Conference of General Assistants to the OFS, presided. Higinio Fabián Díaz Noceda was elected National Minister of the OFS in Paraguay and Alcides Isidoro Martinez Amarilla international Councilor.

Slovakia ó National Elective Chapter

The elective Chapter of the national Fraternity of Slovakia took place in the monastery of the Franciscan Sisters of the Transfiguration in Melice (Slovakia), from August 22-25, 2013. Ewald Kreuzer participated as delegate of the General Minister and Br. Ondrej Tarana, OFM Cap., as delegate of the Conference of General Assistants. In this elective chapter, 33 secular brothers and sisters were gathered from all of Slovakia to choose the new national Council. The elective session, held on August 24, 2013, had as secretary Gáborová Sidónia, and as scrutinizers Tibor Kollárik and Marta Zlatošová. The results of the election are the following: National Minister, Jozef Gazdík; Vice National Minister: Jozef Juriga. International Councilor (reelected): Lucia Spodniaková; international Councilor in substitution: Zuzana Juhaniaková. The National fraternity of OFS of Slovakia consists currently of 1250 members, distributed in 61 canonically erected local Fraternities, and two emerging local Fraternities. The National Fraternity is divided into 6 regional Fraternities.

Madagascar ó Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation

For the elective Chapter and the Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation of the OFS of Madagascar, the General Minister, Encarnación del Pozo, and the General Assistant, Br. Amanuel Mesgun, met in the capital, Antananarivo, on September 10, coming from the island of Mauritius. During their stay the two Visitors were accompanied, in Madagascar and on Mauritius, by the international Councilor for the francophone area, Michele Altmeyer. After passing the night in the village of St. Francis, where the Center of OFS is based and dedicated to the Servant of God Lucien Botovosoa, OFS, the three Visitors travel to the north of Madagascar, to the port city of Mahajanga. At the opening Mass, presided by Most Rev. Roger Victor, bishop of Mahajanga, the Visitors, with great surprise, found themselves before about 500 secular brothers and sisters from the whole island, gathered for a General Assembly. The schedule prepared by the National Council provided for an elective Chapter preceded by an Assembly in which the Visitors would meet with the seculars present (professed, Franciscan Youth, and "Fioretti"). The first day of work (12/09/2013) was dedicated to the meeting with the National Council. In this meeting the Visitors sought to resolve all the questions concerning Chapters and elections during past triennium, checking on their validity. The day 13/09/2013 was dedicated to themes of formation. In the afternoon, the reading of the triennial report began. In the absence of the National Minister at the Chapter, his report was reviewed and rewritten by the National Council and read by the Vice Minister, who, in the absence of the Minister, acts as Minister. After the report on the management of the OFS Center, Lucien Botovosoa, the report of the treasurer followed.

Madagascar ó National Elective Chapter

the triennium, and in the lack of approval by CIOFS of the number of capitulars and those voting, according to the the election on the day 14/09/1013. The results of the

ister and international Councilor, Dr. Rabonary Gerard Cecilien; Vice National Minister and international Councilor in substitution, Razafisoa Marie Madeleine. The closure of the Chapter and the confirmation of the new National Council took place on 15/09/2013 during the solemn parish Mass celebrated in the church of St. Francis Xavier. YouFra (about 500 members) and the little Franciscan Youth called ðfiorettiö (about 600 members) also had their elections during these days. The national Fraternity of the OFS in Madagascar is assisted by Capuchin Friars and OFMs, and is divided into three regions: North, Central, and South. There are 35 Fraternities and about 1500 seculars.

Ecuador ó National Elective Chapter

From September 14-15, in the city of Ambato, The national elective Chapter of the OFS in Ecuador was held. Ana María Raffo Laos, National Minister and international Councilor of the OFS in Peru, presided as delegate of the General Minister. Ana Maria was accompanied by Br. Hugo Ariel Osorio, OFM Cap., National Assistant to the OFS in Colombia. Antonia Gladys Tigrero Silvestre was elected National Minister and Luz Herminia Casigña as international Councilor.

Mauritius ó Fraternal and Pastoral Visit

After the fraternal and pastoral visit to the national Fraternity of Madagascar, the three Visitors: Encarnación del Pozo, Br. Amanuel Mesgun and Michelé Altimeyer, returned to the island of Mauritius on the afternoon of 17/09/2013 to carry out the same task on this small island in the Indian Ocean. After spending the night in the Fraternity of St. Bernard of Siena of the OFM, on the following day they visited the Fraternity of the South. During the trip, the Visitors took a break at the Hindu shrine of Ganga Talao. After having lunch with the OFM of the Fraternity of Chemin Grenier and visiting the Missionary Sisters of Mary, on this day (18/09/2013), the Visitors meet the secular of the Fraternity of the Stigmata of St. Francis in Baie Du Cap, which is a separate Fraternity from that of Chemin Grenier, St. Maximilian Kolbe. This Fraternity is made up of 12 seculars, all professed. The National Assistant, Br. René, also assists this local Fraternity. These two local Fraternities meet twice a month. Thursday 19/09/13 was the day dedicated to listening to the members of the departing National Council, even though it was interrupted by an interview that local radio wanted to do with the Visitors and the supper consumed with the local emerging Fraternity of Beau-Bassin. The following day the Visitors continued their meetings with the members of the departing Council and listened to the National Minister. After having lunch with the members of the Fraternity of St. Agnes of Assisi in Port Louis, they had a fraternal dialogue with the bishop of the island of Mauritius, Most Rev. Maurice Piat. Returning to their base, they met with 18 Ministers of the various local Fraternities, 2 Major Superiors and 3 other spiritual Assistants to OFS-YouFra.

Mauritius ó National Elective Chapter

On the first day of the election, after a brief talk by the General Minister about the animation of the OFS and the role of the spiritual Assistant, the Visitors apologized because they could not proceed to the election as described the national Statutes because it was anti-constitutional. Sunday, the last day of the Chapter, there were two simultaneous elective sessions: that of the national YouFra and that of the OFS. During the election there were present two Indian Capuchin friars from Tamil Nadu, just arrived on the island. The newly elected National Council is composed of Eric Salmine, National Minister; Jean Noel Couyava, Secretary; Daniella Uchanah, international Councilor and Jossette Ach, international Councilor in substitution. The secular members are 119. YouFra is composed of 86 young people, of which 52 have made the promise.